



Batman: No Man's Land, Vol. 4

Greg Rucka (Contributor), Dale Eaglesham

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After suffering a cataclysmic earthquake, the U.S. government has deemed Gotham City uninhabitable and ordered all citizens to leave. It is now months later and those that have refused to vacate "No Man's Land" live amid a citywide turf war in which the strongest prey on the weak. Batman and his allies continue their fight to save Gotham during its darkest hour. In this final volume, Lex Luthor swoops in to help rebuild Gotham City - but his secret plan is to secure the ownership of much of the city's real estate! In the chaos of the waning days of the city's crisis, The Joker strikes, kidnapping a number of infants and killing members of the Gotham City Police Department.

Batman: No Man's Land, Vol. 4 Details

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Author : Greg Rucka (Contributor) , Dale Eaglesham

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From Reader Review Batman: No Man's Land, Vol. 4 for online ebook

Chaitra says

This is the last volume of No Man's Land, in which Gotham is officially part of the United States again. (How costly building those bridges again must have been. Aren't you very unhappy now, US government? Not only was isolating Gotham a wasteful experiment to begin with, it ended up costing you extra. On a side note, I suddenly remembered all those bridges destroyed in The Dark Knight Rises). There's a terrific story in this volume, the one where Joker wants to light one last fire in Gotham, because he's feeling ignored by Batsy-poo. Huntress proves her worth, which is personally very satisfying, because I thought Batman is a kind of a dick to her generally.

There's Bane, who basically just leaves because Batman asked him to, which is a terribly boring. There is an outside interest (quite obvious if you think about it) who's buying up real estate (or rather forging property claims) in Gotham and he leaves too because Batman asks him. Which is also quite unsatisfying. There's a needless death, and this character can't catch a break, and that's quite annoying too, because kill some main character instead of only a slightly important one. (Even if that doesn't work, because they always come back in some shape or another).

But, all that is overshadowed by the abomination that is Catwoman's art. How does she even move with those two horrible boobs that do not for one minute look real? They take up way too much real estate, and I'm pretty sure would get in the way of all the slinking and shimmying. (I had a picture of her, but I can't find it anymore, and that's just as well. It's too terrible to contemplate). If that wasn't enough, this particular Cat costume has a tail. A pretty useless tail, because it's not as if she can use it to hang off railings. Who thought it was a good idea? I kept wishing one of the bad guys would reach out and grab that stupid tail when she's jumping right on top of them. It makes me appreciate her totally abnormal proportions in other comics, because they're not as bad as this.

Derek Royal says

I've been reading the No Man's Land saga for what seems like forever. Not the strongest Batman comics, and the highlight of this final volume is Rucka's stories. Still, there's a reason why it took me so long to slog through these volumes.

Ernest says

No Man's Land was a 1999 crossover story arc that ran through all of DC's Batman titles. Effectively, a major earthquake hit Gotham City eventually leading the U.S. government abandoning it, leaving those behind – the heroes, the villains and ordinary citizens – to fend for themselves. This volume is the fourth and last of the 'modern complete' volumes of this story arc.

It would be almost impossible, and not to mention of limited utility, to try to summarise all the various plot and storylines throughout No Man's Land and how it plays out in this volume. It is suffice to say that all the

major players are present – Batman, Oracle, Huntress, Robin, the Joker, Killer Croc and Two-Face amongst the many characters finding their place, asserting power and working towards the ends they desire.

This is a thick volume and readers would be well warned that this is not something to just dip in and out of. The interconnectedness of the stories flows well from one issue to the next, with different points of view, focusses on characters and art styles draws one in and provides for a living, coherent world. This is not to say that everything is equally enjoyable as I preferred certain issues over others while still recognising that this is merely personal taste, with no particular weak issues. A particular high point of this volume is the Batman and Gordon's reconciliation, a testament to the difficult and at times fragmented relationship they have skilfully portrayed and drawn.

This is a very satisfying read for Batman fans and for those who are willing to wish to immerse themselves into the ending of this story arc (and really can get the most out of following the entire story arc).

Wing Kee says

The end of my favorite Bat family event.

World: The art is good, it's solid and the tone is great for the entire series. So good. The world building is solid and so good, sure the idea of No Man's Land is ridiculous but when inside it it's so good. The pieces have been moved for the finale and the introduction of Lex is so good. There is consequences in this world and it's great. Heartbreaking and great.

Story: I love No Man's Land, it's the first huge event that really grabbed me when I was young and it was the event that gave me Harley in book continuity and Cassandra. The finale was well paced and consistent throughout the series and the lasting effects of what happens in the end is great. It's heartbreaking and beautiful and melancholy and it's everything great about a Batman story.

Characters: The entire family is here and they all have a final to their journey within No Man's Land, it's so good. After so many issues these characters have grown so much the standouts of course are Huntress and Cassandra. Of course this also has my favorite Batman/Gordon scene of all time in the garden...it makes me cry every time.

