



## Ms. Marvel, Vol. 9: Teenage Wasteland

*G. Willow Wilson (Text) , Nico Leon (Illustrator)*

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Kamala Khan has vanished! But where has she gone, and why? Jersey City still has a need for heroes, and in the wake of Ms. Marvel's disappearance, dozens have begun stepping up to the plate. The city's newest super hero Red Dagger and even ordinary citizens attempt to carry on the brave fight in Kamala's honor.

Somehow, Ms. Marvel is nowhere...but also everywhere at once! Absent but not forgotten, Ms. Marvel has forged a heroic legacy to be proud of. But when an old enemy re-emerges, will anyone be powerful enough to truly carry the Ms. Marvel legacy - except Kamala herself?

**COLLECTING: MS. MARVEL 25-30**

## **Ms. Marvel, Vol. 9: Teenage Wasteland Details**

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## From Reader Review Ms. Marvel, Vol. 9: Teenage Wasteland for online ebook

### Rod Brown says

Kamala Khan spends the first half of the book in hiding, and frankly I didn't much miss her. The side characters stepped up and carried things along quite well with quite a bit of help from a feisty WWII veteran named Harold. (I'm totally up for a Harold and Zoe spin-off series.)

Then Kamala comes back and everyone gets pretty mopey through the end of the book dealing with all their romantic entanglements. It's a good thing that all the teen angst is so well done, because the super villain action remains as silly and stupid as usual.

Ms. Marvel remains a fine diversion.

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### Diz says

Surprisingly, Ms. Marvel doesn't show up in the first half of this volume. While she is missing, her high school friends masquerade as Ms. Marvel in order to maintain the illusion that the hero is still protecting Jersey City. The substitute Ms. Marvels are fine, but there's nothing like the real Ms. Marvel.

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### Renata says

(Read as single issues)

I loved seeing Kamala's friends team up and I know there were some ~issues~ to work out but also I missed Kamala :( Let's return to the super status quo pls

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### Joe says

A Ms. Marvel title with Ms. Marvel missing for the bulk of the book? And it's still amazing?! You better believe it. Ms. Marvel has some soul searching to do so her friends pick up the Ms. Marvel mantle (say that three times fast) and try to keep Jersey safe. So much to love about this book:

- Real friendships
- Real religious differences dealt with in real ways
- Hilarious villains
- Entire plots that revolve around sandwich delivery

Read this book nerds!

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## Roy says

I didn't like the start of this. The first few issues deals with The Inventor but majority of it without ms marvel. It just didn't seem to have the same fun as the previous. After Bruno returns it brings the story back to the main arc and begins the reasons for why this series was so much fun to begin with.

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## Lenette says

In one of Stan Lee's most famous Spider-Man stories, (and arc for the regrettable second Spider-Man film), "Spider-Man No More!", Peter Parker gives up the life of Spidey to just be normal ol' Peter. Even though crime happens as usual, Peter finds that he's actually happy in his school, personal and dating life – but he eventually finds out that being Spider-Man isn't a choice. It's part of who he is. If Kamala Khan is this generation's Spider-Man – and in many respects she fits the bill – this volume was "Ms Marvel, No More!" Except it let me down in the ways I'd hoped this generation's version would be.

But let's start with the most endearing first half of the book. Kamala Khan is missing, and so is Ms Marvel. In the midst of worrying about their friend, Kamala's group of buddies have taken to the streets in their own Ms Marvel getups, trying to do what they can to put a stop to crime; along the way, they bite off more than they can chew, uncovering a plot by The Inventor.

This was a lovely way to turn the spotlight towards Kamala's friends, particularly Nakia, Mike, Zoe, and Gabe, and it was fun to see their own personal spins on Ms. Marvel's costume. It also shines a light on the concept from Nolan's Batman films, that becoming an idea is much more powerful than being one person. In this case, Ms Marvel has become an idea in Jersey City, and she's inspired others to take up the mantle as well. (It's also reminiscent of the youth in our country making their voices heard in politics.)

What's ironic, and very strange, is that her friends don't realize that Kamala and Ms Marvel are the same. When both Ms Marvel and Kamala disappeared and returned at the same time, and none of her friends connected the very obvious dots. This seemed ridiculous, and not just because Kamala is the glue that holds everyone together, and, aside from maybe Mike, her crew's personalities aren't strong or compelling enough to hold a story on their own.

