

In this issue of Howard Team-Up, Howard the Duck and Rocket Raccoon escape the Collector and save a planet, with the help of the movie's Guardians of the Galaxy. The humor has more hits than misses in this issue, which seems to be the advantage of pitting Howard in an alien environment with characters who are able to act strange because, well, they *are* strange. Having the lizard-like goons worry about the Gatherer with lines like "should we call Sandra" is laugh-out-loud incongruous, as is when Howard turns the tables on them, shouting "you're all [my] sexy prisoners!" Unfortunately, when someone like Star Lord shows up, and has to deliver lines like "[but i'm] a handsome coward!" it crosses some imaginary line. If everyone is jokey by default, you don't need every dialogue balloon to be a joke. Perhaps I'm appreciating the humor that comes naturally from the incongruity, or more subtly from satire. The Collector works in general as a character because he's a metaphor for the collector's mentality. By actually depicting the Collector going to a ComiCon-like convention, it's moving from subtext into actual text, which cheapens the character. This also causes some imbalance when the comic suddenly shifts into Serious Mode. Howard displays two intensities— full-on abrasion and downright maudlin. He goes from berating the Guardians to melodramatically looking out the window but it's hard to find time to reconcile the extreme sides. And once again, the art adds to the humor enormously. Part of it is the character designs, which takes advantage of having alien characters and locations to play with. The panel choice/layouts change to accommodate the action, although interestingly the backgrounds become quite indistinct when the action takes prominence. An interesting choice is having the background entire white/negative space when Rocket reveals a shaved map on his chest fur. The art pauses our attention to this moment, which is played for both pathos (relying also on the movie version of Rocket whose fur displays scars) and humor. A pretty significant touch. There's a three-page backup story for some reason, with some more "indie" creators offering a quick, humorous take on Howard as a plaintiff for using the "hero for hire" tag versus Luke Cage/Iron Fist. It's pretty much a quick throwaway gag, with the creators clearly having fun playing with this world. I'd like to think there some metacommentary here because Howard's publishing history is so embroiled with copyright, but the opportunity is really just to make caricatures out of Cage/Fist, and to some extent lawyers in general. Perhaps now that the gratuitous and very forced Guardians team up is out of the way, we can get more of Howard as the "normal" person in a world where everything normal is actually very strange. This seems to be the reason to really *have* a Howard in the first place, and we haven't quite landed there yet. The post Howard the Duck #2 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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