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Response Essay

Monstress, a remarkable comic written by Marjorie M. Liu, is the story of an Arcanic teenage girl, Maika Halfwolf. She is a human with exceptional superpowers that come from a monster living inside her. She has been struggling with her identity since the very beginning of the story and goes on a long way to know her past and her mother. In the search for her identity, she keeps fighting with this monster while keeping some of her humanity. In this journey, she is also being haunted and gets closer to all the answers she wanted to know.

The first chapter of the book describes severe kinds of imprisonment, slave auction, torture, sexual assault and scientific experimentation on people who were accused of being monsters(Liu et al.). The story has taken place in a matriarchal world, a world influenced by 20th century Asia. This story is unique because it is based on matriarchy which is rarely found in most comic books but it does not mean that a woman should misuse her power to rule a country unlike in the book where a woman misuses her powers to destroy another race and attacks a teenage girl. One can easily observe the worse attitude of humans with a teenage girl who possesses a massive superpower. This chapter being the first in the series, has many characters and information about different worlds. There are three worlds in this story; one is the world of ‘Old Gods', who possess evil powers, the other world is the world of ‘Humans’ who are normal with limited powers, and then there is the world of ‘Arcanics’, who are powerful but not harmful. The arguments we see in the first chapter are made mostly between the Arcanic girl and the humans who caught her for her powers. The arguments are about attaining extreme powers.

The character of Maiko, the Arcanic girl, slowly grows and with the introduction of more characters in the story with different goals, more issues and conflicts arise. The foremost issue which is the core reason why the story started in the first place, is the identity crisis of Maika who struggled a lot to know her identity as a human and a monster both. She was always in this process of feeling something very strange and unnatural inside her which made her start the journey as a slave(Liu et al.). At this point in the story, one can observe the limits of slavery and the behavior of so-called humans with slaves. The misuse of powers as humans and the torture done by them to achieve their selfish needs is very shocking because humans are known to behave nicely especially with people who do not mean to harm anybody. The selfish needs and lust for power make them cross limits. This is seen in the story where the woman from the human world steals powerful drugs from the bodies of the victim who possess some kind of power.

 We get to see glimpses of Maika’s past which makes the story understandable, otherwise, it’s a confusing story with extended plots and because so much is happening at the same time. The plots are not much clear and some little twists and turns consume time to understand the ongoing conflicts within the story. These happenings are the reason why one should work hard to understand the real essence of the story but the information coming from the characters makes it easy to get the real situation. Anyone with strong stamina could go along with this series of Monstress (Liu et al.).

Apart from the complex structure, it thoroughly talks about some of the serious issues that are practiced in our society, so this book is a good source for different lessons, one of them being the lust for power. Themes of slavery, betrayal, love and feelings are also highlighted through comic characters. Race, an important element, plays a huge role in the book where the Arcanics, a race of creatures with superpowers have been at war with humans for many years. Therefore, humans end up arresting all the Arcanics and sell them as slaves or kill them for their powers. Maika’s desire for identity, and the relationship she shares with the fellow monsters compels the readers to show sympathy for her character. While the war is a large part of the book, it provides a larger ground for the story to evolve. The war with humans, with the gods and the war with Arcanics, are the backbone of the story.

 It would be unfair if the greatest strength of this book was ignored since it is the visual perspective of this book, the art of Japanese Sana Takeda which makes it an artistic masterpiece. All the pages are dissolved in fully-rendered artwork and the Japanese effects are used to influence readers with colorful character development. It also describes the writer’s personal experiences who used to hear Word War 2 stories from her grandparents.

This book, undoubtedly, is a great piece of art but it has its flaws too; it cannot be recommended for kids because of the harsh language the writer has used. However, the depiction of different important themes is the strength of this comic book. Hence, it is by far the most attractive yet beautiful comic ever produced in recent years.

**Work Cited**

Liu, Marjorie M., et al. *Monstress. Book One Book One*. 2019, https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=D87AD418-A783-4626-B08B-3123ADC9E10D.