



## Penguin: Pain and Prejudice

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**Penguin: Pain and Prejudice** Gregg Hurwitz , Szymon Kudranski (Illustrator) , Jason Aaron (Writer) , Jason Pearson (Illustrator)

Bestselling author Gregg Hurwitz examines the painful and dark past of one of Batman's most devious foes. How did young Oswald Cobblepot go from being the apple of his mother's eye to the leader of underworld gangs and adversary of The Caped Crusader?

## Penguin: Pain and Prejudice Details

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**Download and Read Free Online Penguin: Pain and Prejudice** Gregg Hurwitz , Szymon Kudranski (Illustrator) , Jason Aaron (Writer) , Jason Pearson (Illustrator)

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# From Reader Review Penguin: Pain and Prejudice for online ebook

## Aaron says

A valiant attempt to humanize and dig deeper into the psyche of The Penguin, but ultimately this is just too familiar of a storyline. It's missing a certain creative push to knock it over the edge of rote "damaged person becomes a villain" story into something more unique and nuanced. Oddly, I kept thinking "I've seen this all before" as I read it, and then DC went the extra mile by including, as a bonus, an old Jason Aaron story about the Penguin that is almost exactly the same. It doesn't do your story any favors when you hold something identical up right next to it in the same collection.

In any case, Hurwitz does a good job with what is there. His dialogue feels noir-y without being over the top, and he does his best to highlight the various traumas from Penguin's life in a way that reveals why he's making certain decisions in the present. He's also great at writing Batman himself, whose presence is only lightly felt in this story, which makes him all the more imposing and important when he shows up.

However, I never got a real sense of what allows the Penguin to perfectly run a crime empire right under Batman's nose. Sure, I get that he was picked on as a child and as such has an obsessive tendency to visit vengeance upon those who mock him, but how does that factor into being a criminal genius? It actually makes him overly emotional and reactive, which is the last thing the head of an underworld empire should be. Hurwitz doesn't explore how Penguin manages to justify both of those aspects of his personality. We're just shown these two fairly at-odds traits and expected to believe they can co-exist, right up to the point where Penguin blows everything by being, again, overly emotional and reactive. It's a little hard to swallow.

There's also a fair amount of telling instead of showing going on. For instance, at one point, Penguin reveals he's utterly destroyed the life of a man who insulted him. But, we don't see him carry any of it out. He just tells the man all the terrible things he's done and we have to buy it. It's kind of... boring. I'd rather see these things happen to this guy and see the Penguin relish in them than just hear them read aloud like a grocery list of atrocities.

Anyway, this felt like it was on the right track to be a pretty solid and unique look at the Penguin, but instead it kind of peters out, transforming into a very standard tragic romance, complete with a blind woman who can't see how hideous Penguin truly is. I'd say this one is easily missable.

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## Anne says

This was really a great Penguin story, but it was so *sad*!

I mean, on one hand I felt bad for *little* Oswald, but at the same time, he was a horrifyingly creepy kid.

I've honestly never thought of the Penguin as a dangerous villain, but this comic changed my mind. He was a total psychopath when it came to dealing with people who he perceived had wronged him.

*\*shudder\**

Probably the most disturbing thing in the entire book was the incestuous undertones between Cobblepot and his mother.

Ewwwwwww!

Maybe being a mom myself made that whole relationship seem even ickier, but I doubt it. Gross!

(view spoiler)

OhMyGod! It burns! I can't un-see that! ACK!

Like I said, the whole book is just sad. I know the blurb says something about him possibly being considered an anti-hero and maybe finding true love, but I just didn't see that at all.

He certainly wasn't what I would consider an anti-hero, unless you think that bad people *never ever* do anything nice. Occasionally, even the worst people will do *something* kind for someone they like. And as far as finding True Love? It didn't seem that way to me. Nobody as crazy as the Penguin could ever really love another person.

Well, he loved his f\*#@ed-up mother, but that's about it!

It may sound like I hated this, but it was really just one of those books that was *good*, but hard to read.

