



Batman: No Man's Land, Vol. 1

Greg Rucka , Various , Jason Pearson (Illustrator) , Jon Bogdanove (Illustrator) , Phil Winslade (Illustrator) , Bob Gale , Alex Maleev (Illustrator) , Dennis O'Neil , more... Devin Grayson , Ian Edginton , Roger Robinson (Illustrator) , Dale Eaglesham (Illustrator) , Frank Teran (Illustrator) ...less

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Gotham City: a dark, twisted reflection of urban America. Overcrowded, overbuilt, and overshadowed by a continuous air of menace, this gothic nightmare is a breeding ground for the depraved, the indifferent, and the criminally insane. It's also the object of one man's obsession. Forever scarred as a child from witnessing the brutal murder of his parents, Bruce Wayne has dedicated his life to protecting this city from its many predators, taking a form to inspire hope in the innocent...and fear in the guilty. He is the masked vigilante known as the Batman. With Police Commissioner James Gordon, these two men have always fought to preserve law and order, side-by-side, struggling against a pervasive and relentless criminal element, working together to hold the line. Until now.

Leveled by a massive earthquake that has left thousands dead and millions more wounded, Gotham City has been completely cut off from outside aid, transformed into a lawless battleground -- a No Man's Land -- where the survivors are turning against one another, and where the city's protectors are torn by a crisis that may consume them all. Gotham now teeters at the edge of the abyss...and Batman is missing.

For the first time, the classic Batman epic is collected in full, including chapters that were never before collected, starting with these stories from BATMAN: SHADOW OF THE BAT #83-86, BATMAN #563-566, DETECTIVE COMICS #730-733, AZRAEL: AGENT OF THE BAT #51- 55, BATMAN: LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #116-118, BATMAN CHRONICLES #16.

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From Reader Review Batman: No Man's Land, Vol. 1 for online ebook

Chaitra says

Worth the price and time of reading just for the intro into No Man's Land. It doesn't have Batman because Batman is off sulking. (Actually he's building even more Bat Caves because he doesn't want to ever face a situation like No Man's Land, but then he regularly does, so I guess the Bat Caves are superfluous but ooh, shiny gadgets. You can say that I'm a bit peeved with Bats.) But it does have Huntress who does what needs to be done, and is sorely used later if you ask me. It has Oracle who is also sorely used, even though she does an excellent job of running a ring of informers that Bats conveniently makes use of when he finally shows up. It has Commissioner Gordon who is no longer authorized but runs his officers like a gang would and he's peeved as hell with Bats as well, for good reason, at least in this issue. I do think Gordon continued this mess until it made him stupid, but it started off understandably.

This volume's Azrael is the Azrael I remember - the absolutely boring as fuck superhero who doesn't do anything properly. I would have said the Batman stories are no good, but he's faced with a population who have become so used to the hardscrabble lives that they've been leading for the three months that he's been gone, and Bats has to do extra to put the fear of god in them. Yeah, take that Bats. That's what happens to hubris.

The art is okay. I actually like the arc, despite my kvetching about it. It does have a few issues that seem like the writers had no idea what to turn out but they had to, and scribbled down the first thing that came to their mind, but it also has some good ones. (Like the Montoya and Two Face one, which is great and has a bearing on what happens later on in the arc).

Suzy says

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. There were some parts that seemed to drag a bit but I did enjoy it and find it worth the money. I am pretty upset that DC still did not include nor collect "The Road to No Man's Land" which, in my opinion, is a crucial part to the story line. You can read the story without it but I certainly enjoyed it a lot more. The story is about an earthquake that hits Gotham. All the buildings, except those own by Bruce Wayne, are destroyed. This story is about life after the quake and the hell Batman and the citizens of Gotham go through. It is a long book (about 500 pages) and it continues in four other books. Be prepared to wait a bit for the other newly collected books to come out.

