

Once upon a time, we expected all our superheroes to be perfect, flawless in physique and behavior. Then, as we got more socially conscious, we finally allowed our heroes to make mistakes. They lied and cheated, they did drugs, and they even killed every once in a while. Then things got kind of dark. Suddenly, our heroes didn't just have flaws or problems; they wallowed in them. Even though things look brighter nowadays, writers still have a hard time configuring our heroes to seem human, not just generics with a few superficial quirks or hang-ups. And then there are writers like Waid, who seems to have the unique gift when it comes to creating well-rounded characters, by which I mean they're complicated and full of conflicting traits. In other words, they resemble actual people. Matt seems true to life because he shifts so rapidly between moments of resilience and vulnerability, and so often he's strong for the sake of others yet weak when it comes to his own affairs. The former makes him a hero; the latter makes him human. To capture that kind of weakness without exploiting or sensationalizing it requires a great deal of sensitivity, which Waid has in spades. Few writers in the superhero genre can consistently produce complex, engaging characters, but even fewer are able to render characters with real psychological problems. Waid proved that he has a remarkable insight into the struggle people with such issues face when he wrote about the postpartum depression Matt's mother experienced in #7. Still, there was definitely a bit of infomercial-like dramatization in that issue, what with her attacking her husband and infant son, running away, becoming an activist nun, etc. Waid's much more credible handling Matt's sudden relapse of depression here, a consequence of the Killgrave children's unrestrained emotional manipulation. In fact, Waid's description of the condition is one of the best you might encounter anywhere, not just in comics. The only way to truly appreciate the grace and craft of his writing is to let it speak for itself: "Imagine, however, you can, the people who mean the most to you in this world. They're reaching out to you with love and concern. But you can't reach back. You want to, but your arms won't move. You know you should call out, but it's an effort simply to draw a breath. Depression is a living thing. It exists by feeding on your darkest moods. And it is always hungry. Anything that challenges it—anything—it wants that thing to stop. Anything that makes you feel good, anyone who brings joy, it will drive away so it can grow without interference. Its primary goal is to isolate you. At its worst, it will literally paralyze you rather than allow you to feel anything at all. At its worst, you are numb. You are drained." With such deep internal suffering, Killgrave's physical assault means nothing. What it does, however, is reveal that depression is a different beast than fear, and Matt knows how to fight fear. Ultimately, the whole trouble with the Killgrave children is resolved by Killgrave himself, after which Matt takes care of Killgrave with a typically clever, though not outstanding, tactic. The kids are quietly shunted away, their own personal struggles unresolved. You just have to assume that Joe will go back to juvie, Jamie will be traumatized for life over his mom's murder and his subsequent possession, and the others will get loads of therapy. The real fallout from this arc is an interruption to the happy life Matt's been putting together in San Fran. He tries to reassure Kirsten by mimicking the confidence he displayed last issue, but his words and manner here reveal that his upbeat attitude is anything but genuine: "I am ducky, ma'am. Beautiful day, lovely company, wrongs avenged...life is pretty spectacular." Depression is not something one simply gets over by force of will; it lingers, always tugging its victims back towards the dark, which will be the real conflict from here on out. Samnee does a fine job portraying the implosive power of depression when it hits Matt hard early in the issue and when it drags at him when the issue ends. Of course, the action sequences are everything thrilling and fun, and the broken Killgrave stalking his offspring in an arcade is actually rather frightening

from the way Samnee times his sudden, bloody appearances. Wilson manages the issue's suspense masterfully, draping the pages in cold blues, grays, and, of course, purples, when Killgrave or the depression is in control, then turning up the heat to oranges and yellows when Matt takes over. Some Musings: - I like that Foggy is represented by junk food and an IV bag while Kirsten is backed by lotion, make-up, candles (which I assume are scented), and roses. Let's not highlight their legal competence or anything. The post Daredevil #10 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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