

Much as I really, really like this series, I can't deny that it's not the most challenging of comics. Nor does it have to be; pure entertainment is as rare and precious as the most conceptually ambitious of stories, and as long as the plot's solidly constructed, there's no reason why you can't enjoy something that requires close to no brainpower whatsoever. Believe me, in my law school days, I didn't go home and pick up James Joyce's *Ulysses*; after a grueling final, the latest issue of TMNT was sometimes the welcome sight I could see. You know where I'm going with this, right? I don't have much to say about this issue because it plays out almost exactly the way it's been signaling it would all along. If pitting Shredder against Krang was the obvious course of action, the necessary corollary is things wouldn't go according to plan. You're thus unsurprised to see Donnie in hot water after Shredder learns of his betrayal, the other Turtle brothers in an even tougher spot when Honeycutt fails to come through, and Karai awaiting Hob and Co. when they show up for the Ooze. The closest thing that comes to a twist in the issue is when Hob and his fellow Mutanimals decide to leave Splinter behind after getting what they want. It's not really that much of a shocker, not after Raph unwisely and pointedly excluded the Mutanimals from a family meeting in #41. But it does feel like Hob's punishing the wrong guy here, when Splinter's stayed true to his promise to Hob all along. Leaving behind Splinter does mean Karai gets to interact with someone other than Shredder for a while, which she desperately needs. While she's proven to be far more competent and ambitious than her grandfather ever gave her credit for, she still operates too much by his call. We've yet to see her break out with her own goals and motivations; aside from her blood relation to Shredder, she's just your archetypical right-hand man. I'm not sure how Splinter's compassion for her will change anything, but at least it's a completely different character for her to work against. It would be nice for someone to act against expectation. Too often in this issue, everyone does exactly what you'd think they'd do, which makes the reading experience more like a systematic hitting of checkpoints than an organically developing situation. Even when the specifics aren't something you'd predict (e.g., Stockman bugging the Technodrome), the general outline of behavior is par for the course (e.g., Stockman being a shameless traitor and douche). There's still room for surprises, though. With things looking pretty bad by the end of the issue, you're not sure how our heroes will extricate themselves from their respective disasters, even with the help of our outstanding players. If they do get some help from the cavalry, that means some big moments in store for some of the lesser featured characters in the series, which actually will be a surprise. Is it just me, or has Smith really sharpened his skills since the last time he did an arc for this series? He doesn't give the Turtles the kind of individuality Mateus Santolouco spoiled us with, but he's really picked up the action sequences to have nearly the same searing intensity that we've come to expect from TMNT. These guys aren't play-fighting; they're deadly serious, and you can see it in the force and power of their movements. I'd also like to say that near-splash page of Hob and Co. breaking into the Foot's HQ is pin-up worthy, thanks also to Pattison's smooth, toned colors, and I'd like it on my wall now, please. Some Musings:- So, Mondo Gecko—least useful fighter aside from the idiot pigeon, yes? The post Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #43 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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