

While I don't expect deep allegory or riveting plotting from Little Nemo, I had hoped there'd be a little bit of structure and meaning to what is inherently a story of escapism and fantasy. The last couple issues offered a little of that, mostly in the way Slumberland's society revolves around its princess' playdates and its animosity with Flip Flap. It's not much substance to go on, but it's enough for Shanower to fashion some interesting adventures for Rodriguez to draw, and it's Rodriguez's drawing that makes Return to Slumberland as compelling as it is. You can see the way the art's sophistication makes up for the script's simplicity in that entire sequence with the Tesselated Tower. The narrative of those ten or so pages can be summed up thus: Flip leads Jimmy into the Tower to escape the Slumberland Guard and face some obstacles along the way. But Rodriguez employs every trick in the book (e.g., the staircase that leads back to itself, the surreal merging of birds, fish, and bees that get in Flip and Jimmy's way) to make those obstacles complex and bewildering. This visual confusion is purposeful and well-crafted, occupying you far longer than the plot would usually allow. Once Flip and Jimmy exit the Tower, the artistic chicanery ceases and Shanower's storytelling resumes dominance. The duo's adventures are cute, for the most part. Occasionally, cute is all they are. The wonderful thing about the garden tour the princess led Jimmy through last issue was the rich creativity in the different kinds of flowers and their various designs and functions. The "Frunkus," bluish-red rodent-like creatures Jimmy and Flip encounter when they inexplicably shrink to mouse size, don't have that same inspiration. They're mostly a tool for Shanower to lead the pair to their next encounter. The meeting with a group of fireless fireflies has some potential bite to it: the flies complain about the prejudice they face from their non-disabled brethren and ultimately commit a kind of suicide by launching themselves with fireworks in a desperate attempt to light up. Put like that, it's kind of tragic and horrifying, but Shanower avoids that angle by focusing on the flies' redneck mannerisms ("What is they, Lunk? Is they insecks, d'ya think?") and the comical misunderstanding that results in Jimmy being strapped to a rocket himself. With only one issue left, Return to Slumberland doesn't have much time to flesh out the thin conflicts in the story before the necessary resolution. To date, Jimmy's spent hardly any time with the princess, so we've yet to see his anti-girl attitude and her mix-up about his identity play out. And when Flip glibly describes the nature of the enmity between himself and Slumberland ("It's really them that don't like my sense of humor."), he reduces what appeared to be a clash between fundamental forces (dream and day) into something vague and petty. Some Musings: - Woah. Jimmy really hates smoking. You go, man. The post Little Nemo: Return to Slumberland #3 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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