

When a massive super-storm appears in Utah, Storm brings her team of X-Men in to defuse the situation, however the storm is more than it appears. Fresh off the announcement of an exclusive contract with Marvel, G. Willow Wilson is building a simmering mystery that may affect the entire planet. Wilson spends a lot of time on Storm's inner monologue this month, but there's enough substance to make sure you never lose interest. That said, this is definitely a slow issue. Wilson's pacing is methodical, verging on decompressed. She reliably delivers jolts of wonderful characterization, however, the content between these moments is somewhat hit and miss. The story also benefits from and suffers for the larger continuity of the X-books. Wilson is a natural at fitting pieces from other books into the puzzle she's constructing. Storm feels very much in line with the version Greg Pak is writing over in the solo, and both of those incorporate The Death of Wolverine better than they probably should. Likewise, there's a good sense of the team being based out of the Jean Grey School. Elements and characters from the departed Wolverine and the X-Men are used sparingly but to great effect and we even get a cameo from Gambit, even if he disappears rather ominously. In fact, Gambit is the first mutant we see in this issue and his treatment foreshadows much of what is to come. Wilson's Remy LeBeau is so sleazy that it's almost hard to believe he's an X-Man. Just the same, he's so clearly Gambit. Likewise, Wilson plays up the flaws of a number of her protagonists, but balances it out with an understanding of their value in the right time and place. The often too good to be true Storm is humanized by control issues and a touch of hubris befitting a former goddess. Rachel Grey, quite fittingly, is a little bit stuck in her own head and doesn't function well without a team dialogue. There's a give and take between the X-Men and Wilson allows readers to bask in the dramatic irony, seeing their flaws from comfortable objectivity. Even if the story Wilson is telling forces them off to the side so that Storm can take the, fairly logical, spotlight, the team dynamic is very strong. One other thing I'd like to mention is the appearance of Storm's claustrophobia. The trait has, rightly, gained something of a reputation for it's over-the-top reactions and overuse as a way to take the powerful mutant out of a fight or pay lip service to her internal monologue, but Wilson handles it rather nicely, in my opinion. This feels like the reaction of someone who's had significant struggles with a phobia and dealt with it. It's subdued and self-aware and doesn't overplay its hand. To follow that up with a great insight into Storm's character is a great thing for the issue. Unfortunately I'm not a fan of Roland Boschi's artwork. The issue seems to jump back and forth between a very simple, angular style and a more gritty attempt at comparative realism. I think the former has a lot of potential, but it seems like, even in scenes where it's employed, Boschi didn't commit to it enough and the results feel awkward. I think this was intended to be stylized artwork, but instead it often reads as the result of mistakes. Faces are a particular problem this month. Many of the issue's big moments are expressed through close-ups and they don't fare anywhere near as well as panels that give a little more distance. A stunned Rachel Grey, the final panel of Storm's reunion, and our first look at Beast stand out as particularly harsh misses. The last two would be almost hard to recognize without the context of an X-Men logo on the cover, and one of them's blue! I just wish that all the characters could inspire the same quality as the two girls Gambit approaches at the start of the issue, who, despite some excessive cheesecake, look lovely. While there are significant problems with the art, I will say that they're largely aesthetic. The story reads quite clearly. Each panel tends to have a clear concept and momentum to it and, while they each seems to speak with rather unique voices, it's easy to follow Wilson's story. Boschi also does a good job of calling on shared cultural triggers to communicate the function of a panel and does so without feeling derivative. The post X-Men #23 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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