

After a middling opening chapter featuring Storm, G. Willow Wilson's X-Men follows her underground for an issue from Psylocke's perspective. From the first line Wilson's narration has promise, "When I think of myself as Psylocke instead of Betsy, sometimes I get overconfident. Someone called Psylocke obviously knows what the score is at all times." It's cute but it tells us something interesting about Betsy Braddock. Unfortunately this concept isn't really raised again. Indeed, the narration in this book is rather odd. There are long stretches of internal monologue that pepper the page and a couple of short asides, but generally one and the next are completely unrelated. This is, of course, most noticeable in one instance where one thought comes to what seems to be a momentary pause, only for the next caption to pick up "So when Rachel gets like this it's almost never good" with little connective tissue in the art or dialogue. In fact, it's a little unclear what frame of mind Betsy is narrating from. One of her asides notes that "It's at approximately this point that I really start to worry" as if she were relating a story to us, however most of her narration is rather immediate. Likewise, it's a little unclear if Wilson intended the narration to provide commentary or drive the action. All of this is unfortunate, because there are some really interesting ideas coming into play. One thing that Marvel hasn't done nearly enough is set the X-Men up against actual mutations and Wilson's musings on the differences between the X-Men and their recently evolved adversaries seem to be sowing some tantalizing seeds. Likewise, while the storm that brought them into this is barely mentioned, Wilson continues to pit the X-Men against very different challenges than their usual fare. Whether it's environmental dangers, monsters, or injury you can't say that this issue is rote. It definitely seems as though the major theme of this arc will be the differences between the women of X-Men and the dangers and strengths of building a team out of strong-willed heroes with different ways of thinking. Psylocke doesn't get all that much definition this issue, but Wilson does a fine job of demonstrating the major differences between she and her teammates. Monet is a bruiser, frustrated by inaction, while Rachel is an empath, quick to ask questions of morality and try to talk things out. Wilson presents the X-Men as professionals but not really as a team, which is a dynamic we've rarely seen outside of the 'individualism: bad, you must learn teamwork' mold. The girls aren't ready to bite each other's heads off, but they're clearly frustrated with one another and that tension is handled quite well. But while the vast majority of the issue is focused on Psylocke and her two companions, the best and worst scenes of the month actually feature other members of the team. Good news first, there's about a page and half that's pure gold and I attribute a large chunk of that to the presence of Jubilee. Maybe that's not true, maybe it's just that it's the lone happy scene in this month's issue. Regardless, the interplay between Jubilee and Beast is highly charming and both characters read like themselves. Even better, Beast seems to be using real science and keeps his jargon to a reasonable level. Needless to say I have high hopes now that it looks like Jubilee will be joining the action herself. On the other hand, Storm doesn't fare well in this issue. Trapped deeper in the cave system than her comrades, Ororo continues to talk to the departed Wolverine. Wilson explains her choice to do so, even clarifies its purpose within her arc, but she never quite justifies it. The sequence also suffers from some weak artwork. It was a bold choice to spend two pages just watching Storm climb, but with the exception of one close up, none of the panels distinguish themselves or provide any sense of progression. I expect that the compositions were meant to evoke Storm's claustrophobia but they just read as repetitive and vaguely voyeuristic. I had hoped that, given another taste, I would come around to Roland Boschi's art style, but unfortunately it seems that it's not to be. It's strange, because even a quick google search will show that he's capable of much more. While he draws a nice version of Monet, there are simply

many panels that just look unattractive. Anatomy is wonky, faces overly angular, and action unclear far too often. Characters venture into the uncanny valley about as often as not. There's also a cheesecakey element to many of the poses that just sits ill with the story. That's not to say that Boschi's work is devoid of beautiful images. There's a full-page splash early in the issue that's actually really great and there are some lovely compositions scattered throughout, but it's just not enough to balance the scales. Javi Fernandez also contributes a couple of pages. The contrast between Fernandez and Boschi is stark and clearly favors Fernandez. Immediately the characters look more consistent and the compositions flow better. Beast and Jubilee's scene has a natural progression that makes the already well written pages a pleasure. The post X-Men #24 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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