

Superhero comics are inherently power fantasies writ large, and you don't get any more powerly-fantastical than Squirrel Girl. That's a good thing for a character with such inherent humor (and had essentially debuted as a parody of mutant characters in the 90s) and it makes for a fun, light-hearted romp, although it may not leave much more room than that when all is said and done. Let's face it. Squirrel Girl is a silly character that takes herself very seriously. It's evident on the very first page-- from overtly co-opting Spider-Man's theme song from his 70s cartoon to visually recreating the pop-out sound effects from Batman's 60s TV show. Notice the coloring for that latter panel also incorporates the large dot matrix style pattern of pop art. Such begins a long string of tropes and trappings from nearly every page of the Big Book o' Superhero Clichés. It results in a large helping of humor, because we the readers *don't* take her very seriously. Much of the humor and light-heartedness is reinforced by the art. The basic style is one of whimsy and cartoony freedom. There's many attempts at using panels to present visual timing to the gags. And there's even one point when the style shifts into a hyper-colored and even more stylized fantasy sequence, akin to the animated Ultimate Spider-Man show. However, some of that doesn't frankly work. The art shines when it comes to the quirky character work, but some of the sequences aren't that seamless, such as on page 3 when Squirrel Girl supposedly jumps into a chimney, but violates a 180 degree rule, or when Tippy Toe dodges a dart but looks as if she is impaled. Similarly, there is not a lot of emphasis on backgrounds during some key moments of the battle, which disconnects some of the action. Kraven the Hunter is a nice choice for a villain, in that his motivation is diametrically opposed to Squirrel Girl, but it does lessen his motivations in order to force him into the story to begin with. It's good that the writer takes that as an opportunity to make Kraven more than just a one-note, capital-H hunter, and Squirrel Girl overcomes the villain by talking with him rather than just punching him until he falls down. The joke, I think, that Squirrel Girl can even defeat Dr. Doom and Thanos and etc. by sheer brute force is perhaps a bit assumed-- what if this manner of taking down villains is what makes Squirrel Girl so unbeatable? That would be a very interesting twist on what's otherwise fairly straight send-ups of the superhero cliché. (Also, maybe I'm reading too much into it, but essentially Squirrel Girl convinces Kraven to give up one "white whale", i.e. Spider-Man, for another. And it almost makes me want to read more comics with Kraven as a Marvel/Atlas Comics' monster hunter!) I can't help but feel that there's essentially one joke here, however, and that's the inherent silliness of Squirrel Girl herself. She's perhaps a little too sweet for her own good, treading too close to the line that separates naiveté and stupidity. Her set-up is meant to be "real-world," since, you know, it IS college after all, but how exactly does she do this? For all we know she's always been homeless and living in trees, and lives in a fantasy world of her own making. If she really is quite stupid about the world, it would make a bit of darkness to her story, in the vein of Mr. Bean or Dumb and Dumber. I think so far we are supposed to laugh *with* her, but maybe there's an edge to the story that we're missing, and it would be more interesting if we are meant to laugh *at* her at the same time. The post Unbeatable Squirrel Girl #1 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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