James DeSantis says

This was really solid. When you throw in a ton of different writers/art styles into one book you can assure it'll always be mixed results. Some stuff you'll love, some you'll like, and some you'll just wanna skip as soon as possible. No Man's Land is a Batman mega crossover that happened in the 90's and early 2000's where Gotham was hit with a earthquake and left to basically die. So Batman is back in town but now it's all broken into sections where people hold territories from Joker, to GCPD, to Batman turf. It's a all out war!

What I liked: Most of the stories involving Gordan, Batgirl, or Batman are all solid. I also really enjoyed the two face story quite a bit. The art, when good, was really solid for it's time. The concept is great too and keeps things fresh. The Superman issue was way too funny as Superman basically like "Fuck these people" in the end.

What I didn't like: Some of the issues were meh. Especiall Azreal or whatever his name is. This Christian crime fighter is just dull and screams 90's. Also his suit sucks and his art is so bad in comparison to the rest of the artwork in here. Also the penguin story was far too long and found very little interest in that.

Overall it's around a 3.5. It's solid, interesting, and had some great stories. It's the mix of 4-6 issues of blah that bring it down. Still worth checking out for Batman fans for sure! Gotta grab volume 2!

Wing Kee says

A lot of things to like...then there's Azrael.

World: The art is generally good. Dated but good. The Guy Davis did an issue. I love that. The world building is very solid. It's well thought out and consistent between the titles. This is one of those unbelievable situations that is so logically consistent it's great writing.

Story: There are so many highlights. It's well thought out and full of heart and all the emotions. The tone is great and the weight of the situation is handled so well. From the first arc with the Blue Boys, to Batman, to Babs to Scarecrow this is a really solid arc and a solid event. The stakes are high the world is just interesting and all the writers bring their A game. Then there is the Azrael boring stuff which I do not like at all.

Characters: Great! All the characters are through the lens of No Man's Land and it's good. It's raw and it's real and it's interesting. Seeing Bats adjust to the world, seeing Gordon making new rules and seeing the Penguin and Scarecrow, it's all so good and so rooted on the core of the character that's it's riveting.

So good, love this event. It was one of the best.

Onward to the next book!

Maria Kramer says

A series of disasters renders Gotham unfit for habitation. The federal government cuts it off and it's survival of the fittest. Since this is a big crossover event, the quality of the stories goes up and down. Still, this is a landmark in the history comics - inspiring The Dark Knight Rises, among other things.

The one issue that absolutely floored me - the one with the Death Dancer. A villain who - no joke - tap dances in front of you, then kills you with his sharpened shoe. OMG. Did the writer realize how hilarious that was, or were they just sleep-deprived and running up against a tight deadline? The world may never know.

Similar titles:

Katie says

I'm not sure what exactly it was that kept me from enjoying this as much as I thought I would. I've loved all the other work by Greg Rucka that I've come across...ah. I see. The compilation of stories in this aren't all by Greg Rucka. That explains why it just didn't seem to mesh very well. Different writers, different illustrators; just didn't work all that much for me.

Gotham City has been hit by an earthquake. The government tried to evacuate the populace, but not everyone left...some couldn't, and others didn't believe that the government would truly abandon them. For some reason, Gotham has been isolated. Nothing...people or goods...can come in or out. (I thought I was starting at the beginning of the story w/ these, but apparently not. Something to do w/ Nick Scratch, a character I'm not familiar with.) Batman has disappeared & it's up to the remaining police force to try to re-establish some law & order...or at least justice & order. Different sections of Gotham have fallen under the power of different gangs & villains. When Batman returns, he finds that the people have changed. Freedom isn't the most important thing in their lives. They want food & protection, regardless of who is giving it to them.

Another gripe is the storyline about Azrael. I honestly don't know this guy, but we're thrown into the (apparent?) middle of his storyline. I found it frustrating.

I'm going to give the subsequent editions a chance...mostly because I've already borrowed them from the library.

