



Batman, Volume 5: Zero Year: Dark City

Scott Snyder , Greg Capullo (Illustrator) , James Tynion IV , Andy Clarke (Illustrator)

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Before the Batcave and Robin, The Joker and the Batmobile, there was ZERO YEAR. The Riddler has plunged Gotham City into darkness. How will a young Dark Knight bring his beloved hometown from the brink of chaos and madness and back into the light? This final ZERO YEAR volume collects BATMAN #25-27 and 29-33.

Batman, Volume 5: Zero Year: Dark City Details

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From Reader Review Batman, Volume 5: Zero Year: Dark City for online ebook

Jedi JC Daquis says

Zero Year could have been rightfully called as Gotham and everything would be just the same. But Zero Year has a more nice ring to it, a sort of nod to Frank Miller's more grounded and brutal Year One (and still the definitive Batman origin story).

Snyder, in his exceptionally well-written Batman arcs, always has a thesis in mind as the foundation and works the way up in the most amazing ways to deliver a montage of memorable Bat stories. In Zero Year, aside from a modern retelling of Batman's origin, Snyder establishes two tenets in the Batman mythos: number one, Bruce cannot be just a vigilante Bruce to take up crime on his hands, he has to be Batman and two, Gotham City needs Batman. Embedded in these two rudimentary philosophies are side stories that are seamlessly put together by the genius mind of Scott Snyder. We have Red Hood and The Jokers origin, the giant coin in the Batcave, the Batcave itself, the Bat-signal, the Batman-Gordon friendship and most notably an outstandingly good Riddler story.

This is what happens when Edward Nygma rises up to the throne unchecked, undisputed and unrivaled. He has the capability to turn the City into a dark place. Although Snyder goes a bit in excess with all those drones and killer bots (but this is comics, I guess? Kinda like how can Bruce afford those large computers with large screens in the Batcave and all sorts of Batman stuff, or how can the Joker implement that elaborate plan in Death of the Family), this Zero Year is what separates The Riddler from the Clown Prince of Crime - The Joker is all about the laughs and his twisted love for Batman while the The Riddler takes so much pride in his intellectual prowess to a fault and openly challenges everybody to beat him and his riddles.

As a short aside, can I just say that Greg Capullo kills it big time in Zero Year? I mean o my god. This guy draws exceptionally fantastic! Capullo (and Danny Miki of course) perfectly, I mean perfectly illustrates the story. The colors are vibrant with a significant touch of lush green, the postapocalyptic-ish rendering of Gotham City truly tells how it has been abandoned and given-up.

Gotham City itself in Dark City is one large riddle. Freeing it from the hands of Nygma has become a personal mission for Batman. Alone, he cannot do it. The book shows to us that The Riddler is way intellectually superior to Bruce. So how did he beat the green skinny man? Snyder then displays us what Batman can do: 1. Bataman is a detective, devising a feasible plan to defeat the Riddler, solely figuring out where his lair is and even goes one-on-one brain-wise with The Riddler. 2. Batman has the technology and gadgets to do his, though in Zero Year they are still crude, they do the job. 3. He has allies. Bruce has Gordon as his wingman, Lucius Fox as his tech expert and Alfred as the one who will tend to his needs. And finally, 4. Batman has the physical advantage, the muscle to punch Edward Nygma (hugely gratifying) and stomp him to oblivion.

So whenever Batman says that Gotham "is my city". This is the definitive justification why he has rightfully earned it.

Saying that Zero Year is a Batman origin story is an oversimplification of what it really is. It is a study of the rudimentary ideals that make up the Batman: a detective, a vigilante, a hero. It is a baptism by blood of the City itself. Zero Year is a modern tale, deep and at the same time entertaining, a literature that everybody should read.

David Schaafsma says

Okay, I'm a little behind on this series. But it remains strong. It's the continuation of the origin story from the last volume, and it features the best Riddler story I have ever read, with an assist by a really creepy Dr. Death. It's got a lot of Batman history in it, and is a kind of Batman love letter to Gotham, in a way, in that he gloomily chooses the city over any possible woman. The writing is strong throughout, as it has been in previous volumes, but the art from Capullo in this volume stands out for me even more than it had before. The sort of epic, operatic quality of this Batman story is in the ballpark of some of the greatest from Miller (Batman One, The Dark Knight Returns) and Moore (The Killing Joke). Maybe not with that edge, quite.

