

Everybody should have a style. It announces your presence, defines your intentions, and solidifies your identity. Batman and Robin #36 definitely possesses a style, a presentation that by combining Patrick Gleason's square, bulky figures; Mick Gray's intense blacks and shades; and John Kalisz's muted, red-shifted colors; seems to smolder like the embodiment of a narrative volcano, one that remains half-dormant and smoking for long periods but still possesses the capability to erupt spectacularly. Like the art, Peter J. Tomasi's story seethes and bubbles and churns, but never ignites. Tomasi glories in a shared universe. He excels at taking characters and plots introduced by other writers and exploring their natural extensions and combinations. In that he is like a medieval alchemist measuring, combining, and fusing different elements in an effort to produce a miraculous elixir. But Tomasi is not a creative whirlwind filled with intense energy, nor a subtle artist assiduously hunting rare plot elements like a chef trying to find just the right spices to achieve a layered balance. His writing method resembles a large, automated factory, steadily collecting, distilling, processing, and mixing narrative elements according to preset algorithms. Batman has come to Apokalips, followed against orders by Batgirl, Red Hood, Red Robin, Cyborg, and Titus the dog, to retrieve his dead son, Damian, from the clutches of Kalibak and confront Darkseid in order to resurrect the former Robin. It is not clear how he knows he must defeat Darkseid personally, or how this will lead to his son's return. Nevertheless, he sets about laying waste to the Apokaliptan landscape with angry abandon, making for the place where Kalibak is using Damian's corpse as one component of a chaos cannon. All of Tomasi's weaknesses are on display. The holes on the plot are not huge, but noticeable. Characterization proves broad and erratic. On confronting his family plus Cyborg, Batman seems poised to go into one of his patented tirades about leaving Gotham unprotected, only to suddenly, and meekly, confess that he is sure they have left the old place in good hands and he is glad they came. His attitude is healthy, but the sudden shift mirrors one that occurred back in Robin Rises: Omega when Bruce, having spent four full issues of the Hunt for Robin arc loudly proclaiming he wants to rebury Damian so he, Bruce, can be at peace, in one panel makes a complete reversal and says it is now time to bring Robin back ALIVE. Finally, Tomasi's dialogue sounds blunt and awkward as ever, with the subtlety of a batarang to the head. Yet, it all works acceptably. The smoldering art brings the Hell-world of Apokalips to a kind of eerie life. The characterization and plot holes emphasize the phantasmagoric and nightmarish qualities of Darkseid's realm. And even the dialogue is a workable, if not elegant or brilliant, successor to that of Jack Kirby, who originally wrote the New Gods with more Marlovian extravagance than Shakespearian poetry. The post Batman and Robin #36 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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