Victoria Hawco says

Turns out earthquakes are bad!!

Caroline says

A sprawling storyline involving Gotham being shut down from the rest of the world after a series of cataclysms, with this picking up a few months after the borders have been shut down. An interesting way to get Batman to have to operate in new ways--since gang warfare breaks out, his usual tactics just don't work in here. I wouldn't be at all surprised to hear that both *The Dark Knight Rises* and *Arkham City* used some ideas from here.

Fantastic character work in here--Bruce Wayne, Barbara Gordon and Jim Gordon all get some character building and introspection in here, it's not just action sequence after action sequence. I rather enjoyed Huntress' storyline and the way that panned out.

I was dreading Azrael when I realized he was included in here, but luckily I really like what they've done with his character. He's still not a favorite, and doubtful he ever will be, but after his stint as a homicidal and self-righteous Batman really anything is going to be better. Even Azrael has some excellent character development in here.

Boots says

The first volume in this mega-arc starts strong with Gordon and the remaining GCPD trying to provoke fights between gang factions to gain ground in former Gotham (now No Man's Land). Other points of interest include a mysterious new Batwoman, and the various kooks from Arkham carving out their own turf, including the Joker who is roving quietly like a jackal. Azrael is back with a new costume that's way too silly to take seriously (and sillier still, he fights an Irish dancer? Oy vey. This character's days are numbered, methinks).

Unfortunately the disaster plot that made *Cataclysm* and the other preludes so compelling gets subsumed with other silliness, like Batman just vanishing for more than three months while the city crumbles and a visit from Superman who fixes a power plant and then decides to leave Batman to the rest since he's not really grooving on the tenor (uh, what?).

The escalating turf war between the GCPD, Batman, Ventriloquist, Two-Face, Black Mask, and Penguin is what holds this together, but barely. Even Jim Gordon's kvetching started to grate on me, which is pretty bad. Still had to give this three stars since it kept me reading. Hopefully the series gets better instead of worse.

Cheese says

I genuinely couldn't finish this. I'm just not a Rucka fan. I got so bored after 200 pages of sticking it out I gave up.

I find Ruckas' writing really tedious I had the same problem with his indie run on Lazarus.

Shannon Appelcline says

No Law & A New Order by Gale. I wasn't sure what I'd think of the non-Rucka stories, but this is an interesting start, helped in no small part by the Alex Maleev artwork. But more generally, this story sets an interesting foundation for *NML* of warring tribes in a post-apocalyptic city and uses that basis to create a very different sort of *Batman* story based on ethics and morals. The introduction of a new Batgirl and the strong focus on The Gotham PD both add to the enjoyment of this story [7/10].

Fear of Faith by Grayson. I find it fascinating that this arc focuses on a new political group (the church), a new heroine (Huntress), and a new villain (Scarecrow). It shows the potential power of treating Gotham as a setting for adventure that can be inhabited by many peoples and groups. This tale of a powerless Scarecrow is fascinating, but also way too slow [6/10].

Bread & Circuses by Edgington. At first this story feels repetitive, as we've seen the elements before, but it finally puts the Penguin front-and-center, and the battle of wits between him and Batman actually proves very interesting, as it's never clear who's on top [7/10].

Mosaic by Rucka. Rucka was one of the main reasons I picked up these volumes. His first story is interesting and unusual, but also badly fractured ... which pretty much goes to the name. Despite horrible art, some great characterization really comes through, continuing to add depth to the new setting [7/10].

The Batman Chronicles: Two Down by Rucka A great early Montoya story that shines for his relationship with Two Face [8/10]. **The Comforts of Home by Beatty.** An amusing story because it shows the dangers left in Gotham [7/10]. **Harold by O'Neil.** A shallow vignette [5/10].