Sandra says

final rating: 4 stars

? i didn't connect with this as much as the first one for some reason.

? my main issue is that i didn't think the Riddler was a compelling villain . sure, he did a lot of shit. he was always one step ahead of Batman. however, i just didn't buy all the things he's done as well as his reasons for doing them. he is insane, clearly, but you get what i mean right? there wasn't enough substance to what he was trying to do.

? there were just a lot of what the fuck moments. how the hell did Batman survive that shit??? there were a lot of instances in this that he should have been dead. yet here he is alive, not well, but alive.

? one thing i really liked about this volume was the **flashbacks he's had with his parents**. those were all good

? another plus is his relationship with Alfred and how it evolved overtime.

? Commissioner Gordon is always a favorite. but like Batman, there were a lot of times you wonder how he got away with things.

overall thoughts

i liked it, but not as much as secret city. the parts where we see bruce's past was always good to read about, the other parts were okay i guess. they just didn't wow me.

Sean Gibson says

Reading this is a little bit like first time you engaged in the time-honored art of lovemaking. You were pretty excited about it going in, and you were reasonably sure you enjoyed it once you'd finished, but you didn't really know what was going on when you were in the middle of it—you were really just holding on trying to keep up—and when it was over, you couldn't really make heads or tails of it (in part, perhaps, because, for a brief period of time, heads were tails, and vice versa). Still, you certainly liked it enough to want to give it another shot, though you think you might wear your glasses the next time around and make sure you're less distracted so you can figure out exactly what the hell is going on.

Shannon says

Wow. **This really impressed me.** I've been reading so many crappy graphic novels lately that I was starting to feel like I was being too picky, especially when I wasn't agreeing with any friends on here, but I don't think the problem is me.

Heh. Honestly I just think that I was making bad choices. Hard to go wrong with Batman though! We get another origin story here and I'll honestly say I thought this was going to be mediocre at best since I wasn't really a fan of the Zero Year stuff, but this was clever and it had a story that I found instantly engaging. I also don't remember a story with The Riddler being so murder-y.

This book was dark and also very serious at times too. That's usually the type of Batman storylines I love. We see Bruce struggling with PTSD as a teen after his parents were killed and just overall watching him as he comes to terms with his past, battling mental illness along the way.

The art was beautiful as well which helped me to enjoy this. I mean, look at these panels:

(view spoiler)

Such great atmospheric artwork.

Art matters to me with graphic novels because if I didn't care about it I'd just read a regular old novel. So I appreciate when both the story and artwork come together to make something fantastic, and this is one of those times.

Just for fun, one of the variant covers:

(view spoiler)

That cracks me up.

Kemper says

I love Scott Snyder writing Batman, but this is one of those cases where he tried to put 10 lbs. of story in a 5 lb. sack.

The rebooted origin continues with a fledgling Batman trying to stop a complicated scheme created by the Riddler involving Doctor Death that leaves Gotham devastated. He's also struggling to figure out where Bruce Wayne fits into his vigilante plans as well as coming to terms with characters like Jim Gordon and Alfred.

As I noted when I reviewed Zero Year - Secret City, Snyder wisely sped by the standard points of the history of Batman. Bruce Wayne's parents are murdered in front of him, he travels the world learning crime fighting skills, he realizes that he needs a symbol to bring justice to Gotham, yada, yada, yada. Those are the fixed points in the Batman universe, and while you can tweak them, you can't change the basics.

Snyder treats Bruce donning the cape & cowl as the beginning of this rather than the end point, and that's the best part of the story. Seeing a younger, reckless and more arrogant Bruce think he can wage a one-man war on crime with no help and getting taught some harsh lessons is great stuff. The character interactions between an angry young Batman and Jim Gordon and Alfred were some of the best bits. Snyder also continues to deftly weave in some nods to past versions of Batman like things will remind fans of *No Man's Land*, *The Dark Knight Returns* and *The Dark Knight Rises* movie.

Unfortunately, the story starts collapsing under its own weight and at times feel like it's descending into a Grant Morrison level of confusion. I would have preferred if Snyder would have focused in on a young Batman dealing with one major villain rather than two and operating in essentially a post-apocalyptic Gotham for a large chunk of the story. I guess you could make the point that it required something that catastrophic to get Batman recognized as a force for good by the city so that the cops aren't constantly chasing after him, but it really feels like way too much is going on at times.

