

So, they're really going with the title of "Spider-Gwen," huh? That's ... weird. In some metacommentary kind of way, it blurs the line between what's an in-universe world (fiction) and what's a publishing-world (reality.) I mean, we all know that Ben Affleck will be playing the next Batman in an upcoming movie, but the studio isn't going to release it titled "Batfleck" or anything. Can't we just enjoy stories as stories, free from the context that they're products for fan community? That's how I like to discuss comics, anyway, as *stories,* so here we go: Rather than recapping an origin or returning to a status quo, this comicbook tries to answer a much more interesting question-- what happens next? Gwen's origin, a rehash of the familiar Spider-Peter's, was never really the beginning of the story from her first appearance, but it follows the themes of Spider-Man's world, exploring the consequences of choice and responsibility. The balance between "I want" and "I must" is an important and ongoing struggle, which is perhaps why Spider-Man/Men/Women resonate so well for youth/young people. Here, this familiar theme feels fresh and appropriately youthful, thanks to the character, plot, and art.

It's also why the Vulture is a good choice for a villain here. As an elder villain "feasting" on death, he represents the thematic opposite of Gwen, who struggles with but has yet to give in to the groaning darkness and complexity of her world. (Incidentally, Spider-Man's second major villain was also the Vulture, in 1963, issue #2.) There's just enough that's different with this Vulture, however, to give him an aura of mystery and danger beyond the more familiar version, along with a vague suggestion of different powers, making us want to read more about him in coming issues. But there's a lot more that's crammed in here, including a lot of Easter eggs for Spider-fans. Whether that's appearances from characters filling almost half of a Marvel Handbook to catch phrases like "jackpot" and "action is your reward," it gets a bit much, like there's a quota the creators are trying to make. And I'm never really sold on using television news to deliver exposition which actually happens a few times in the same issue. Thankfully, the character work is so strong that these hiccups aren't nearly as disruptive as they could be, and hopefully it's all a syndrome of being a first issue and we don't have to rely on them as the series continues. The art has a wonderful vibrant quality, being expressive, dynamic, and sometimes purposefully distorted. It adds a lot to the feeling of being something contemporary and fresh-- this is a Spider-person for "today." The shining elements are Renzi's colors. The colors are bold, the palette is contrasting but in a pleasing aesthetic. The greens of the Vulture being opposite and yet so balanced to Gwen's magentas. Reading this on a tablet is wonderful, with colors that pop even in subdued scenes, but nothing is garish or confusing. Clayton Cowles' letters, too, are great. The sound effects are carefully chosen, making music and sound an actual feature of the story, something that must be hard to do in a purely visual medium. Both the colors and letters take full advantage of modern artistic techniques by being carefully chosen and masterfully rendered. That said, I do question Gwen's ability to use a single can of spray paint and make legible sentences with graffiti that must be using words that span 7 stories and multiple skyscrapers. The last page cliffhanger (a term somewhat literally used) isn't that effective, I'd argue. It's obvious, of course, that she will survive so there's really no tension to it. We are going to pick up the next issue because we want to see the character continue in her struggle, and her survival isn't really in our minds. So in that sense, the panel feels like it's just like any other panel from the middle of the issue/fight scene. Perhaps it's meant to be more metaphorical, matching the conflict between the different aspects of Gwen's life, and suggesting that this conflict is what will be carried through as the series continues. The post Spider-Gwen #1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

Read more: <http://weeklycomicbookreview.com/2015/03/02/spider-gwen-1/>