And I never thought I'd say that about a comic with Penguin as the title character.

This one's dark, folks.

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## Roxanne says

There's never enough penguin, he's one of those that gets overlooked or helps another villain out but we don't get to see that much of oswald. This however focuses just on him, and it's so dark and gritty showing how calculating and cold the guy is. You kinda get used to villains banging on about their plans or giving people 24 hour notice to get out or leave, penguin on the other hand will invite you into a room and tell you he's already fucked up your life and there's nothing you can do and he does that without lifting a finger i mean you don't get more badass than that.

The plot flashes back to his youth, and little cobblepot was so adorable it's like you wanna hate the guy he became but then you remember lil oswald crying holding his dead bird and ya like aw fuck do what you want penguin seriously, it does mess with you because the shit penguin does is insane but yet you feel bad for the guy. Also batsy does show up but it's one of those cases where he's butting in a little too much, reminds me of the killing joke where ya like batman you about to fuck up big time, he doesn't royally fuck up as much but they make batman seem clunky and out of place in this like he's the odd one out and it really adds to the story.

Overall it's awesome and definitely worth picking up i love origin stories you get to understand a bit more about the man plus do your best penguin impression.

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## Fugo Feedback says

Me gustó la idea general, que es la misma de siempre: Oswald Cobblepot es un nene feo al que maltratan y discriminan desde chiquito. Crece resentido y sintiéndose inútil, pero con una inteligencia por encima de lo normal que le permite ir escalando en el mundo criminal y de paso vengarse de aquellos que lo jodieron, hermanos incluido. Ya en el presente, con todo un imperio criminal construido a sus espaldas, se enamora y a la vez trama ootro de sus planes llenos de resentimiento y rabia, pero Batman lo frena. No es que sea una historia muy original que digamos pero la verdad que está bien contada.

En el aspecto del dibujo, mis opiniones son más contradictorias: Szymon Kudranski es muy buen dibujante, pero muy mal historietista. Sus caras, cuerpos, gestos, escenarios, y toda la bola, la verdad que se ven muy bien. Pero a la hora de narrar, de hacer un planteo interesante en la página, de resaltar lo que se supone que tiene que resaltar en la página, etc, no logra mucho. Sólo muchas masas de negro y confusión. Y la verdad

que todo el masacote oscuro del coloreado tampoco suma.

Una lectura pasable para el que quiera probar algo reciente de Batman independiente y completamente autoconclusivo de las sagotas que desarrolla el amigo Snyder actualmente.

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### **Chad says**

Greg Hurwitz has done what I thought was pretty much impossible. To take a joke villain like the Penguin and make him scary as hell. The Penguin takes the ultimate revenge on the smallest perceived slight and at the same time give the ultimate reward to the smallest kindness. Be rude to him unknowingly and you might have your business shut down, your wife murdered, your kid given an incurable disease, your neighbors burned alive in a house fire and yourself framed as a drug dealer.

We also see him as the kingpin of Gotham. Sending thieves out to steal jewelry to give to his mother. We also gets flashbacks to his life as a child. How his brothers and father endlessly picked on him and mysteriously died one by one. Then we see his weird Oedipus like fixation on his mother.

Szymon Kudranski's art is dark and ominous, perfect for the series. My one complaint is that it is sometimes too dark and closeup in some of the panels and I didn't really know what was happening in those areas.

Finally, there's a one shot in the back by Jason Aaron that appears to be the treatise for this series.

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### **Brady Smith says**

This was a much better book than I expected, a nice little back story for one of the Batmans more famous foes. Not only did this title make me care about the character, it made me empathise with him one page and detest him the next, great stuff! Batman is used sparingly but you know he is always there lurking in the background and he is at his most menacing in this title, more so than I've seen in a long time, when Batman is hunting the penguin through his house and taking the guards down with stealth you cannot help but think "awesome!" Whilst my only gripe is that the artwork is a bit too dark at times, the fact that it is panelled so well more than makes up for this, even with the flashbacks you never lose grip of what is going on. This isn't penguins killing joke as people say, this is penguins Joker, as in joker by Brian azzarello, it's dark, menacing, unsettling at times but more importantly always awesome!