Other Shorts: Balance by Rucka. A nice, if shallow story about Alfred [7/10]. **Home Sweet Home by Klink.** A great look at a citizen in *NML*, with beautiful art by Guy Davis [7+/10]. **The Visitor by Puckett.** A good answer to the question of why other heroes aren't saving Gotham [7/10]. **Shades of Gray by Gale.** This final short does a terrific job of reminding us of some of the main factions of Gotham, while also offering a few great stories; the one about Bruce's father is particularly strong [8/10].

Azrael by O'Neil. The *Azrael* issues are a bit troublesome because they're so out of tune with the rest of the volume. O'Neil doesn't participate in the round-robin writing and generally doesn't seem to care about the plot threads of the rest of the collection. I also found the first couple of issues actively bad, though it might have been me getting used to O'Neil's style again. By the last few issues, I felt like I was reading about a variant of *The Question*, which was interesting, but not necessarily good for the collection.

Overall, I was surprised how good the whole volume was. There were quite a few good writers working on No Man's Land, and though the plot didn't do much that was interesting, there were still piles of interesting character stories here.

Heath Lowrance says

Earthquake in Gotham. City sealed off from the rest of the world. Criminals take over. Bats and his crew take the city back, block by block.

This goes on for a year. Some good stuff from Rucka, some tedious stuff from everyone else. No Man's Land (all five volumes of it) contains a few gems, but honestly goes on WAY too long. Still, it's nice to see the status quo get shaken up from time to time, and No Man's Land certainly signaled the beginning of a solid few years of Batman stories after that.

StoryTellerShannon says

MINI REVIEW: this is the first of several volumes about a Gotham which has been mostly abandoned by the rest of the world. An earthquake hit Gotham and it was so horrific that most people left Gotham yet enough stayed for various reasons, creating a feudalistic setting in which gangs (and rare good groups) control different sections of Gotham. A lot of the Batman villains have stayed and make their appearances, especially The Penguin.

Where is Batman? Nobody knows and he isn't around at first but other vigilantes have taken up the slack.

This volume (close to 500 pages) covers a number of stories including Jim Gordon and his people trying to control a small section of Gotham. Nice play on moral and personal divisions as well as regular people trying to survive day by day and slowly sinking down into something far below civilization (Superman shows up to “help” and then realizes he's doing it all wrong).

The Azrael bits felt mostly out of place but everything else was somewhat good to superb. Writers and artists varied and I have newfound respect for writer Bob Gale.

“Fear of Faith” was my favorite but just a notch above “Shadow of the Bat”. I plan to continue the series.

OVERALL GRADE: B to B plus (higher if Azrael wasn't in it)

Shad says

I read a lot of Batman stuff, in fact most of the top shelf of my bookshelf is dominated by Batman trades (mostly paperbacks but I have scored a few hardcovers) and I would rank this amongst my favorites.

It was unlike any Batman story I have read up to this point. I found most of the book to be captivating as it wove the story of a post-quake Gotham that has been cut off from the world. The various gangs and factions, some led by various villains or the remnants of the GCPD, carving up the city. The return of Batgirl in the form of Cassandra Cain, Batman's own return to the city not going as he planned, his begrudgingly taking the new Batgirl under his mantle. Jim Gordon's refusal to accept the returning Batman and Barbara's animosity when she watches another woman in “her” role while she sits in a wheelchair, feeling semi-useless as a “high tech girl” in a “low tech world”. Even the brief appearance of Superman in the city as he makes an attempt at the boy-scout thing and himself finds the citizen's of Gotham unable to accept the kind of salvation he can bring was well told.

In fact the only problems I had with the whole book were a few not so gripping segments with Azrael/Jean Paul Valley. While not all of them were bad from a story standpoint, in the first few the story just didn't affect me much.

And while I'm discussing the Azrael spots its fair to mention that in these segments (and a few others) I found the artwork to be less than stellar. A large part of what I enjoy about these books is the art, often times I find the art in many of the Batman books to be so amazing that I often struggle with other series that don't live up to that standard. Which means there are times in this book, namely the Azrael stories (but a few others) where I just didn't care for the look of it.