Jayson says

(A-) 83% | Very Good

Notes: It's Gotham in lush, dystopian splendor: a wild, malignant overgrowth, prophetic of monsters and madness to come.

Gianfranco Mancini says

After the Joker one, another good volume about another classic bat-enemy (and the first part with Doctor Death modern incarnation was great too).

Snyder & Capullo's Batman reminds me a lot Nolan's cinematographic one...
I can hear Hans Zimmer's theme in my mind while reading climax scenes! :D

Alejandro says

The Riddler never has been better!

This collected edition features #25-27, 29-33 from the comic book "Batman".

Creative Team:

Writers: Scott Snyder & James Tynion IV

Illustrators: Greg Capullo & Andy Clarke

WHAT HAPPENED WITH ISSUE #28?

First of all, if you care to read the explanation of what comic book issues are collected in this edition, you may find odd that issue #28 is missing, but as I already explained in the review of previous volume, you will find that issue #28 in the Volume #6 *Graveyard Shift* that collects several stand-alone stories published along the run of the title.

WHERE DID I READ THIS BEFORE?

I honestly think that this is Scott Snyder's strongest storyline (so far, and considering as something "apart" of the first part told in the previous volume) in his tenure of *Batman* title.

Of course, I can't be blind that besides his solid start with the introduction of The Court of the Owls (as new villains to the Batman's rogue gallery), the rest of his take on the run has been variations of previous concepts developed by other people. *Death in the Family* is based on *The Man Who Laughs* where it's even mentioned those events; the first part of *Zero Year* known as *Secret City* is based on *Year: One* and now this second part known as *Dark City* is based on *No Man's Land*.

Don't take me wrong, I am not saying that he copied the stories, no, his own takes on the stories have a solid original contribution, **BUT** I can't avoid to think that he got a strong inspiration from those previous published storylines.

My feeling (and it's that, a feeling, not like I read about it somewhere) is that it's most likely that Scott Snyder did his superb job on *The Black Mirror* and...

...Bam! Crash! Kapow! He was appointed as the new writer of Batman in DC Comics that since is its most best-selling character is certainly a **HUGE** responsibility and demanding. I figured that he must had the idea for The Court of the Owls, so he wasn't nervous about taking the job, and the storyline became very popular, so the responsibility and demanding got bigger and he was out of fresh ideas (totally fresh from the start) so he consulted the lore of the character and he got inspired to do his own versions of the mentioned storylines. I am not reproaching anything (well, his take on The Joker was too soft for my taste and/or expectations due the selected title) since definitely with the long journey of *Zero Year* showed that he was able to keep up the demanding job of being the writer of Batman.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS CITY?

Bruce Wayne has become The Batman just few weeks ago but now there are too many things in scenario.

Gotham City is suffering a major blackout with a super-storm coming.

The citizens are suffering not only due the power shortage but also of robberies and mugging. GCPD Commissioner Loeb is fully focused orchestrating a massive manhunt down on The Batman.

Lucius Fox is keeping some secrets even from Bruce Wayne.

Lieutenant Jim Gordon is trying to figure out what to think about this “Batman” and his real intentions, and his own past will be intersected with the one of Bruce Wayne and that fateful night.

A brand-new version of classic villain “Doctor Death” is leaving a grotesque trail of bodies around Gotham City.

And of course, there is...

...The Riddler.

WHO IS THE RIDDLER?

In this Volume #5 *Zero Year – Dark City*, Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo continue their tale about the origin before the origin of The Batman.

Between the writing of Snyder and the illustrations of Capullo, this is easily their masterpiece in the run (so far).

The “first appearance” of The Riddler in Gotham City is told for a new generation of readers and this enigmatic character never has been better.

Edward Nygma is “fired” as the questionable strategic consultant of Wayne Enterprises and since ironically nobody knows who he is, I mean, nobody knows that he exists, Nygma set up his masterpiece plan to make sure that **EVERYBODY** in Gotham City will know who is The Riddler for the rest of their lives.

Bruce Wayne is just beginning to be The Batman, and while he already faced (pun intended) the masqueraded Red Hood Gang, he will realize soon enough that his real baptism of fire will be against The Riddler, who will test him in body and mind far beyond what Bruce Wayne thought possible and victory is uncertain.