This is my favorite event for Batman, it's flawed but it just hits so many emotions.

Onward to the next book!

Gayle Francis Moffet says

If there is one Bat arc I've been told time and again to read, it's No Man's Land. It's been recommended to me time and again by every comic shop employee and regular I've ever known. I've waited to read it simply because I've been reading other comics, and that turns out to have been the best plan.

No Man's Land is not the book for the Bat-beginner. There's too much history in this event on all sides to just thrust this into the hands of a newbie and tell that newbie it'll be easy to follow along. It won't. But

that's okay. What this book is, is a book for fans who know this crew, who know this city, and who know they're going to spend at least a little time wondering just what the hell Bruce is up to.

He's up to a lot, as is everyone else, and for the most part--I'd say 90% of this 86-issue arc--what everyone's up to is interesting and engaging. Azrael's early issues into the arc felt out-of-place and a bit lackluster, but Denny O'Neil and the editing team found their niche in the story, and I ended up really digging the guy. I straight up hated two of the three Catwoman issues in this arc. The first of the three was engaging and played well into the overall plot. The other two felt like out-of-character filler that was only made worse by Jim "You have to get out of here! Your vagina is haunted!" Balent's balloon boob, bad cheesecake art. I like the role Catwoman plays when she shows up the first time, but I hated what they did with it. What a waste of such a great, interesting, engaging character.

The less said about what happened to Sarah Gordon (and boy, did that feel like an editorial mandate) the better. I really enjoyed her and her relationship with Jim and Barbara, and to have it taken away like that really pissed me off. It pissed me off further because her death is part of the final arc penned by Rucka, and I just can't believe he made the call to kill her. It's not his style at all.

There is a lot of really great stuff in this arc. To see the Bat family fractured by outside circumstance rather than Batman's inability to feel feelings was super interesting. To see Babs in some of her (in my opinion) greatest moments as Oracle was phenomenal. The two-parter Nightwing arc where she and Dick have to escape the tower is easily one of my favorite stories in the whole thing. No Man's Land is the story where everyone gets a moment to shine. We get to see exactly how dedicated and determined Huntress is. We get to watch Tim Drake deal with being a non-orphan with a worried, pissed off father. We get a few small but great moments with Stephanie. We get the introduction of Cassandra Cain, who's Bat book I've not yet read, but who is deeply interesting and intriguing right from the very start. Leslie shines in every scene she's in. We get the best from every good cop in Gotham, and even the villains get interesting, fun turns.

We have, unquestionably, one of the greatest moments between Jim Gordon and Batman that has ever been put on paper.

This is not the Bat story to get you started unless you want to spend some time on wiki, but man, is it one to sit down with once you know all these people and what they do.

Katie says

I believe I've decided that I really like Damion Scott's illustrations best. It's that perfect balance between realistic & cartoon. I enjoyed the storyline where Two-Face tries to put Comm. Gordon on trial for making a deal with, well...Two-Face himself.

This book & the last one finally gave some backstory to several characters that I knew nothing about, as well as telling the *beginning* of the No Man's Land story; specifically where Batman was when everything went to hell. It didn't really say WHY, other than perhaps he was sulking. I've got this feeling that's kind of something Batman does well & honestly, I don't have time for that. My girls do plenty of whining. I don't need self-pity in my superheroes.

Unless you're already a fan (and in which case, you've probably already read these), I'd skip them.

Curt Matzenbacher says

I was torn between 4 and 5 stars. Went with 4 because I feel some of the Catwoman stuff was pretty weak. But I LOVE some of the social commentary in this book, beginning with the first issue, wherein Dr. Leslie does her badass pacifist thing and her morals are challenged and fleshed out. Another favorite moment would be a spoiler, but involves an interaction between Batman and Jim near the end of the book. Very solid read overall. Glad the arc ended strong.

Matt Smith says

No Man's Land was one of the first comic series I remember investing in. The promise of a mega Batman crossover with Gotham in dire straits that Batman must put to rights captured my imagination and stuck with me. I was, of course, not alone in this, as No Man's Land is still remembered as one of the most successful Batman crossovers of the past two decades. It comes to mind in ways that War Games, Batman RIP, and more simply don't.

That's the secret, I think. It isn't enough to merely be zeitgeist. It has to withstand the tests of time.

This is the final volume of No Man's Land, concerned with the actual politicking of how it is Gotham managed to pull itself out of this year from hell. There's a lot of maneuvering, not the least of which is the revelation of the identity of Gotham's actual, ultimate savior (which I won't spoil here). It adds a delicious wrinkle and a solid counterpoint to Bruce Wayne himself, giving a very anti-superhero perspective to how Gotham would eventually be saved. It's not enough, this argues, to take the city back block by block. You actually need the government and public support to undo this municipal nightmare.

