

One of my favorite shows, which is dearly departed now, is Parks and Recreation. While it had a powerful weapon in its core cast, the show kept adding characters to its tool-belt, reusing them as needed until you knew and loved them as much as the main players. This collection of characters played a huge role in P&R's longevity; after a certain point, the show could generate plotlines and whole stories just by mixing and matching one character with another. Saga is doing pretty much the same thing. The series started with essentially four characters—Alana, Marko, Robot, and Will—and with every arc, it's added a couple new faces and slowly nurtured them to be as carefully and fully realized as the original cast. I can't emphasize what a rare, smart thing Vaughan's doing here. Variety is key to the longevity of serial fiction; having all these people to pull from allows Vaughan to work with different pairings and see which directions they take him. Perfect example: the irresistibly weird and volatile combination of Marko, Robot, Yuma, and Gus. Obviously, Marko is the emotional center of that group, and watching his sensitive, self-doubting personality smash into his companions' unreceptive reactions is both entertaining and revealing. Gus is too innocently oblivious to be a sounding board, and Yuma, when drug-addled, is worse, if anything. Marko, still eating himself up over throwing a bag of groceries at his wife, frets, "It was horrific. Unforgivable. If I can't be trusted around the love of my life, why should I be allowed near Hazel again? Whatever is inside of me is—"—"like the ink from some ancient sea creature," Yuma says dreamily. "It's so perfectly black out there you can almost taste it."Laughs aside, Marko's touching on raw flesh here. Back in #5, we saw Marko's bloodlust was repressed, not eliminated, and his near-fatal rage on a convenience store robber in this issue proves it. Back then, Alana had stopped him before things got too out-of-hand and he asked afterward, "What would I do without you?" It looks like now he'll have to find out. The funny thing is while Robot has no patience for Marko's pacifism (and it's especially hard to be sympathetic when Marko's preaching peace with blood all over his hands), of their group, Robot's the one who could relate to Marko most. He, too, suffers from war trauma and worry for his child, so it's a bit tragic that both seem so determined to be at odds with each other. It's going to take something fairly drastic to draw their hearts and minds together, and Vaughan seems set to deliver. It's worth noting that while Yuma hasn't purposely set out to cause trouble, she's been a passive destructive force in this series, exposing Alana, now Marko, to temptation when they're vulnerable. There's comparatively less to talk about with Alana and Co.'s hostage situation with Dengo, and in fact, Alana says pretty much all that can be said to Dengo in this issue in her attempt to reason with him. That's probably not the reason why Vaughan introduced the Last Revolution, but lucky he did, because like Marko and Robot's quest for their children, the Revolution gives Alana, Klara, and Dengo something to bond—or not—over. Back in the Hall of Justice—I mean, with the expedition to save the Will, Vaughan continues to deliver the action that the other plotlines are skimping on for now. In the process, he sows the seeds of future discontent in Gwen's imprudent dismissiveness of Sophie's inarguably awesome thinking and adds yet another player to the series, a person with an ominous resemblance to the Stalk. Well, the giant lizards aren't peeing anymore so Staples has less material to impress with this time around. But her art is just inherently remarkable, hitting that sweet spot of beautifully drawn and painted without losing its fluidity. Her art somehow moves and poses at the same time, which she uses to great effect in action, but also in dramatic scenes as well. That and her impeccable eye for facial expressions, like the storm of thought in Marko's eyes as Yuma speculates as to why Alana took drugs in the first place, is why Saga has some of the best, if not the best acting in comics today. Some Musings:- I like that the different features of each Robot class gives new meaning to calling someone "colored."The

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