

Magneto #16 seems to be something of an extremely soft reboot for the series, keeping everything fans have come to love about the highly unique title while also significantly changing the modus operandi. Having made it clear to S.H.I.E.L.D. that he neither respects nor submits to their authority, Magneto turns away from the stealthy assassin for mutant rights angle he had been pursuing and formally sets up shop on Genosha again, openly welcoming shiploads of mutants fleeing oppression every day. There's no denying that this is a significant shift within the book, replacing the haunting vagueness of Magneto's mission and protectorate with a smaller but all too real circle of refugees who now depend on him. The transition is clearly illustrated in Erik's relationship with Briar Raleigh, which takes a familiar but nonetheless surprising turn this month. Magneto can't afford sweeping philosophy anymore, the issue seems to tell us, there comes a time for settling down and defending the small, or in this case sovereign, sphere you call your own. Still, Cullen Bunn hasn't abandoned the nearly procedural quality that so defined the first year of this series' run. The feeling of the hunt, of the meticulous plotting Erik's crusade requires, is alive and well, but someone clearly seeks to turn back the clock, to a time when Magneto was not the hunter but the prey. The prospect of a murderer in Genosha is hardly original but there's such grit and mourning in Bunn's writing that it doesn't feel redundant. Admittedly, the story, and the cover, seem to be pointing one way and, if it does take that path, the story could become somewhat routine. Still, in the moment, it works. It's also very interesting to see how Bunn continues to write Magneto's radicalism. Between his complex relationship with the only human on Genosha and his understanding of a symbol's history, Magneto comes off as a thoughtful and considered individual, contrasting with the harsh justice we've seen him mete out throughout his lifetime. The characters' voices, both dialogue and monologue, continues to be a strong selling point of the series, with Ms. Raleigh proving a particularly fun character this month. Of course, as is often the case on this series, this is a rather slow issue. Bunn's priority is clearly on establishing tone. This is effectively a horror story starring Magneto and Bunn spends the appropriate amount of time building suspense and an air of eeriness. It's effectively done, but while it admirably serves as the first act of this story, as a section of a serialized narrative, it has a weak beginning, middle, and end. Bunn is joined by his original art team of Gabriel Hernandez Walta and Jordie Bellaire. Walta's artwork is as beautiful as ever, occasionally surpassing his already high standard, however, the material that the script provides him doesn't seem to excite him terribly and the result is an issue that's not as visually interesting as its predecessors. Make no mistake, Walta draws an attractive and effective story, but while it looks beautiful, it's largely somewhat static conversation. I will say that there are some incredible panels in this book. Though it hangs around a bit, the squat-faced look that's followed Magneto around is less pronounced and the characters are looking more natural than in previous months. Erik's initial conversation with Briar looks particularly nice and, in keeping with tradition, the flashbacks are stunning. While Walta's breakthroughs are often hidden in the details, Jordie Bellaire's bold colors leave no ambiguity as to her talent. It's a dark issue to be sure, occasionally too steeped in the muck of Genosha's reconstruction, but Bellaire uses rich contrasts of red and cyan to give the story impressive contrast. In fact, we've seen, and continue to see, this device in the series before, as it bears a striking resemblance to the particular palette of Magneto's flashbacks. Judging from the solicit and the clues scattered throughout the issue it seems like Magneto's past might be catching up with him. Whatever the meaning in the long run, Bellaire does beautiful work, and not just in choosing palettes. As ever, the textured, oddly gentle touch of each shade and shadow is a huge part of the book's visual identity and does a lot to bring Walta's work to life in the subtle, dialogue-driven segments of the

issue. The post Magneto #16 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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