Of course, this means that No Man's Land almost completely crumbles under the weight of its own logic. "Gotham City is declared a No Man's Land because this devastating earthquake caused too much property damage and it was a safer bet to just close Gotham, declare it not a part of the United States, and then stop anyone from getting in or out after an arbitrary cutoff date. It strains credulity even with the level of suspension of disbelief that comics normally requires. It's not that Gotham is a PR nightmare; it's a humanitarian shitastrophe. Thousands upon thousands left to die, abandoned by their government through absolutely draconian measures at the expense of a cool idea for a story.

Now, all that said, I think part of the reason this holds up as well as it does is because of all the cohesion. The Batman editorial team really brought it to make sure that all of these No Man's Land tales held up and wove a complete tapestry. Some were less good (the Catwoman issues across all volumes were just abysmal) or necessary (I didn't read a single issue of any of the Azrael tales) and it sagged a bit in the third volume (lack of Greg Rucka). But the truth is that it comes around at the end and it comes around hard. The actual finale with the return of The Joker in a big bad way is iconic to me in ways that early comics only ever could be. The splash page of The Joker leaving behind his devastating final act of No Man's Land is one of those comics pages that is burned into my head forever. And that actual final act, the repurcussios of it, are all one final knife twist in what could have been easily disposable. True, it's not as huge an act as the death of Stephanie Brown or the apparent death of Batman/Bruce Wayne, but it doesn't have to be. That such an event can make everything feel pyrrhic speaks volumes to the skills of Rucka and Devin Grayson as writers. That it

works as well as it does makes sure this massive event ends on a proper note, the likes of which don't ever seem to happen in massive crossover events in comics. They always seem to blow the ending. And given that this was a year long and crossed over into every single Batman book at the time, that it holds up is largely down to the strength of this ending.

Honestly, this is the era of Batman for me. And while I have fallen off the superhero bandwagon in a big bad way over the past few years, I must admit that this is the kickoff to what is my favorite era of Batman comics in terms of "status quo". Cassandra Cain Batgirl. Tim Drake Robin. Nightwing in Bludhaven. Oracle. Spoiler. Lite Azrael. The promise of a new Gotham. I love watching the Bat Family all together like this. And it makes me want to go read the rest of the Batman comics that came out between this and Infinite Crisis. For the Rucka. For the imminent arrival of Ed Brubaker. Chuck Dixon on the ancillary Bat Family books... For all of it. And while this might not hold up as well as I want it to (and Vol 1 was easily the best), it's a solid nostalgia read and one of the great Batman comics that people who like Batman comics all should read. For they will almost assuredly like it very much.

3.5 Stars

Amanda says

This series as a whole is worth reading.. some great issues and some just ok issues but all-together, (Volumes 1-4) it's awesome!

Graeme Dunlop says

This whole series -- Gotham destroyed -- had so much potential and for the most part, that potential was fulfilled.

Volume 4 starts with two poignant stories. The first deals with Dr Leslie Thompkins, and her vow to never cause violence. It features Killer Croc and Zsasz as the two opposite ends of the villain's gallery, with various bat-family in between.

The second is a reconciliation -- of sorts -- between Batman and Commissioner Gordon. Most of the panels in the first half of the story are empty of dialogue. Looks and glances. Thoughts and memories. And then it explodes into hurt and friendship betrayed and friendship maybe maybe repaired.

I have to say, though, that at the end of all the stories, we have a woman in a refrigerator. And that took me out of the story in a big way.

So. While it ends on a very very bad note, there are some of the most amazing stories I've read in the Batman universe up front.

Patrick says

The not so epic conclusion! The problem with this ambitious story was it was too big and sprawling. Even in

a collected format there are so many odds and ends and things to keep track of.

Vance Gatlin says

It bounces around in continuity. In Volume 3 it ends with Robin's predicament and then its ignored until the end of this book. Other than that, the first half was good, though I don't know why the Batman: No Man's Land issue 0 wasn't in the first volume.

Maria Kramer says

That was...a big, big comic. "Event" comics tend to irritate me, but this one was well-executed for the most part and didn't feel like a gimmick. Of course, I'm sure the reset button got hit hard when this was over. I've already bitched about continuity issues regarding Robin, but honestly, I'm impressed the writers kept it together as well as they did. This was massive.

Issues with this volume specifically:

Jim Balent. I am so glad he doesn't draw Catwoman anymore. Even gratuitous cheesecake is better than the spherical boobs of his run.

The fridging of (view spoiler). It's so late in the game and so out of nowhere. If they were going for that "anyone can die!" feeling, why not kill off Gordon himself, huh? Or someone who's a more regular character?

