

It's Valentine's Day for Midgard, Jersey City, and Ms. Marvel and all three are getting a visit from a certain Agent of Asgard. As the first Ms. Marvel adventure to follow its lengthy first arc, "Loki in Love" has a little bit to prove. G. Willow Wilson does a nice job of quickly and efficiently justifying Loki's presence in the book and manages to add some gravitas to the plot we've been enjoying at the same time. Wilson's interpretation of Loki is noticeably different from Al Ewing's, but it shines with the truth of the same myth differently told. I honestly prefer Ewing's take, I suppose I should if it's his lead character, but Wilson's version is in some ways even more classic. He's a broader character than in *Loki: AoA* but there's both a greater whimsy and a greater sense of his connection to the traditional 'god of lies' Loki. As for the usual Jersey City crowd, this issue is particularly nice for giving us a little more time with Kamala's friends. Bruno is thinking of asking Kamala to the Valentine's dance even though her parents would never allow it. I'm personally uninterested in seeing Bruno's affection for Kamala spiral into a mush of overfamiliar man-feels but Wilson uses the opportunity to unpack some of the nonsense we like to believe about Valentine's Day, teenagers, and romance. To be honest, one of the greatest strengths of the issue is the way that it challenges such assumptions, however one of the greatest weaknesses is the superficial nature of that criticism. I know that Wilson had more to say but it feels like she pulled many of her punches, whether for the sake of marketability or, more likely, in order to keep the story within twenty pages. Despite attempts to be real, there's something of a corporate feeling that undermines the themes of the issue. That said, there will be readers, especially young readers, for whom this issue will seem revolutionary, and that's an important thing. As for the execution itself, Wilson does a great job of writing Kamala's turbulent feelings and her protective instincts toward her friends and her community. Once we hit the dance itself, things play out extremely naturally and Wilson does a fine job of creating an engaging and believable fight between Kamala and the god of mischief. It's also great fun to see Loki running around Jersey City. Admittedly the issue plays its Hipster Viking shtick a little too freely, but it is pretty funny and there's something charming about the way Loki gets himself involved in our principals' affairs. That said, it is more than a little weird how no one minds 'Hipster Viking' consistently asking how to go to a high school dance, especially considering how old he looks in this issue. Elmo Bondoc is a different taste for Ms. Marvel, but not necessarily a bad one. There are definitely places where Bondoc's work feels off, the fight between Ms. Marvel and Loki moves well but is notably awkward in the details. It seems like Bondoc is better suited to the restrained and the simple, I love his dialogue scenes. The first page in the Circle Q is excellent, as is Kamala's sleepover. It feels like he's aching to do something a little more different, something you might connect more quickly to a web comic aesthetic, but there's a pull of 'traditional super hero art' that strands it between identities. Of course, it bears mentioning that it's not entirely Bondoc's fault. For perhaps the first time on this series, Ian Herring has some noticeably weak pages, particularly in Asgardia, where, what one assumes to be, an attempt to demonstrate the mystical nature of the realm leaves the panel more than a little oversaturated and Bondoc's lines feeling much too heavy for my taste. Still, Herring does some great stuff with the lighting of the dance and Kamala's room and most of the issue is still strong, it's just surprising to see such a reliable colorist make a clear first misstep. The post Ms. Marvel #12 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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