Zero Year – Dark City is a must-read by any Batman fan but also for fans of The Riddler.

???? ???? #BookDiet2019 says

Zero Year had its share of downs. The first three issues (*Secret City*) challenged Snyder and co. to set up important pieces before they go in motion for the next installments, often favoring emotionally-nuanced characterizations than action-oriented sequences to tell the story, which eventually paid off when *Dark City*'s issues #24 and #25 rolled around because these two are definitely the best of the series for me because all

that build-up I witnessed on the first three arcs was realized in their well-balanced and tantalizing pages. However, there had been pacing issues on #26 and #27 (the former suffered anti-climactic brevity, while the latter suffered having too much story to tell with little room to expound on them). And then we took a break from the series to get a sneak preview of *Batman: Eternal* for issue #28 which was quite an effective decision for readers to truly look forward to the double-sized issue #29.

That last installment of *Dark City* was at least emotionally satisfying for me even with a couple of misses here and there that are mostly technical or have grating implications (like that big-ass Bat-blimp. I mean, Bruce Wayne has made a donation of blimps for the city so how the hell won't the GCPD make the connection sooner or later that the prodigal Bruce might also the caped crusader since his return and Batman's appearance are already so perfectly timed together? Wouldn't that make them incompetent imbeciles if right after *Zero Year* wraps up, they won't follow the lead on that Bat-limp?) But I digress. It has been a great ride that didn't disappoint fans (and only annoys every now and then but only when you really nitpick), all thanks to Snyder, Capullo, Miki and FCO.

Next, we have *Savage City*. It opens up with a dream sequence from Bruce Wayne. He wakes up from that and finds himself in an almost fairy tale-esque setting: Gotham City is presently infested with shrubbery and forestry (thanks to Pamela Isley's plant formula which the Riddler stole) while its despondent citizenry haplessly shuffle through their lives, waiting for a hero who has only woken up, and one who is still unsure how to undo the terrible 'curse' that intellectual narcissist Edward Nygma has cast. Looking through the illustrations, my mind just started having nostalgic recollections of *Sleeping Beauty* and it certainly fits the atmospheric tone and mood of the entire issue.

This is the foremost reason the storytelling itself spoke to me resonantly. I love a murky setting which most fairy tales have, especially when there's the general good and evil forces thrown into the mix. Nygma as the Riddler is a pompous, self-serving man who claims to have the higher ground by challenging the city to 'get smart or die', taunting them to one-up him through a sick game of riddles. So far, no one has defeated him in this mental battle and this is definitely the side of the Riddler that I can get into because Edward Nygma had always believed he is intellectually gifted and it distraught him to be surrounded by lesser minds. This riddle game of his is also his way to show off and make people around him inferior which definitely strokes that bombastic ego of his. The expanse of the artwork and illustrations by Capullo, Miki and FCO are (and I cannot stress this any more than I already have since the beginning of *Zero Year*) is sheer perfection; the attention to detail and coloring are staggering. Each page is just so full of lush; even the grittier action sequences look pretty.

The comic book medium is a rich tapestry that combines the elements of storytelling narrative and visual artistry so in reading, reviewing and appreciating the content of a comic book issue, one must never neglect to take the aesthetic appeal that complements the written passages within. Scott Snyder's *Zero Year* issues have been widely acclaimed not only for its scope of story but also the splendid collaboration among Greg Capullo (penciler), Danny Miki (inker) and FCO (colorist) to produce some of the most engaging and stunning artwork and illustrations that truly capture the essence of Snyder's stories as they come to life in the pages.

Another thing to commend for this saga are the covers which range from minimalist depictions of objects to beautifully detailed portraits that have symbolic meanings. The cover for this volume falls on the latter category. One of the most iconic images of Batman is whenever he's standing on a skyscraper somewhere, his figure but a shadow across the ominous dark sky. However, in this cover, we see Batman crouching almost in defeat on top of a gargoyle that is covered in shrubbery while the sun sets on his side. Batman has a bow but no arrow which could indicate his aimlessness as well. It evokes an emotion of hopelessness as if

Batman himself has been weighed down by something so heavy he can't stand anymore. And yet hope is on the horizon as signified by the sun rising.

It's really a moving illustration and one that paints the events inside this comic book issue so accurately.