Naftali is also a nice addition to Kamala's friend group. He's an Orthodox Jew and the two have bonded over their shared kosher limitations. While Naftali looks pretty stereotypically Jewish (particularly with the large schnozz), I really appreciate how Wilson shows how minorities can form friendships over commonalities rather than fighting over their differences. Plus, she's done her homework – when Naftali asks his uncle about Kamala, his uncle asks if she's Sephardi, a term for Jews originating from the Middle East and Africa. And Naftali may look very Jewish, but he has a great personality that transcends the nebbishy, awkward personality stereotype – it's his perseverance that allows him to finally find Kamala.

**SPOILERS this paragraph.** When we leave Kamala at the end of volume 8 (which I reviewed as an issue here), she's unsure that Jersey City needs her because they've fallen head over heels for Red Dagger. So I was expecting, like Peter dumping Spider-Man's costume, that Kamala would focus on herself for a while before realizing she has to be Ms Marvel. Not so. Instead, Kamala has completely disappeared from her school and cuts off contact with her friends! Naftali finally finds her – reenrolled at a private school away from Jersey City. The writing here has me very confused. Granted, Kamala might be making a bigger deal out of this than it needs to be – as teenagers do – but everyone's love of Red Dagger seemed to cause Kamala to question being *Ms. Marvel*, *not being Kamala Khan*. So why also leave her school? Kamala tells Naftali she wants to "blend in" and be less pressured, but would she do or be either of those at private prep school in Jersey? It just felt like an immature thing for Kamala to do, beyond the confines of who she actually is. And we didn't see anything she learned or ways she grew by making this choice. I would have much rather seen Kamala at prep school figuring herself out – or realizing she made the wrong choice – than the idiocy that is the Inventor.

Ugh, the Inventor. I didn't like him the first round and I don't like him now. He has zero backstory and is a straight up mad scientist villain. He's gone from using kids to using the elderly, and it was a very cheap way to lecture the reader about how old people aren't valued in our society. Then Zoe becomes the mouthpiece of what's right, and then there are spider bots and robotic lizards (which are related to using the elderly as batteries how?) and it all just becomes confusing and stupid. Yes, it's true – we don't value the elderly (*Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande is a must read), but this was all the latter of show-don't-tell. (And this has been done before in this series, like the voting issue.) The only good that came out of it was a surprise superhero return, who could really have been a mentor to Ms Marvel over the last couple of weeks. Seen doing an impressive squat move that looks impossible to pull off in real life below.

So, Ms Marvel and Kamala Khan both come back. The last few issues launch straight into two pillars of high school storytelling: a love triangle, and drama at a school dance. And if we had the return of one villain in the first arc, bringing back another one of Ms Marvel's rogues just felt tired.

If you read the back cover you know that Bruno returns from Wakanda in this issue – causing problems for both Kamala and Mike. But for Kamala, who has been flirting with the Red Dagger as Ms. Marvel, we finally see a love triangle emerge. While for some a love triangle is just frustrating and cliché, it could have been an interesting and more layered dilemma for Kamala, especially because Kareem (Red Dagger's alter ego) is also Pakistani. We've seen from previous issues that Kamala's family feels strongly that she should marry within her group (not unlike many minorities, as a Jewish woman I can attest), so this kind of conflict would have been so interesting for Kamala.

**How's this for a love triangle:** Kamala must choose between pursuing a relationship with Kareem, someone new, of whom her family would approve, and maybe she likes a bit too, but she's not sure - does she like Kareem because of who he is or because he fits into the box she's expected to date in? ....or does she choose to be with Bruno, whom she's been friends with since childhood, and whom she already probably loves, but would certainly be dating out - potentially ostracizing her from her family and community - as well as risking losing her friendship with him for a second time if it doesn't work out.

(To heighten it further, Kamala's family literally just went through another out-marriage, but her brother married another non-white Muslim; and she shares her identity as Ms Marvel very differently with Kareem than with Bruno.)

SEE THAT? It's a stereotype turned on its head, that says something valuable and interesting about being a minority, just like Kamala herself. And I know Wilson is up to the task as a writer. I'm so, so disappointed this wasn't fleshed out more.