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### **Michael O'Brien says**

A fascinating story of a very complex anti-hero, the Penguin. Of Batman villains, most seem most interested in either the Joker or Harlequin, but the Penguin is, to me, one of the more psychologically interesting. In this story, we see Penguin at the height of his game --- wealthy and powerful. But, after reading his past, it's clear that these are incidental. In childhood, despised by his father, bullied by his older brothers, ridiculed and humiliated by his classmates, but loved unconditionally by his mother, the Penguin is twisted and tormented into the creature he will become in adulthood. Which is to say cruel, ruthless, and vicious --- but retaining a small, last remaining vestige of compassion. Sin and cruelty from the past beget a bumper crop of more sin and cruelty in the man that will become the Penguin.

Unlike other villains, it is neither power nor wealth that Penguin craves, but respect. Which does not come his way naturally. Clearly, if who you are now is what you were when, then Penguin's formative years have lead him to conclude that love, with the exception of his beloved mother, is not a reality --- and that, if love is not possible, then life is but a choice between either humiliation or fear -- and that to be feared is better. Penguin's accrual of wealth and power are means to an end --- to make sure that the humiliation and ridicule never happen again --- ever --- and to take action when they do.

Add to this bitter past a brilliant cunning, high intelligence, and patient calculation, and, in Penguin, you may well have someone pathological in ways even beyond that of the Joker. His way of thinking differs little from Josef Stalin or the members of North Korea's Kim Dynasty --- who would understand the Penguin's methods perfectly. An insult, a trifling gesture of disrespect -- and the Penguin doesn't torture or kill you ---- he destroys your entire life, piece by piece, cruelly, mercilessly in such a way you wish for a quick end. Not hesitating for a moment to go after your loved ones and friends if that is the best way to destroy you.

In this plot, after the death of his mother, Penguin does encounter a blind woman --- also being bullied and ridiculed -- and they establish a connection. Possibly the first and only member of the opposite sex. other than Penguin's mother, to love and accept Penguin as he is. But, tragically, right as the two finally bridge those last barriers between them, Penguin cannot restrain his drives to go after those who, in his view, despise him --- blowing his one chance at retaining a touch with the rest of humanity, and forsaking his companion.

The story ends in my opinion, sadly with Batman intervening to stop Penguin's villainy and Penguin losing his last chance at humanity --- but the crafty bird always has a backup plan. This story is wide open for a sequel!

Overall, I enjoyed this story immensely. One of the best graphic novels I've ever read.

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## **Nicole Pramik says**

*Pain and Prejudice*, written by Gregg Hurwitz, is a graphic novel from the Batman universe that's actually a compilation of five issues. (The issues, in numeric order, are "Cold World," "Beautiful Boy," "Blind Love," "Practice Run," and "Touch of Death.") Here, readers are treated to Oswald Cobblepot's origin story, from his troubled childhood to his rise as a king of crime in Gotham under the infamous moniker the Penguin.

The Penguin (aka Oswald Cobblepot) has always been my favorite Batman nemesis throughout the years, whether it was the colorful, campy character portrayed by Burgess Meredith...

The still campy yet decidedly disturbed take by Danny DeVito in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*...

To the more recent, less campy yet delightfully dark young adult incarnation portrayed by Robin Lord Taylor in Fox's drama series "Gotham"...

In any case, every actor has presented his own take on this iconic villain yet manages to retain some of the Penguin's signature personality quirks. Such as Oswald Cobblepot is one seriously sociopathic dude who just

happens to be completely sane (as paradoxical as that sounds). But it's certainly true, and this truth is explored here in *Pain and Prejudice*.

