

Convergence: Nightwing/Oracle left us with quite an excellent cliffhanger last month so fans are likely excited to see how Gail Simone wraps up her jaunt back to the last days of the Post-Crisis universe. Having dedicated an issue to establishing tone and setting the stage, Nightwing/Oracle #2 is almost entirely dominated by a clash between our two sets of, if you'll pardon the pun, lovebirds. This is especially true once you acknowledge that Oracle fights even when she's not on the battlefield. Despite the action packed nature of Simone's story, the issue manages to feel at once too long and too short. It feels to me as though a third issue might have allowed the story some much appreciated space, but that, without that room, Simone didn't have quite enough to fill issue #2, at least not without ending the first chapter earlier. Nightwing's acrobatic fighting style seems noticeably constrained by page space, but also doesn't serve a distinct enough purpose beyond that being the clear progression of the story. Indeed, this issue, even more than the first, is mistitled. While Nightwing is certainly a major player, and a huge part of Babs' development through the piece, this is undoubtedly an Oracle story and it really shouldn't be ashamed of that. Simone is pretty much the definitive Oracle writer and the ability to tell what seems to be a last story with this version of the character allows her to explore some of the necessary flaws within her and grant her some lovely and subtle character development that simply wouldn't have been possible in a regular issue of Birds of Prey. Even so, there are plenty of shades of here, from Barbara's secret weapon to the fun of a reversal to her monologues near the issue's end, it's all classic Simone and it's all pretty awesome. That said, if you picked up the issue for Nightwing you might be a little disappointed. Though we get to see him be a hero towards the issue's start Dick is not particularly agentive in this issue. On some level that makes sense, what makes him work as Barbara's partner, in all senses of the word, is his willingness to go with the flow, to understand and adapt to her plans, but it doesn't leave him with much of an arc. Indeed, as he fades into the background towards the fight's end, one has to wonder if Simone would have kept him in the title if not for marketing concerns. As for the Hawks, they remain thrilling antagonists but it feels like they made their pitch last issue and tend to deliver variations on those themes. Either way, Simone nearly admits that they're not the part of the story that interests her most. "That's not the bit that's breaking my heart," says Oracle, "That's an obstacle. I'm good with obstacles." Simone seems much more invested in the strains of a life and love restricted and, reading this, I can't blame her. Maybe I'm just a sucker for a Dick Grayson love story or a character portrait, but the issue comes alive when dealing with the doubts that comes with being a hero or being a married couple. The rest is engaging filler that's largely designed in service of a couple of big moments - the same ones I mentioned above, in fact - that are deeply satisfying to read but still reads like filler. Other than that, it's about details. Simone probably could have squeezed a little extra drama out of the story if she'd introduced a quirk of the Hawks' Absorbacrons a little earlier and would have missed out had she not played up the importance of Oracle's clocktower, but these aren't the things that make or break the issue, they aren't the core of the story. Most of what I said about Jan Duursema's artwork last month still holds, but there's no denying that her work leans towards her strengths this month. There are still panels that clash a little with their brothers and sisters in their depictions of characters or expressions that don't play, but there's a ferocity and power in the look of the issue that really works for this battle-heavy story. The Hawks remain particularly lovely subject for Duursema, even if they also provide the majority of the anatomical cheats, and Hawkwoman, in particular, looks fantastically villainous, very cold and very powerful. Character still seem thicker or thinner depending on the panel and the things veer awfully close to the uncanny valley at times, but the story itself

remains highly readable. There's nothing in the layouts of the issue that stands out as particularly brilliant, but there is something to be said of layouts that don't stand out, that tell the story quickly and cleanly so that you barely even notice the art of them. Some (Spoilery) Thoughts: Why does Barbara still have a Batgirl-copter? I mean, it's awesome, but where does she store that!? I'm not following the main Convergence story too closely, but it definitely seems weird to me that Telos' drones are easier to hack than the Hawks'. I think the answer is pretty obvious from a branding and structure perspective, but in-universe, Barbara's choice to fly to the site of the battle seems odd. I mean, anyone who thinks that Barbara Gordon isn't more dangerous than most people you'll meet in your life while in a chair are completely out of tune with the reality of the character, but it still seems like a fundamentally flawed plan to send the paraplegic hacker into battle while having the world's most talented martial artist hang back on to run support when she's famously computer illiterate. Surely Oracle could have patched her in remotely. The post Convergence: Nightwing/Oracle #2 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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