It's telling that of the whole love triangle story, the high point was Kamala's honest conversation with her imam. It reminded me a bit of Father Brah in *Crazy Ex Girlfriend* – it's great to show clergy as caring people who are not closed off to the world, or who place tradition above everything. The imam doesn't tell Kamala that she's terrible for liking a boy outside her ethnicity. He advises her to follow her feelings.

But instead of giving Kamala time to figure things out, and maybe learn something new about herself and what kind of relationship she wants, the whole thing collapses before it could even get started. Bruno came back too fast, and by the way, it's not clear that he wants to date Kamala either.

**(SPOILERS)** On that note, I don't at all understand Red Dagger's choice when he was the one who showed interest in Kamala in the first place. Instead it feels like a convenient exit back to Karachi, so Kamala and Bruno can work things out (with Mike to provide the drama, of course).

Nico Leon's artistic talent is a good fit for Ms. Marvel, with a slightly more anime style than the last artist, Diego Olortegui, but not nearly as much as Takeshi Miyazawa. Her characters are expressive, simple without looking too cartoonish. I would have loved to see her be more creative with Ms. Marvel's embiggening powers though, especially since we only see them for a couple of pages. At the same time though, a really lovely full page of Kamala's first kiss:

When it comes to the art, I'm really surprised by Schiti's cover, because he completely changes what Kamala Khan's face looks like. Seriously. Look at every other panel of Kamala in this post and go back to the cover. He's changed a few things. And it's annoying that it got to the cover.

I was really hoping this would be a different kind of "Ms Marvel No More" story. I was hoping to see some growth from Kamala and a couple of surprises along the way. Instead her crisis never fully resolved, and the ensuing love triangle was quickly resolved and tied up with a bow. There were some nice moments – Kamala talking with her imam, a long-awaited birth, Bruno's Wakandan friend doing "field research" on Americans, and a potential love interest for Zoe. But that doesn't ease my lingering doubts moving forward with what used to be my favorite superhero title.

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### Amanie says

One of my favorites so far, and just so funny. I appreciate the way that the visiting Wakandan referred to

America as a developing country and referred to American teens as "disadvantaged youth." I really really loved the part where Kamala is just so overwhelmed by her feelings that she goes to her Imam, expecting to get yelled at. Instead, he is wise and embracive, with many good things to tell about how elders tend to be stern and forget how to teach young people what to do with their feelings and such. Phew. Loved it, love this series, love my girl Kamala.

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### **Scott S. says**

#### **4.5 stars**

I was skeptical at first about *Teenage Wasteland*. Kamala Khan is noticeably absent for approximately the first half of the volume. Can her well-intentioned friends / Coles classmates pick up the slack?

They can. In fact, I'd say Zoe ("I've been doing Crossfit . . . Prepare to feel the pain of several hundred dollars worth of specialized strength training!") is the M.V.P. here, jumping into action - assisting Red Dagger - on the streets of Jersey City. The Inventor is causing trouble while free on parole, after all.

Kamala returns for the second half - along with a surprise appearance from another Marvel heroine - which is heavier on dialogue and lighter on the action. However, love is in the air, and there are a number of great scenes (Kamala seeking guidance from her community's spiritual leader - amusing and thoughtful; some observations on high school cliques) that keep the series running strong.

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### **Katie Florida says**

I loved this volume. I enjoy the focus back on Kamala's personal relationships; it's a part of her narrative that I've always enjoyed. And of course, the writing was smart, the perfect balance of witty, and left me anxious for the next volume already!

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### **Dan says**

More like 2.5 but meh it was ok

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### **David Schaafsma says**

"We like to think we choose the people we love. But we don't, really. Life puts those people in our path. We love them because we're in it together. Maybe it's destiny, maybe it's something else. Whatever it is, it's something real."

Kamala Khan is AWOL for the first three issues, so friends Zoe, Nakia, Mike and Gabe try to fill in. This reminded me of a time when Buffy the Vampire Slayer was gone and the Scooby Crew tried to fill her shoes, which kind of makes a good point about superheroes vs. the rest of us doing things for ourselves. That "what makes a hero" thing.

There's a lot of stuff going on, otherwise. The Inventor comes back, yawn. Bruno comes back and is funny and flips the script on the whole ugly right-wing American s-hole country move. The "disadvantaged" teens of America. And so Bruno and Kamala get to talk. And she and Carol make up. There's teen love and triangles. Mainly this is Ms. Marvel focusing on personal issues. It's goofy teen humor and art. I don't love the color choices but I might be in a minority here. 3-3.5 for my tastes, but the team is trying to establish more of the positive energy so I'll round up.