I suppose I have to preface this review by saying that's why I enjoy the Penguin as a villain: unlike the Joker or other Batman adversaries who are just flat-out (bat?) crazy, Cobblepot retains his sanity, utilizes mob-inspired tactics, and exhibits a gangster's business sense. Yet despite these criminal schemes, he has been known to serve as a snitch at times (to Batman and/or Jim Gordon); thus, Cobblepot does some good that he doesn't purposely intend, which keeps him from being utterly despicable as far as bad guys go. Make no mistake - the Penguin is not a charitable man nor does he commit good deeds for the sake of moral propriety. Instead, he does what he feels will benefit himself and his aims; and if that means ratting out another baddie, then that's what he'll do. Thus, his moral compass isn't lost but it is sorely off-kilter.

But back to the graphic novel. I've never been a graphic novel reader though I take no issue with the medium nor do I view graphic novels as glorified comic books. I just never found one that retained my interest or that wasn't some kind of socio-political sermon (I'm looking at you, V for Vendetta!). But thankfully, *Pain and Prejudice* did hold my interest and didn't preach. Granted, there are interesting themes that are covertly addressed here, from revenge to the nature of love; but this graphic novel's intent, first and foremost, is to entertain and enlighten readers as to the origins of a DC super-villain.

The novel begins with Cobblepot's birth, which is met with fanfare only by his mother. In this version of his story, Penguin is despised by his father, who eventually dies from pneumonia, leaving Oswald to be raised by his mother along with his siblings. Oswald is clearly the runt of the litter as he's mercilessly tormented. Unlike some villains who are bad simply because that's the way they're written to be, you feel (and see) little Oswald's rejection and pain, which he uses to his advantage when it comes to plotting revenge. The abuse he suffers isn't justified, but when one act serves as the final straw, he goes after those who have hurt him deeply.

Even from an early age, Cobblepot proves why it's unwise to mess with him as, case in point, he actually murders his own brothers in various way, all cleverly designed to look like accidents. Hence, Oswald teaches himself that the best way to combat those who slight you is by striking back, and it's a habit that follows him into adulthood.

This graphic novel skips ahead of his teen years (heaven forbid what those were like!) to Cobblepot's adult self, which is colder and more calculated than his younger self, as he proudly reigns as one of Gotham's kings of crime. At the heart of his operations is a desire to exact revenge upon those he feels has bullied him, no matter how small the infraction. This brings a far crueler color to Penguin's character that I hadn't encountered before yet I think his personality grows because of it. These portions are often juxtaposed with scenes of Oswald's childhood or him tending to his ill mother in the present, showing he can be a man of deep cruelty as well as sincere compassion, and he can easily swing back and forth between the two like a pendulum. This creates a paradox that, for me, makes a great villain: Oswald Cobblepot is both black and white (no penguin pun intended...well, maybe just a little) as he can devise devious, sometimes murderous, schemes yet his heart isn't entirely dead. Thus, he avoids becoming a stock villain who is bad "just because." There is a reason to the Penguin's methodology, as morally flawed as it is.

But as dark as *Pain and Prejudice* can be - both in its visual execution and its overall story - there is a bright spot through the introduction of the character Cassandra, a blind woman whom Oswald falls for. Yes, this sort of "blind love" plot has been done before, but I enjoyed it as Oswald seems to truly care for Cassandra and he struggles to understand the concept of love or devotion devoid of strings. For instance, Oswald lavishes expensive (and usually stolen) gifts upon Cassandra, but she's more interested in getting to know

him as a person than in accepting trinkets. She tries to explain to Oswald that, if I may quote from the Beatles, you "can't buy me love;" and while Oswald listens to her, he never completely understands this concept.

Furthermore, Oswald's care for his ill, aging mother reveals a tender side, showing that he is capable of love but the ability has been buried deep. Similarly, Oswald still tries to please his mother by giving her gifts, polishing her nails, and even building a robot penguin to tend to her needs while he is away. It's sad in a way as it shows that Oswald's only tie with any sense of humanity is his mother as he has no friends, no other family, and no significant other (besides Cassandra). His attempts to care for his mother show how he also tries to seek her approval even as an adult though she's in no position to give it. Overall, Oswald's interaction with Cassandra and his mother avoid becoming saccharine and, instead, generate sympathy for his character while not making him look pathetic.