Readers will be so lost in the story and action in the past issues that we might overlook Bruce Wayne's character development in all of this, but we will see how far he has come along from the early issues where he is angry and vindictive because finally, he understands that being Batman is not some sort of mission to avenge his parents alone. It's not just about striking fear in the hearts of criminals. It's a true act of altruism foremost where he has to stop being just a man with a haunted past but become more of an unkillable ideal that lives on for hope's sake. Bruce has acknowledged that he wants to be a hero, one who is flawed yet determined to stand back up again in every failure.

He has acknowledged that this isn't a self-serving mission he is carrying out; being Batman also means championing the citizens of Gotham; showing them that there is always going to be a fighting chance in hell as long as you keep holding on to the belief that the darkest of times will always be followed by the brightest. I recommend this series for three reasons:

- **You're a long-time Batman fan and you probably had this on your bookshelf for a while, waiting for the series to end and making sure the reviews are positive:** Fear not, Bat-geek. You won't be disappointed when you get around to reading this, preferably by also dropping everything right now and just go for it!
- **You only knew and enjoyed Batman through television or the Nolan trilogy:** This will definitely be a good side-by-side comparison with Batman Begins which is essentially a great origin story for Bats. However, Zero Year offers more nuanced characterizations, plot lines and callbacks to previous adaptations in all mediums that Batman had embodied throughout the years. There is a strong cinematic style in Capullo's illustrations that will be visually appealing as well.
- **You want to start reading comics and Batman is a superhero you hugely favor and you want to start from the beginning:** Though this is the New 52 where DC comics in general have been rebooted, I think Zero Year is a great place to start with in correlation to the classic Bat origin story Year One. It makes little difference if you decide on that one or this one first as long as you BOTH read them.

RECOMMENDED: 10/10

DO READ MY BATMAN COMICS REVIEWS AT:

Richard says

★★★1/2

While it's a bit uneven, silly and confusing at times (where the hell did the Bat-Blimp come from?), and doesn't flow as well as I would have liked, there are some really good ideas in this sequel to Zero Year - Secret City, which is Scott Snyder's take on the introduction of Batman to Gotham City. There's a nifty little *Dark Knight Rises*-style idea with Batman struggling to save a slightly dystopian Gotham taken over by The Riddler, all while in a soiled t-shirt, army pants, and cowl, riding a beat-up dirtbike.

While James Gordon was barely in the previous book, he has much more of a presence here, and Snyder has a great new take on his character, that might feel controversial to some. Not only is there a hint that Gordon's past as a cop might not be as straight and narrow and idealistic as you might think, there's also the idea that he and Bruce Wayne have a history dating back to the deaths of Bruce's parents, with Bruce growing up blaming him along with the other bent cops in the city for the violence that lead to his parent's deaths. It not only provides a past that Gordon has to overcome, but also a grudge that Bruce has to overcome as well. In Zero Year, Bruce is a cocky, angry 25-year-old who, throughout the two books, has to learn to put aside the anger, learn that the only way to really save the city is with the help of others, and become a true symbol of hope that Gotham needs.

Sesana says

Wow, Snyder. I really liked the first volume of Zero Year, but this is even better. Retelling the early days of Batman is quite a challenge, especially with somebody else's take being so highly regarded. I got to say, I like this one better.

I like how much younger Bruce feels. He's still single-minded and completely devoted to his crusade without exception, but he seems less... weighed down, if you will. Which stands to reason, doesn't it? He leads a crushing life, in every sense. It's kind of heart breaking to see a slightly younger Alfred, who hasn't quite given up on hope that Bruce could have a normal life. There's a scene at the end of the book where Alfred imagines a possible future where Bruce allows himself to meet a normal girl, love her, marry her, and have a normal family. And knowing what we know, it's such a punch. Alfred has been accepting of Bruce as Batman for so long that we forget there was a point he hoped he would have a happy, normal life, and a point when he gave up that hope.

Riddler is so rarely cool, or threatening, but he's both here. He's very, very smart, as he should be, and a very convincing threat. Yes, I do suspect that Snyder took some inspiration from The Dark Knight Rises by having a major villain cut off Gotham from the outside world. That's not a bad thing, not here. As a Riddler plot, it makes sense, and this Riddler is actually a dangerous and frightening villain. Well done, Snyder.