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### **Kristin says**

3.5

It's telling that the best issues of this trade are the ones without Kamala in them.

The first 3/4s of this volume is Kamala's friends group trying to fill her embiggened shoes and having wacky street-level superhero encounters. As soon as Kamala comes back it's back to bullshit love triangles and half-baked teenage philosophy.

Ms Marvel started out as a friendly neighborhood superhero and slowly turned into an angsty tragedy magnet, like Spider-man before her, and I really hope Wilson manages to right the ship she built. With Nico Leon on permanent art duties now, maybe some of that whimsy will return.

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### **Chad says**

Ms. Marvel's friends try to cover for her as she's completely MIA from the first 3 issues. The Inventor also returns. There's something just missing without Kamala in the book. Eventually she returns but the book instantly turns into poor romance comic with a love triangle instead of focusing on Ms. Marvel fighting bad guys. Nico Leon's art looks like it belongs in an issue of Highlights magazine. I prefer a more traditional Marvel look.

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### **Ashley says**

Should I just copy and paste things from my previous reviews of this series so as to just really hammer the point home?

"Okay, so Ms. Marvel is probably my SECOND favorite comic, definitely my favorite superhero comic. I love Carol Danvers probably as much as I love Kamala Khan, but the last couple of Captain Marvel trades have fallen a little flat for me, and meanwhile G. Willow Wilson continues to absolutely KILL IT with Kamala." -Me, three years ago

"How does this series continue to be SO GOOD. It is the only superhero comic I read that doesn't allow the larger events of the Marvel (or whatever) universe to completely mess with the narrative it's trying to tell. Kamala is always Kamala." -Me, two years and three months ago

"I have no doubt that Kamala and Ms. Marvel will weather this storm. It continues to be an

excellent series. I hope Wilson never leaves." -Me, one year and nine months ago

"I almost feel like I should knock on wood, because surely G. Willow Wilson can't keep this up? Writing an emotionally affecting, funny, superhero comic that manages to transcend the limitations of its genre (mostly neverending mashups with other series, forced crossover storylines, etc.)" -Me, one year and one month ago

"Regardless of how it made me want to punch all humans in the mouth a little, Ms. Marvel continues to be the most solid, contemplative (yet still somehow fun) superhero comic I've read . . . But Wilson, I don't know, man, she's just so good at keeping it all about Kamala. No matter what else is going on in the comics around her, this is a coming of age story about a young superhero, learning to be an adult at the same time she's learning to deal with her powers and the responsibilities and burdens that come with them." -Me, nine months ago

"This comic is still my favorite ongoing superhero comic." -Me, right now

Nine trades in, and this series is still awesome and I love it. Literally the only thing keeping me from giving it five stars is that I am now completely unwilling to believe that Kamala's friends don't know/guess that she's Ms. Marvel. (Oh, and also Captain Marvel didn't apologize to Kamala, and I really need that to happen.) ESPECIALLY since this entire book consists of all of Kamala's friends picking up her slack, as Ms. Marvel has mysteriously disappeared at the same time as Kamala, whose family says she's fine and just going to a new school. COINCIDENCE?? Anyway, seriously, they all have to know by now so stop pretending, book.

So they take turns trying to be Ms. Marvel, helping the citizens of Jersey City out, but when the Inventor turns up again (remember that guy? he used to be a bird, but now he's not? Anymore?) they are completely out of their depth, none of them having any real superpowers to speak of.

Kamala is absent for most of this volume, but that's okay, she's going through something. And her friends (and family) are great. And Bruno! Bruno's back! Yay! I've been so upset since they've been estranged.

Anyway, it's been forever since I read this and I'm behind in reviews, so this will be the last sentence of this review.

[4.5 stars]

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### **Lara says**

I enjoyed this one a lot, possibly mainly because Bruno. Also Zoe--I kind of love Zoe. There are a couple of weird bits...like how Red Dagger just very conveniently decides to go home pretty much out of nowhere. But there are parts that make up for it, like when Kamala talks to the imam and it's kind of hilarious and adorable and sweet. I'm still all in when it comes to this series!