Overall though I simply have to give the book high marks and label it mandatory reading for Batman fans.

Caitlin says

No Man's Land is one of those essential Batman stories that I've been meaning to read forever and now that my life is finally slowing down a bit, I can get to it. Even this first volume comprises a fair number of stories so I've put a mini review in for each. If you'd rather read the short version, I put a tl;dr review in at the end. :P

No Man's Land takes place in the aftermath of a massive earthquake which devastates Gotham. Despite the warnings of a seismologist, no one (besides Bruce Wayne) seriously considers an earthquake as likely to happen in Gotham so only the Wayne buildings are built to withstand that kind of disaster. The federal government decides it's easier to abandon Gotham than to try to provide the massive aid necessary to rebuild the city. Instead, they order an evacuation, leaving the city to the criminals, the stubborn and the destitute. This means that there is no law and order in Gotham and with the disappearance of Batman, different factions fight for control.

No Law and a New Order - ★★★★★

Writer: Bob Gale

Artist: Alex Maleev

The collection starts off strong with a fantastic intro story, gorgeously illustrated by Alex Maleev, which introduces the idea of Gotham as an abandoned no man's land populated by criminals and those few people who either refused or were unable to get out in the evacuation. Batman has disappeared and is assumed by most to have abandoned the city so the story deals with the attempts of the people who are struggling to survive amid the ruins. We get to see what Oracle, Penguin, Joker, Huntress and others have been up to since the quake but the story really focuses on the few remaining members of the GCPD and Jim Gordon in particular. It poses some interesting questions about just how far they'll go to maintain some semblance of law and order and I'll be very interested to see how Gordon moves forward.

Miracle Run! - ★★

Writer: Dennis J. O'Neil

Artist: Roger Robinson

I'll admit right now that since first meeting him in Knightfall, I've never been a fan of Azrael. He has at least toned down his brainless jackassery since then but this still isn't an impressive story. Basically, Batman has given Azrael the mission of tracking down a charismatic cult leader named Nick Scratch who all but ensured Gotham would be declared a no man's land. It verges from just plain to silly to tolerable but the artwork is awful. I'd like to see someone make Azrael interesting but this isn't it.

Fear of Faith - ★★★

Writer: Devin Grayson

Artist: Dale Eaglesham

This story has Jonathan Crane (aka Scarecrow) manipulating a group of refugees who are hiding out in a church under the care of a naïve and benevolent man named Father Chris. I will admit that I'm really not religious so this felt a little preachy. That aside, I do like that it focuses on Huntress and the struggle with her darker, violent side so I felt it was one of the better stories in the volume.

Devil Down Below - ★½

Writer: Dennis J. O'Neil

Artist: Roger Robinson

This is basically Azrael comes to Gotham. Azrael tails Scratch to Gotham and ends up helping an old woman attempt to reach her daughter who is stranded in Gotham. This is the same writer/artist duo from "Miracle Run!" and while the art is a little better, the story definitely isn't. I'm not sure if it's worse but the ending definitely left me wondering, "WTF?!"

Bread and Circuses - ★★★

Writer: Ian Edginton

Artist: D'Israeli

This story focuses on the black market set up by Penguin and results in a Penguin vs Batman showdown. The art style is...different but I actually liked how it worked with the story. Not bad and it totally feels like something Batman would do.

Mosaic - ★★★

Writer: Greg Rucka

Artist: Frank Teran

This story follows Batman's conflict with a group assembled by an even crazier than normal Blackmask. I've liked Greg Rucka since reading Gotham Central and he crafts a pretty interesting story here, especially with the conflict between Oracle and Batman. I don't think he handles Gordon's personality as well but still pretty good. I have to say that I'm really not a fan of Teran's dark, messy artwork but I think that might be more a matter of personal taste than lack of quality.