I was kind of nervous when I saw that Snyder was going to be delving back into times past, but clearly he knew what he was doing. I guess I should have trusted him.

Sam Quixote says

Remember Jim Carrey in Batman Forever? I don't think Riddler has ever recovered - until now. Scott Snyder writes what has to be Riddler's best book ever in this final part to the epic Zero Year storyline.

The Red Hood gang has been dealt with but before Batman has a chance to catch his breath, the Riddler has taken the city hostage by taking away its power and plunging it into darkness. He's also enlisted the help of Dr Karl Helfern aka Dr Death, whose bone research has gotten a bit out of control, as well as Dr Pamela Isley's research to turn the Dark City into the overgrown Savage City.

The two volume Zero Year storyline has been divided up into three mini-arcs: Secret City (Vol 4), Dark City

and Savage City (Vol 5). If Secret City was a mixture of Year One and Killing Joke, Dark City is a mash note to the two Frank Miller classics, Year One and The Dark Knight Returns, while Savage City is a blend of No Man's Land, the Arkham Asylum games and The Dark Knight Rises.

So why not a full marks/rave review of the latest brilliant Snyder/Greg Capullo Batman book? It's mostly great but I do have a few minor gripes, so I'll get those out of the way first. Essentially it comes down to length: Zero Year, while hugely ambitious and largely successful, ended up being one arc too long, namely Savage City.

The story reaches a climax at the end of Dark City that the finale of Savage City can't hope to match. What's more exciting: Batman fighting a monster on a blimp in the middle of a storm in the sky or Batman answering a riddle in a colourful room? Exactly. Not to mention I'm not a fan of No Man's Land so Savage City really didn't work for me (except for the art). If this storyline had been shorter, I think the book would have been that much better.

Also, let's be clear: at this point, this is no longer a Batman origin story. Bruce Wayne became Batman at the end of Volume 4: Secret City - besides gaining the familiar gadgets like the giant penny and the bat signal being created, there's really nothing else to say about his origin. This volume is instead a look at the early days of Batman.

Or you could say this is the origin of Batman and Gordon's relationship, which it is. And that's fine because Snyder writes both characters really well and I liked their interactions, except so many of Gordon's actions are contrived to make him be as superhuman as Batman. Like when Batman's escaping the SWAT team (an inversion of the same scene that closed out Year One), Batman pops up in Gotham harbour - at the exact same spot where Gordon happens to be sat in a boat, alone, and away from the GCPD. My, what a coincidence!

And in that same scene, Gordon happens to relate to Batman - not knowing that he's Bruce Wayne - an incredibly pertinent story that's been bothering Bruce about Gordon's integrity, the explanation of which helps bring the two together. Oh, the coincidences! Then later in Savage City, Snyder's got Gordon doing ridiculous Batman stuff like leaping off of the sides of skyscrapers into flooded subway entrances - come on!!

That finale too - wow. It's the scene after the riddles and really hits the whole Batman/Gotham connection way too hard on the nose. Especially as the scene following it again re-emphasizes that Bruce's true love is the city itself and can never be another person, much less a girlfriend. I felt it was just a bit too much at that point (though, if you're a fan of Superhero Cafe on YouTube, you'll love that Alfred literally says "because you're Batman!").

As for the positives about this arc, it's basically everything else! The fact that Snyder completely rehabilitated the Riddler to become a major threat to Batman, as he should be, is the best thing about this arc. Snyder emphasises his technical side with his robotic creations helping him keep the city in his thrall, showing just how much potential the character has. Dark City is Riddler's finest hour.

My favourite aspect of this arc - and really all of Snyder's Batman books - is how much of Batman's history he puts into it. He's said many times that he works for DC but he writes for the fans and it really shows in his comics. If you're as big a Batman fan as me, you'll love playing spot the reference in the pages. He goes as far back as the early days of Batman with the Dr Death character to the recent Arkham Asylum games, with all those Riddler boxes and devices scattered across Gotham. Even the "goddamn Batman" makes a

censorious appearance, a nod to Miller's lesser Batman moment amidst so many of his glorious ones.

Capullo gets in on the references too. Some of the best art in this book features his take on Miller's iconic Batman silhouette against the lightning storm backdrop. And his design for the jumping Batmobile is incredible - the man spent two days trying to make that schematic work and it looks absolutely brilliant on the page.

