

I try not to go into any comic book series with too many expectations. Every story deserves to be judged with consideration of the creators' intent, and sometimes the story they intend to write is not the story you expect. That's fair; freedom of expression and all that. But some things are so fundamental that missing them would be missing the point, no matter how good the story is otherwise. One of those things is that a team book should probably feature the whole team. That's been the prevailing defect of this series. The cover says Justice League, yet the more accurate title much of the time would be The Trinity Plus Those Weirdos They Hang Out With. In #35, I lamented the fact that Johns continued to fix all the attention on Clark, Bruce, and Diana at the cost of all their other illustrious teammates. Here, he literally puts the others out of commission, sparing only Clark and Diana by virtue of their non-human lineage and Bruce because you've just got to. This would be more acceptable if the interaction among the Big Three was tight and colorful, but aside from a terse exchange between Clark and Bruce as to whether Luthor released the virus on purpose, their dialogue is limited to commenting on the disaster before them. Even worse, Diana breaks into the scene late in the issue, as if to remind the boys that hello, she's here, too. This beats lying comatose in a fetal position on a hospital bed, I suppose, but just barely. At least Johns manages to do something interesting with Luthor, in the process proving that sister Lena isn't just a prop for Luthor to hang his sympathy on. She's perceptive enough to know when Luthor's lying, an invaluable skill when no one else in the League (aside from Diana's lasso) can do the same. Hopefully, Lena will keep piercing through her brother's veil for us to see what the man inside is really like. That's got to be more useful than Bruce's speculation and Clark simply assuming Luthor's no good. With Lena, a more complex picture comes into focus. At first, Luthor offers a rather convincing account of why he developed the Amazo Virus, one that borrows from some common questions about the whole superhero business "The fact is...meta-human criminals kill dozens if not hundreds of people every year. And virtually no prison on Earth is capable of containing them for long. Over eighty-seven percent of all violent meta-humans escape within three months of incarceration. One month if we're talking about Arkham." These statistics easily support Luthor's idea to create something that can neutralize the metahuman* danger, but Lena cuts him off, demanding to know the real reason behind the virus. It's a small moment, but it does expose Luthor's habit of using his hyper-intellect to rationalize his baser instincts, which may be the whole Luthor problem in a nutshell. On the other hand, why he created the virus may be a moot point. The fact is it's here, it's spiraling out of control and beyond his original designs, and it's not about to go away anytime soon. Shutting down metahumans is one thing, but torturing regular folks before killing them means the impact of his virus will linger long after it's inevitably cured. Luthor's been trying and largely succeeding at cleaning up his public image; we've seen signs he may be genuine in a few respects; but once news of his role in this debacle comes out, it may undo a lot of these superficial and substantive changes. While the story is mostly functional, not impressive, Fabok's art lends it the air of a real doomsday scenario (although the dark, sickly greens and yellows that pervades the issue courtesy of Anderson is equally at work). By this point, his work has evolved well past his David Finch-influenced days, and this issue should be proof that he's surpassed his mentor, mastering the craft of mainstream art. His figures are larger than life, attractive, powerful, without completely breaching the realm of human possibility. Unfortunately, they tend to be rather static in their movements, but bold choices of POV still allow for a cinematic look to the issue. Some Musings: * Luthor hyphenates the word. Is that a thing now? Because I don't like that. The post Justice League #37 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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