

DC has chosen to continue its Free Comic Book Day branding and label these preview stories "Divergence". I find that fairly cute. There's a part of me, not a very smart part, that wants think that the name "Convergence" was chosen simply to allow this follow-up name, because it really is a beautiful bridge between the "Convergence" event, focused on DC's past, and what they seem to be hoping to create in the future. We really are seeing a point of divergence and I, for one, am really excited. Perhaps the existence of a new Omega Men comic is a perfect example of what DC is trying here. The Omega Men haven't had an ongoing comic since 1986, the closest they've come since are 2006 miniseries and a supporting role in R.E.B.E.L.S. vol. 2. They're an oddball DC franchise that's probably best remembered for giving us Lobo, in a form that most of us wouldn't recognize. With that in mind, Tom King has his work cut out for him if he's to hook people on this series. To get it out of the way, I'm not sure that the way to make fans is to promise the murder of a beloved character, especially not a relatable young hero of color. In this, the story is very much not divergent from DC's policies. I feel a lot more favorable towards a company who tries to appeal to my love of a character by telling fantastic stories with them rather than daring me to buy the record of their death on the off chance that it actually sticks this time. Still, it's hard to say if this was King's idea or a part of the idea he was brought on to write, so I'll try to leave that worry out of this. What is new is the choice to not only spin off a Midnighter series from the short-lived but popular Grayson, but to also give Tom King, a relative newcomer to DC, this rather out there series. Much has been made of King's time in counter-intelligence with the CIA, but, even more in Grayson, that's a very present component of this story. Our first images of Doc setting up a sheet to serve as a background do a fine job of grounding the scene, forcing us to accept both the uncomfortable pacing of reality and the unglamorous drudgery of it. It's not necessarily a gritty short in the way that we think of Frank Miller's Dark Knight but there's a definite honesty to it that bodes well for the series. Depicted entirely through the lens of a camera, Divergence: The Omega Men is, admittedly, a little disjointed for an eight-page story, but that also means that it provides a glimpse into a number of different elements that will play a part in the ongoing. Primus is alive in this continuity and receives the largest amount of screentime, laying out, with some style, the nature of the conflict that will form the background of the series. We also get a reintroduction to Broot, who primes the reader for the odd place that religion plays in the story and the Vega System's conflicts, as well as a rather touching moment with Kyle Rayner. Primus' monologue is probably the best example of the writing quality we can expect. The air about him is also very real, with his statements following a basic throughline but not always making immediate sense. He feels uncertain, which holds to what King has said about the character. I will say that it took me a minute to realize that Primus had started to address the camera rather than Kyle Rayner and that King and artist Barnaby Bagenda could have done a better job of communicating this. Nonetheless, once you get your footing with this, the monologue becomes rather engrossing. It feels like King's ambitions are still a little bit ahead of him, but it's early yet and what of them he's able to bring to the page is impressive. It's also kind of cool to have a completely static frame for this story. King has mentioned that he'll be employing these kinds of simple grid layouts frequently on the series and this is a smart way to introduce that concept and the kind of objectivity it implies. I also have to say that the pacing is beautiful, if risky in such a short story. It was certainly a bold move to invest so heavily in tone and some may feel like there isn't enough content but it feels very considered. The dramatic, almost long-winded, quality of Primus' monologue comes through with brilliant clarity thanks to the sheer number of silent panels. Comics have an ability to play with time that other visual mediums don't, but opting to

firmly establish a 'real-time' feeling pays off. It really helps that King can control the flow of dialogue so precisely and when Kyle finally speaks, this technique throws a spotlight on him worthy of the end of a play. Bagenda's angular, shadow-filled figures aren't the most consistent, but they're rather attractive. The interplay between the hard corners and soft presentation is interesting and allows Bagenda to give the illusion of realism while still indulging in some fun abstractions. I will say that some panels are just better than others. None of them are bad, but it's clear when you're looking at a superior panel and that draws attention to the difference between those panels and their fellows. I also wouldn't blame readers for being put off by the simplicity of the imagery or the unevenness of quality or consistency in the story. The limitations of the static frame highlights Bagenda's interpersonal storytelling. With the background staying largely the same, the reader notices each move of the characters, where Kyle bows his head in worry or when Primus starts or stops moving. Little things like Broot's hand on Kyle's shoulder suddenly carry quite a bit of weight. I'd also mention how much colorist Romulo Fajardo brings to the short. Though he's largely playing in black, white, and orange - not necessarily flattering colors - the attention to detail is important. The way light plays on Primus' skin or hair is taken into account and likely helps to make some of the particularities of Bagenda's style easier to accept. The colors flow together nicely, while still remaining separate, and therefore keeping to the look of Bagenda's linework. The post Divergence: The Omega Men appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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