

Many find it fashionable these days to dwell on William Moulton Marston's personal idiosyncrasies and the way those quirks of character were reflected in his most famous literary creation, Wonder Woman. Particularly, one reads a great deal about Marston's fondness for bondage games and the inclusion of that in various tropes of Wonder Woman comics, especially the use of bracelets and lassos and belts. One could see the current fascination of writer Meredith Finch with Diana Prince's life balance issues as an updated version of Marston's tension themes. As with last issue, Wonder Woman 37 includes several discussions of the demands placed on Diana by her status as god of war, acting queen of the Amazons, and member of the Justice League. One such discussion occurs as she is sparring with Superman, to be fair about the most obvious visual representation of strength and determination one could imagine, at least for a supposedly quotidian scene. However, there is another strong theme in Wonder Woman, a theme that began in the previous run by Brian Azzarello and Cliff Chiang and continues into the current regime of Meredith and David Finch. Wonder Woman is fundamentally a story about children, their value, their meaning, and their eventual role as actors in their own right, whether in their own stories or someone else's. The previous arc focused on the child Zeke, revealed to be an incarnation of the god Zeus, while also exploring Diana's relationships with her Amazon and divine families in all their glory and secrets and dysfunction. This arc continues to explore that relationship, especially on the Amazon side, although the destruction of Diana's petrified mother receives curiously little attention. One of the later scenes in the book powerfully explores children as vessels and objects of sacrifice. As this scene is also the one that brings about the introduction of the much-missed Donna Troy to the New 52, it seems safe to say that this particular theme is likely to return. Yet, for all the power of this insight, the story is almost completely disjointed. Meredith Finch takes us from one hurried vignette to another, from a fight with the Stympalian birds to a political conflict in the council rooms of Themyscira to the sparring match with Superman to a savage bargain with an eldritch entity to a cryptic conversation between two unintroduced figures. It is as if the book was put together from shards of other comics assembled with some desperation and no time to craft a uniting narrative. This time, David Finch's pencils and Richard Friend's colors fail to lift the script. Finch's figures are more elongated and angular than usual, giving a sense of being slightly disproportioned, while Friend's inks are heavy and overbearing. The frequent use of splash pages and meta-panels is probably meant to evoke expansiveness and majesty, but instead they slow down the pacing drastically. One gets the sense of posed figures in some mytho-historical diorama arranged by an enthusiastic but not particularly subtle or sophisticated curator. Sonia Oback's colors are darkened and muddy, making it seem as if Themyscira has fallen under a heavy cloud cover. If the storyline were more focused and united, this effect might powerfully underscore the troubles gathering for the new Amazon queen. As it is, the shadowed colors are simply one more disjointed element. David Finch's faces don't help, either. Finch has always placed heavy emphasis on the mouth and chin regions of his figures, but now that has become exaggerated, making both Superman and Wonder Woman look like petulant Hollywood celebrities rather than powerful heroes. The post Wonder Woman #37 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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