Alright, Marvel. You got me. It's been a while since I read an Amazing Spider-Man, so I clicked on this issue without registering that whole point-one thing after the number 17. It took a couple of pages until we get the handy-dandy footnote referencing "ASM 16.1" [sic], and I suddenly remember that I usually don't purchase comics outside of the regular line, purely for financial reasons. So there ya go, Marvel, you get an extra Starbucks/$3.99 on me, while I will go caffeine-less for an afternoon. The issue, once you get over the learning curve of an ongoing storyline, is done fairly well, thankfully. The focus is on the Wraith, really, but there's already a female-led title of Asian-American descent spinning off of Spider-Man (see: Silk) so I suppose she can't be a headliner. Essentially, here she is used as a foil for Spidey's modus operandi and sense of justice.In fact, the issue serves well enough to be a "done-in-one" story. You see, Hammerhead and the Goblin King are in the middle of a turf war, and the Wraith is determined to keep her own "turf" free of such criminal influences. She gets welcome help (and unwelcome advice) from Spider-Man, but also help from a third factor, Mr. Negative, which may bode a complication to true justice in the future.There's some more stuff about the fallout from the previous "issue," thanks to a massive info-dump of exposition between Yuri Watanabe/the Wrait and her boss, and a sit-down with someone who must have been an antagonist last issue. This guy, a Judge Howell, wants to plead his case to Watanabe, telling a story that's almost verbatim to Heinz' dilemma, which shows Watanabe's sense of justice falls somewhere on the Conventional Stage of Moral Development according to Lawrence Kohlberg. Does this mean that Spider-Man is actually Stage 5? Or are superheroes by force of genre pretty much all at the Conventional Stage, actually, and merely express them different ways?Unfortunately, the art is not quite as deep as the philosophical implications of comicbook heroism. At first, I was quite taken by Barberi's/Vlasco's work, as the first scene is vibrant and exciting, even though the aesthetic is the same kind of blocky figures and excessive crosshatching that reminds you of the 90s. Those dynamic panels and twisted figures are reminiscent of why some of that 90s-style art was so popular; it can look very great. The same can't be said in the non-fight scenes, which take up the majority of the remainder of the issue. This style cannot capture any dynamism (or even realism) of characters in a room conversing with one another. Body postures are too distorted, and facial features float shift on the form. In too many places, Watanabe does not look like a normal human being as her waist, arms and legs are out of proportion. They look like the artist is concerned with surface details rather than internal structure. Barberi draws an amazingly slick-looking car, but the figures on/near the car is nowhere near as well-constructed. Also, you'd think the character might be drawn to appear Japanese as well.I remember really liking the original Wraith's costume back in the day, and this Wraith maintains some similarly pleasing design. However, this issue doesn't provide you any explanation nor any display of her powers. This is a comicbook, and I like my superheroes to display something unique when they are in action. Based on this issue, the Wraith has powers of jumping, balancing on cage bars, and of having control over her long scarf ends. There's gotta be more to it than that, right? The post Amazing Spider-Man #17.1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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