

Woman World

Aminder Dhaliwal

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It's the near future, and the men of the world are going, going, gone. Aminder Dhaliwal's *Woman World*, adapted from her serialized webcomic, moves quickly from the unheeded warnings of a geneticist couple who notice that men are disappearing from the gene pool to the world after, where buildings are crumbling and the fate of humanity is uncertain. But it's not all doom and gloom; left to their own devices, women and girls are finally free to just ... be.

Picture this: the freedom to be safely nude in company. Communal sympathy around natural bodily processes. Frank, nonthreatening conversations about sex. There's an awesome openness to *Woman World* that cannot be denied; the triumph represented by a community flag whose symbol is Beyonce's thighs is palpable. *Woman World* is proudly sex-positive and LGBTQ-affirming, diversity is a matter of course, and the only absolute directive is that you be yourself.

But Dhaliwal is careful not to paint a world without men as an instant utopia; her use of color alone reveals that we're a more vibrant species when the gang's all here. The mostly blue, pink, and purple landscape turns gray scale when the Drs. Sharmas' predictions come to pass. Color returns in short bursts—when the book depicts relics from the past; in an instance of extreme passion; when next generations learn to let their worry go and embrace what is.

Before those steps are taken, though, the women of the book battle familiar mores. They wrestle with doubts about the validity of their leadership; even Gaia struggles to be confident. They are plagued by insecurities in and outside of their relationships. Finding humanity's new footing requires a feminist reconfiguration—an acceptance of human beings as valuable on their own terms, flaws and all.

Woman World is an often raucous and always moving project. It functions as a giant permission slip for every person to live authentically, external challenges be damned.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November/December 2018)

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