

I've read a good bit of Snyder's work by now, and one thing I can tell you is he's not particularly interested in making things easy for the reader. That sounds like a criticism, but it's not—not necessarily. There's no reason why a writer has to hand over a story, cut and dried on a silver platter. All that matters is whether the reader has enough substance to sink into the story and wade forward, even if it's slow going at times. That does mean, however, that not every issue of the story's going to blow you out of the water. That's the cost if there's going to be a bigger payoff later, which there seemingly will be in *Wytches*. Snyder clouds the connection between Sail's past trauma in the woods with Lucy's accident, revealing only that there is a connection without clarifying if the two are independent events or if one causes the other. The answer can send the plot in wildly different directions, but for now, realizing that the Rooks have had two encounters with the *Wytches* is significant enough. At first blush, all the strangeness the family's experiencing seems to have its source in Sail, but a different possibility arises when a young hit-and-run patient of Lucy's suddenly wakes up and starts interrogating her about her accident. Eventually, he tells her, "I can smell it on you. Someone by you was pledg—" His choice of words is deliberately ambiguous. Was someone pledged by Lucy or was someone by her pledged by someone else? The term "pledge" suggests a promise or exchange of some kind, but while you can easily see the trade-off (albeit unintentional) where Sail's death wish for Annie is concerned, you can't see what Lucy got from running into a *Wytch* herself. If anything, Lucy's paraplegia and obvious glumness about it gives her a motive to pledge someone now, but whether it's Sail, Charlie, or someone else, we don't know. It's also hard to imagine Sail, being as unstrung and frightened as she is, pledging anyone herself. She's nothing like the callous Tim of last issue, giving the *Wytches* a hand in capturing their prey. We saw her trying to grab Annie, her nemesis, from the *Wytches*' grasp and now we've seen her try to get the *Wytches* to leave her Uncle Reggie alone when they both encounter the creatures in the woods in broad daylight. Sail seems like such an unwilling victim herself, especially with a medically baffling "lump" on her neck after she sees Annie from her bedroom window, that you can't see her as someone who would victimize someone else. Whoever's doing the pledging, it's clear the entire family's in for it now. Naturally, the consequences fall on the most likable character in the series thus far, the man trying his damndest to keep things together. Whatever's happening to Charlie after the same creepy bald man from #1 attacks him inside the house and blows fiery powder into his face, it doesn't seem good. And just what are we supposed to make of the man's unnerving claim that Charlie "never had a daughter"? Does that refer to something inherent in Sail herself or something that happened to her? Jock's linework is an interesting beast, capable of making his figures clear-cut, but also vulnerable to the forces within the story, as if the characters are always on the verge of crumpling from the emotional and psychological weight they're under. It gives *Wytches* a rough, uncertain look, as if you can't totally trust what you're seeing. Hollingsworth adds to the uncertainty with constant splotches and streaks of color obscuring the page, making the very light play tricks on your eyes. -Minhquan Nguyen

The post *Wytches* #2 – Review appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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