Boots says

It's a shame this could not have held together better, but the finale does try to give it some shape and purpose (albeit a bit weak on some fronts). We begin with Nightwing infiltrating (sort of) Blackgate where Lock-up has half the city's criminals (placed there by Batman). Immediately Scarecrow, Ventriloquist, Mad Hatter, and Black Mask start plotting with Nightwing to escape. Fun story, but badly drawn. Then there's a lengthy digression about Catwoman stealing some data in New York at Batman's behest (flip flip flip). And then a story about Robin and the return of Ratcatcher and Mr. Freeze (with a dose of that lame Spoiler who I thought we'd lost many many pages ago). The Catwoman stuff is boring (disappointing especially for something from Ostrander), while the Robin stuff was mildly entertaining, though kind of pointless in the end (how did he get back in the city after he was lifted out?).

Things get interesting again with the return of Bane and a really great story about Leslie Thompkins, Zsasz, Killer Croc, and Huntress. Then there's another nosedive with *Low Road to Golden Mountain*, a story arc that just sucks up space and does absolutely nothing. Joker returns in *The Code* and *Endgame* as the gang wars hurtle toward their inevitable climactic showdown.

About half of this volume is stuff I didn't care about and could have done without (and really, now we fill in where Bruce went when he disappeared after the quake? Who cares at this point?). But the other half was

great, with the high point being (as many others have mentioned) the reconciliation between Gordon and Batman (and the tragedy that ensues). I dislike the "easy fix" of LexCorp coming in to clean everything up (how convenient), and I am on the fence about Joker's apprehension. On the one hand, I *love* how bizarrely insane it is, but on the other I just don't get why he did it. To say "because he's crazy" isn't enough. Was it just easier for the writers? Did they just need to wrap it up? Or did he just want to see the look on Gordon's face? It's a strange moment ~ but I guess it works.

I'd've given this four stars but for the fact that so much of it is just pointless filler.

Oscar says

I have to say, I have been pretty dissapointed by this story arc overall and the ending to it which we can read in this volume. Like others I have heard the praise this storyline has received from the fans, but after reading the complere saga as collected in the 4 trades: I just don't understand why. Even when you take away the non-essential chapters like the issues from Azrael and Catwoman, what you're left with isn't really all that much.

We start this volume with a Devin Grayson penned story which highlights one of the most annoying characters in No Man's Land: Dr. Thompkins. This is a character who likes to complain to all the characters involved that they are using violence to save people. Mind you, Gotham at this stage is a virtual outlaw nation where the villains are in charge and the everyday man is suffering day in and out. And Dr. Thompkins, who is featured throughout this event, feels the need to criticise our heroes for using violence; with which they are saving countless lifes. Aaargh! And despite the need for violence to save her own life in this very story, she doesn't change at all afterwards.....

Luckily the following stories in this trade get better, but not by much. The highlight is a reconciliation talk between commissioner Gordon and Batman, written by Rucka and excellently drawn by Rick Burchett. It made me finally understand somewhat the reasons behind Gordon's animosity towards the dark knight (he just comes across as childish in the beginning of No Man's Land tbh) and brings these two back together to fight for the cause. Sadly this part is only like 10 pages or so of the trade. The 2nd highlight is the siege of Oracle's lair where she and Nightwing get some fine characterisation as done by Chuck Dixon & Scott McDaniel.

The rest of the trade however is a little jumbled and really not that good. We get a Huntress story which should have been in the first trade of No Man's Land, a Robin story which should have been placed a couple of chapters earlier in this trade, and an ending which was pretty meh. I'm not going to spoil who one of the main bad guys is in this story, but the way he is disposed with at the end was pretty anti-climatic considering the epicness of him being who he is, and Batman and this character rarely being at odds with each other. Yet he becomes a non-issue with a simple piece of paper.

And of course the Joker has to be one of the last villains Batman deals with. I know the Joker is pretty much seen as THE Batman villain, but I just don't see how he is any more dangerous than Killer Croc or Bane. Oh that's right, because he has paint on his face. I think maybe the writers felt the same way, and to make it seem as there was more levity and danger when facing THE quintessential villain, they just make him kill a character. Because other than that, there was very little 'finale' about this final battle.

Oh and that Robin story that was out of place, that was placed right after the issue where this character was killed. So after having all these feels of losing a main character, we get a story about Robin trying to get out of Gotham and worrying about being grounded by his father. Misplaced in every sense of the word.

So yeah, No Man's Land left me a little let-down after having heard all the praises this event received. It's not horrible, though some chapters are, but if this is one of Batman's best storylines then I shudder to think how the others must have been. (don't worry, there are much better Batman stories out there)

[This collection includes: Batman Chronicles #18, Batman #572-574, Detective Comics #739-741, Legends of the Dark Knight #125-126, Azrael #59-61, Catwoman #75-77, Shadow of the Bat # 93-94, Nightwing #38-39, No Man's Land #0, Robin #73]