The novel's latter portions pit Penguin against Batman as the former concocts a scheme to spread chaos and terror throughout Gotham; thus much of the earlier, subdued dramatic tension is replaced with bombastic action and fight sequences. True to form, some of Oswald's inherent camp value is retained here as it's an army of robot penguins that brings most of the melee, but it's not in a childish or cartoony sort of way. Overall, it plays out as a Batman drama should though, to be fair, the Dark Knight is not the focus of this piece, so his scenes are minimal considering the full scope of the narrative. In the end, Oswald learns his lesson so to speak, and everything wraps up as you might assume it does without me unleashing spoilers.

Concerning the illustrations (this is a graphic novel after all), the color scheme is dark but makes good use of a respectful palette that isn't colorful and cheery like a Sunday comics page. I also thought the idea to use sharp lighting for the present day scenes and a muted style for Oswald's flashbacks was a good move and visually enables you to tell the difference as to whether you're witnessing the action in "real time" or as part of a flashback. It also bears noting that all of the scenes from Cobblepot's childhood are rendered in a muted, softly illuminated style. I really liked this as it adds a good bleeding between light and shadows as well as an interesting contrast between the gentle color and lighting scheme and the often emotionally dark scenes.

My only real complaint was, oddly enough, with some of the artwork. As stated, I enjoyed the airbrushed/watercolor-looking style; but during some moments, especially close-up action scenes or character confrontations, the images became a bit blurred and hard to decipher. Overall though, I thought the muted, dark style was suitable for the story and transforms Gotham into a dusky realm that's not entirely dark but isn't a place of heavenly light. In the same way, Penguin is a man of the shadows, possessing both darkness and light. Thus, it's a good, fitting symbolic contrast.

Concerning content, any profanity usage is minimal with only a few PG-level words sporadically used. Violence-wise, Cobblepot often orders gangster-style violence committed against his "enemies." Some scenes depict blood splatter, especially during gunfights, but it avoids realistic gore. In the end, this is a better fit for older Batman fans, particularly teens and adults, due to its tone and thematic elements, and is not a good choice for younger readers (for them, I would recommend something a little more colorful, such as the Batman comic chapter books).

Regarding sexual content, there is some mildly suggestive dialogue (but it's not pervasive) and some panels depict women in revealing clothing or bikini-style "stage wear" as it's no secret that Oswald hand-selects girls to work at his clubs. Yet his relationship with Cassandra remains chaste. There is an implied sensual scene between Oswald's parents that occurs while he is a baby, but the artwork is so dark and blurred, that it's a bit indeterminate. Lastly, there is a scene where Mrs. Cobblepot's doting on her son is a bit odd as she kisses (or licks?) his ear for giving her a present. Some readers have cited that isolated act as being



incestuous though no where does Oswald reciprocate in like fashion nor does anything further happen between them, so I disagree with that theory.

Overall, as far as my first foray into graphic novels goes, I really enjoyed *Pain and Prejudice* both as a narrative and as a work of art. The tone might not be for everyone and possibly only Penguin fans (such as myself) will be attracted to it, but it avoids becoming a socio-political sermon and, instead, serves as a subtle morality tale about one of Gotham's supreme super-villains.

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### **Natalie says**

I signed up for a year of DC Universe, and this is one of the things currently available to read. It was a pretty good story. A very grim-dark and moody tale about the Penguin.

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### **Julius says**

To put it plainly this comic surprised me. Taking a look at its cover I didn't expect much from it, but it was not long before that changed. The story deals with the origin of the Penguin, one of Batman's most well-known villains. From the way it brings across the Penguin's childhood, and the suffering he endured within it, down to the way in which the comic follows his thoughts (both current and past) I found excellent. Even the art, not enough to catch my eye very much in it's form, simply fitted to the story so well that I had to nod my head in its favor. Everything about the comic fitted the story it was telling so very well. I suggest this to anybody who likes a good look at seeing the world from the villain's point of view.