Two Down - ★★★½

Writer: Greg Rucka

Artist: Jason Pearson

This is one is a very interesting Two Face story that is best because it's Montoya struggling with how to handle him rather than Batman. Montoya has a helluva history with Two Face (figures pretty largely into Gotham Central as a matter of fact). Rucka does an absolutely fantastic job with this story and it definitely had me glued to the page all the way through. I'm not a huge fan of the way Pearson illustrated it but still one of the better stories.

Comforts of Home - ★★

Writer: Scott Beatty

Artist: Damion Scott

Man this couple deserves a fucking Darwin award. If I lived in Gotham and I got even the HINT of an idea that I was in Joker's house, I would GTFO in a heartbeat. But apparently the lure of loot is too much for them and of course shit gets crazy. But seriously, dude?! Joker's house?! What. The. Fuck. The artwork is pretty decent though.

Harold - ★★

Writer: Dennis J. O'Neil

Artist: Chris Renaud

Meh. This story centers around Batman's little mechanic/fix-it-guy Harold. I think I may have to accept that I'm just not impressed by O'Neil because I have yet to read a story of his that really interested me. Basically this just tells you what happened to him after he and Alfred got stranded in the ruins of Wayne Manor and what he's up to now.

Jellybean Deathtrap - ★★

Writer: Dennis J. O'Neil

Artist: Roger Robinson

And...another mediocre Azrael story. This one involves Azrael filling in for Batman against the Joker. The results were better for Azrael than I expected, there was an interesting moment with Batman at the end and for once with Azrael the artwork wasn't awful. Probably the best of the Azrael stories in this volume but I still wasn't a huge fan.

Balance - ★★★★★

Writer: Greg Rucka

Artist: Jason Pearson

Bless you Rucka for writing an adorable Alfred story. This gives you insight to what happened to Alfred from Cataclysm to the current point and I loved seeing the bond between him and Batman. Much, much shorter than "No Law and a New Order" but I loved it just as much.

Home Sweet Home - ★★★

Writer: Lisa Klink

Artist: Guy Davis

This one was actually pretty good. It's about an older man who's lived on the same street in Gotham for his entire life and refuses to evacuate. He's a fixture in the community and even with all the chaos and unrest tries to help out his neighbors. Things get predictably dark and violent with the entrance of some villains and their gangs but overall it's a good story despite not great artwork.

Visitor - ★★

Writer: Kelley Puckett

Artist: Jon Bogdanove

This is Superman comes to Gotham and tries to fix everything with boy scout cheer. Not gonna lie, this was a perfect illustration of why I can't stand Superman. (view spoiler) The artwork is good but the story is just okay.

Shades of Grey - ★

Writer: Bob Gale

Artist: Phil Winslade

This was awful. It's like a morality tale with Batman. Basically, he finds two women arguing over who a baby belongs to and then has to figure out how to deal with it. It's just incredibly stupid. I don't really have anything else to say about it, other than that I wasn't any more impressed with the artwork than the story.

Step Into the Light & Misery Dance - ★

Writer: Dennis J. O'Neil

Artist: Roger Robinson

Holy shit. Someone please take Azrael away from O'Neil. I don't care if he created him, he clearly can't do him justice. In this one, Azrael goes up against a serial killer who dances for his victims to "ease their suffering" and then cuts their throats. Turns out that's exactly as terrible as it sounds. And still the same unimpressive artwork.

The tl;dr version of this review is that it's a really interesting concept whose execution varies from outstanding to mediocre depending on the writer(s)/artist(s). I'm giving it three stars but honestly there's a lot of terrible stories in here so it's not one I can wholeheartedly recommend. I do think the idea of Batman being somewhat at sea in an atmosphere that is constant chaos is a really interesting

one. I like seeing how Batman's skillset isn't really geared towards the kind of trouble that Gotham is in and the moral quandaries that presents.
