

The Ghost continues his take-down of Parker Industries, Anna Marie continues her cover-up, and the Black Cat is pretty much completely turned around. Making a compelling villain, the Ghost proves a nice match to Spider-Man, both as an antagonist to Peter Parker's role as a CEO and to Spidey's purely physical power set. Ramos' art is also well-suited, as both the Ghost and Spidey are drawn in inhuman poses with their sinewy-spindly twisted body types. Unfortunately, the battle itself feels a bit cramped, which results in a couple of problems— with little sense of space/landscape, several layouts are made more confusing than necessary, and the battle scene relies on the environment for key points of tension that are carried more by dialogue than by the visuals. The colors overall seem a bit drab and less distinctive than usual, which contributes to some of the “sameness.” Still, it's a fun book, largely because these scenes do more to highlight the supporting cast— Anna Marie and Clayton Cole/Clash— than either Spidey or the Ghost (although I did have to look up the Clash once again because why would I be expected to have the guy in the front of my mind?) Thus, the Ghost isn't really allowed to be too distinctive as a fully-realized villain, which is a shame. But it brings out the themes of secrets and hidden things that “haunt” our characters, and the series now has to force the status quo of Parker Industries to either continue or to shift (or, more likely, to content with the publishing demands of the Secret Wars event these coming months.) That's some good comicbookery soap opera stuff. The less good comicbookery stuff? The way the Black Cat continues to devolve as a character. There's no real continuity to this character, by which I mean there has been no consistency to the momentum of this direction. The only explanation is from other characters that is tantamount to them just shrugging their shoulders to suggest, “Hm. Luck powers?” She seems a new character now, one that not only steals something that Jay and May Parker bought at auction, but proceeds to kidnap them and attempt to burn them to death with all the other things she re-stole. How is this logical story progression? But don't take my word for it. Spider-Man says the Cat is “almost a completely different person” and tells her “this isn't you.” “Something's wrong,” he says, to which the Cat declares “I'm done being what other people want.” Well, since we all wanted a fan-favorite character who once starred in her own mini-series or two, I guess that's true. Now, we all now the Spider-Man corner of the Marvel universe lacks some iconic female villains. Not one of the ladies in his rogues' gallery can match the stature of Doctor Octopus or the Green Goblin. The Black Cat is certainly already high in the profile, so maybe having her become an archenemy could bring an aspect to the book that it rarely gets. For that argument, I'd just point out that, with a few tweaks, this plot could have been done with any number of female villains with the same results. I'd like to nominate Princess Python. By my count, she's one of Marvel's first published female villains, and has never toyed with being anything other than a criminal. Why not raise her up to the next tier instead of bringing the Black Cat down to a lower one? The post Amazing Spider-Man #18 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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