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### **Sam Quixote says**

The Penguin, aka Oswald Cobblepot, is a crime-lord from one of Gotham's oldest and wealthiest families. Diminutive in appearance with a crooked nose, a rotund figure, dressing in blacks and whites, and a love of all things avian, it's easy to see how Penguin came by his cruel nickname. He's always been kind of a joke figure in the Batman world, a small fat man with no real powers, just money, the ever present monocle, umbrella and cigarette holder - really, what's to be scared of? Well Greg Hurwitz doesn't think Penguin's a joke and writes what is essentially his version of "Killing Joke" for this classic Batman villain.

Hurwitz tugs at the heartstrings by making Penguin a figure of mockery from the earliest possible age; spurned by his father but loved by his mother, Penguin grows up with several older brothers who mock and beat him mercilessly, before going to a school where his peers do the same. Isolated by his appearance, he cultivates his precocious intellect to concoct schemes to make his life more bearable - by killing off those who jeer him. Thus are monsters created.

Jumping back and forth from the present to the past, we see the Penguin today as a master of revenge, targeting those he perceives have wronged him, sensitive for even the slightest of slights. But he doesn't just go after the person, he goes after their friends, their family, their pets, their acquaintances; Hurwitz writes Penguin as Don Corleone x 100. We also see Penguin's massive network of contacts and resources, making

him formidable to a single person looking to stop him - like Batman.

Hurwitz gives Penguin a love interest for this book, a blind woman who warms to his personality, and through her we see Penguin's capacity for good - making this story all the more tragic by its conclusion. We also catch glimpses into Penguin's psyche, like how an inferiority complex and bitterness can warp a person on the inside and turn someone who could conceivably make the world a better place but, because of a lack of understanding and love in their formative years, has decided to make the world suffer instead.

This is a 5 issue mini-series, but DC also include a one-shot Penguin comic from 2008 written by Jason Aaron called "He Who Laughs Last..." which, despite its brevity, manages to tell the same story Hurwitz has taken 5 issues to tell in just 1! This mini-series has its roots in Aaron's short comic, and though I enjoyed Hurwitz's book immensely, it made me once again appreciate Jason Aaron's brilliance as a writer and hope he one day returns to Gotham to write a feature length story arc.

"Penguin: Pain and Prejudice" is an inspired and engrossing story reminding readers why this cartoonish villain is one of the all-time greats in Batman's Rogues Gallery, as well as giving us access to the real person behind the reputation. An excellent read, Batman fans will devour this but for those who enjoy a great gothic story, this is well worth a look too.

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### **Cassie R. (cassie-loves-reading) says**

Oh Oswald, such a sad and horrible character. In a good way of course. I wanted to read more about the character after I watched a few Gotham episodes and I thought this would be a good starting point. I thought this story gave a good explanation as to how Oswald became The Penguin. And I love how he compares himself to other people that do bad things and makes Batman think about how they decide who the villains are.

This was a sad story and of course there are no happy endings for villains. What happened to Cassandra was horrible but I thought her interactions with Oswald were great. And I just loved the little Joker cameos. I definitely want to read more about the character now and learn about the other villains in Gotham as well.

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### **Sheida says**

Oswald is a very fascinating villain so I really liked the story here but I wasn't really a fan of the artwork, it was way too dark, you could barely see what was happening.

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### **Pawe? says**

Mroczna i ponura historia o pingwinie. Zdecydowanie najlepiej oddaje wszystko co ma ten z?oczy?ca w g?owie.

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## **Matt Garcia says**

Terrific storyline and dark, foreboding artwork adorn this Penguin origin story. The Penguin is a tragic character who has been belittled his entire life and who is someone that I truly felt sympathy toward. Amazing job done here with such an infamous Batman character.

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