

Oh Ms. Marvel, it's nice to have you back. With issue #9 ending on a particularly interesting cliff hanger, it was extra hard waiting an additional month for this installment of Kamala Khan's story. Nevertheless, it's here now and this month provides some of the biggest 'superhero' moments of the title's short but sweet run. Structurally quite simple, Ms. Marvel #10 is made up of two scenes and pursues two main concerns, advancing The Inventor's agenda and examining its ramifications. Though the end of last issue called into question The Inventor's role in the story, this issue's developments firmly plant him on the wrong side of the line. A comedic villain, more than capable of becoming deadly serious and plenty creepy, the power-mad budgie continues his bid for city-wide domination and proves his villainous credentials in the process. Especially contrasted against his humorous concept, the Inventor's ruthlessness and sheer skill for villainy make him a rather frightening adversary, all the more so for Adrian Alphona's art choices. Unfortunately we're not filled in on what the Wizard of Menlo's plans entail, but we learn a lot about what he's willing to do to accomplish them. While the Inventor's methods are interesting, Wilson falls victim to one of her most frequent problems with this series: over-moralizing. While some of the earlier issues felt excessively pedantic when demonstrating the variety of Muslim lifestyles, that was primarily felt through Wilson's story structure. This issue, Kamala herself gets up on a soapbox. It might be alright for Kamala to state a deeply felt opinion or for the story to push a social message home, but combined the issue sometimes feels like propaganda for a cause that its readers already support. As soon as the issue is raised, Kamala ditches her uncertainty and levity to deliver a high and mighty speech about the importance of teenagers. Again, it's not wrong - in fact, I think it's really cool that someone is finally taking these ideas apart - but it just feels too unnatural to retain its full effectiveness. While this element is somewhat disappointing, it's nearly impossible not to see through the awkwardness to the wonderful conflict at the center of the story. I've made much of Kamala's similarity to Spider-Man, but it's truer than ever as we watch her hurdle through every obstacle, physical and emotional, that The Inventor can throw at her. Kamala's brand of heroism, her very necessary brand of heroism, is defined by her ability to discern what's right and, no matter the odds, go for it with well over 100%. Befitting the looming threat that the Inventor poses, Adrian Alphona's art is looking slightly grittier than usual. This manifests literally, with specs of color giving a more textural quality to the art, as well as figuratively. In the latter case, things kind of go two opposite ways. Some characters, noticeably Kamala, are looking a little more photorealistic this month; check out the final panel on page two, for instance. On the other hand, other elements almost have a quality of caricature about them, with more exaggerated shapes, conventionally unattractive expressions, and harsher inks appearing sporadically. It's an interesting incarnation of Alphona's style, but one that doesn't speak to me, personally, as his standard work. Though there are deviations, this is still clearly an Alphona comic. The attention to detail, offbeat sensibility, and ever so slightly rebellious blast of energy that have come to define his work are all still in play and, in places, are especially strong. The Inventor's appearances, for example, look fantastic this issue. There's less of a focus on his strange, alien quality, and more on an actively creepy air about him. With long fingers and haunting eyes, Alphona's avian actor possesses an absolute confidence that's as unsettling as any body horror and as sinister as any lighting choice. I actually like that word a lot in this instance: actor. Particularly in this issue, Alphona's characters seem like players in a film and he has chosen to frame the shots to highlight their humanity. In strong moments, the ragtag group of volunteers surpass their limited characterization through the little ticks built into their character designs. Alphona is at his best when things are weird, when colors get bright and robots get fashionable.

I'm not a fan of the tweaks to the look of the title, but the spark in a volunteer's face, the unwavering certainty of the Inventor, the goofy charm of Lockjaw's neutral expression and the infectious quality of his smile when he knows he's done good, that's where Alphona excels this month. The post Ms. Marvel #10 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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