

On a mission to Mars, something goes horribly wrong, and an unlikely character finds himself trapped in an alien civilization. Judging from that, you'd expect a lot of familiar tropes and characters, because, let's face it. That's Heroes Journey 101. And while this issue doesn't shy away from some basic formula, it's got a flavor all its own, and it's quite spectacular. The opening splash page is powerful and evocative, although it's just a teaser. The story sets itself up with a more "mundane" environment, with plain greys and distinct but familiar character types. When the alarm bells ring, the palette shifts with more dominating magenta and bold colors, nearly all pure CMYK. The alien world is where all this comes alive and vibrant. The designs are organic and swoopy, as opposed to the spaceship's angular and geometric backgrounds, and the people and creatures in it are like from some fevered dream. Except for the barbarians Dartor, Prince of Endom, and Skullthor, who looks like he's from some 70s Mad Magazine-type parody of a Conan comicbook. The art thus borders a bit on caricature, which contributes to a confusing tone. Is the comicbook a genuine, if unique, expression of the "stranger in a strange land" fantasy story, or is it a humor book, a send-up or parody? Also, some of the panels are a bit difficult to read sequentially. There are mists that somehow help illustrate the exposition in the last few pages, but they start illustrating the information before they've been staged/set up. It's just a hiccup of a few panels, but it's a hiccup nonetheless. And like other storyboard-like comics, a whole page might be used as a doctor runs to an escape pod, or when a pod falls through the landscape of the planet. The dialogue can be a bit rocky, too, as characters slip into that unnatural and forced exposition to tell each other things they already know. "I guess it's easy to coast when your rich auntie is pulling the strings," says one. "I get it," says another, "You were a scrawny gay teen and now you're a man and nobody gets to shut you down any more." Clunky, right? Especially when there's a perfectly good example of "show, not tell" when later, the same character says "I can't die! I've never even kissed a girl! I don't want to, but still!" Other times, characters are allowed to break type. We weren't expecting the heroic captain to die horribly, or for our main character Keith, Prince of the Dance Floor, to go "off script" on the last page and accept his new status quo as a John Carter, Warlord of Nothing. It seems our "hero" still has far to go on his Hero's Journey, but the path is uncertain, and where it can go is anyone's guess! The post Kaptara #1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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