The big scenes are pulled off beautifully like the blimp fight in the storm but what tickled me the most was the smaller scenes. Like when Gotham is blacked out, looters are stealing stuff from a mom 'n' pop store, the mother protecting her daughter and the POV is the little girl's. We briefly see Batman then her mother's outline in front of her but on the edges we see the looters being beaten up. Batman's gone before she knows it but she pulls out a torch and a pen and draws a bat symbol on it - the first Bat signal! Totally brilliant, and that's just one page!

The last volume was arguably as good an origin as Batman's ever had, up there with Miller and Mazzuchelli's Year One. This volume is an excellent continuation of the story and also the best Riddler story you'll ever read. It may be overlong but there's a lot to recommend it. Overall, Zero Year has been a remarkable success - one more notch on the utility belt for Snyder and Capullo!

Mike says

Fucking. Gorgeous. Art. Even if Snyder was one of those writers who thought they had to explain everything (or someone who doesn't say their dialogue out loud as they're writing it), the pages would be worth a look just for the composition, the cinematic eye or the colours.

You know how some comics look like a clown sneeze, they're so garishly overdone with the whole colour spectrum? Well it sure makes me admire the shit out of anyone who can dabble the whole palette and come away looking...elegant.

Elegant is not a bad description for Snyder's dialogue either. It's actually fascinating to watch Snyder tread past the work of Frank Miller (and a nice touch by Capullo to evoke DKR in one panel - or three, by my count). It's not like he's retreading or cowering in the shadows - he's actually taking a few good moments and character flaws and updating them to a reasonably better writing style.

I've heard other reviewers say that this story makes Riddler a darker, more menacing villain. To me, it just makes him bigger. Not the narrow-minded obsessive, but a smart guy with big, multi-layered plans, and the will (or lack of conscience/self-doubt) to execute them.

This is a good set of surprises, for all our expectations that Riddler is still the laughable caricature we knew from Frank Gorshin and Jim Carrey. And Snyder serves up other surprises too, letting us fall prey to (and forget) our expectations of the old guard of characters we've known too long in this Batverse.

More surprising - or at least more pleasing - is how much Snyder imbues into Batman's personal philosophy. There are a few monologues on why he does it, and I'll be damned if I don't find myself falling in love with this character, this particular Batman. Not the brooding, menacing loner of recent times, and not the super-smart detective - just the dude who believes so strongly in why he's doing what he's doing - not for himself or his parents, but for the city and its lessers.

Anne says

4.5 stars

Origin of the Giant Penny!

Ok, maybe nobody else cared, but I thought it was cool of Snyder to give that massive Penny that Bruce keeps in the Batcave, a fresh start.

Dear Mr. Snyder,

Could you do the Dinosaur next?

Sincerely,

Anne

This is the second arc of Zero Year, which is Snyder's New 52 origin story for Batman.

It's not as dark as some of the previous origins, but it's not exactly light and fluffy, either.

This is a younger version of the Dark Knight. He's fallible, relatively inexperienced as Batman, and more mouthy than what we're used to seeing.

He sort of reminds me of Dick Grayson, with the snappy comebacks during fight scenes, you know?

Did I just say Snappy?

Holy shit. I did.

Did you know, that every time someone uses snappy in a sentence...

Somewhere an angel gets his AARP card?

That's deep, man. DEEP.

Anyhoo. Edward Nigma (last seen abandoning Wayne Industries) has returned as a full-fledged super villain.

The Riddler!

He's planning on taking Gotham hostage, and cleansing the earth, so to speak.

Can Batman unravel the clues fast enough to stop him?

Surprisingly...not at first.

Butbutbutbutbut, you say. He's the goddamn Batman!

Yeah, not so much. Or at least, not quite yet.

Butbutbutbutbut, you say. Batman is too well-prepared to be caught unawares!

Yeah, but nobody is born with Bruce Wayne's level of paranoia. That sort of thing is learned.

I mean, unless you're schizophrenic, of course.

So, I'm thinking that by showing Batman pull an epic fail, Snyder is giving us a solid reason for his wildly detailed contingency plans.

And also the Penny. Because, *really*, that was a highlight for me.

There were a couple of scenes I raised my eyebrow at, but, on the whole, this was another solid Snyder/Capullo team-up.

And if you're not reading this title, then you need to turn in you Cool Kid card.

Seriously.

Thank you, NetGalley!

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