



## Batman: Knightfall

*Dennis O'Neil*

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A savage fight with the supervillain Bane has left Batman virtually crippled and Gotham City defenseless. As Bruce Wayne begins the long process of recovery, he realizes he must choose a successor in his role as the Dark Knight. But is his apprentice ready? Is Gotham City ready? And what will happen when Wayne returns to reclaim Gotham City and his role as the true Batman?

## **Batman: Knightfall Details**

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## From Reader Review Batman: Knightfall for online ebook

### Victor Orozco says

Very Good. Without a doubt a good rundown of the Knightfall/Knightsend series. Having only read the comic book collection to Knightsend I was unbelievably enlightened by the first half of the book. However felt somewhat disappointed in the last half. So many characters were eliminated that could have made it much more exciting. B-

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### Sean Carlin says

Note: I read this novelization in conjunction with the newly released Batman: Knightfall Omnibus Vol. 1, the review of which you can read [here](#).

I hadn't revisited this novel -- or the comics storyline upon which it is based -- since they were first released in the mid-nineties, so as I was approaching the end of Batman: Knightfall Omnibus Vol. 1, rather than wait for the next two volumes to refresh myself on how the story developed (and ultimately resolved), I pulled Dennis O'Neil's novelization off the shelf for the first time since 1994, which covers *Knightfall*, *Knightquest*, and *KnightsEnd*.

O'Neil is a fine wordsmith, and he understands these characters and their world better than probably anyone. As such, this novelization reads like a breeze.

It's not without issues, though. Given the *massive* amount of backstory required to understand the sprawling *Knightfall* saga -- which includes a selective recapitulation of Batman's hagiography, not to mention material covered in Batman: Venom, Batman: Sword of Azrael, and Batman: Vengeance of Bane -- too many of the earliest chapters of this book are weighed down in *exposition*, not swept along through *action*. Many of the chapters are just bald-faced info-dumps without any forward story momentum or value change to speak of. It's not great storytelling.

In addition, this expansive epic was better served in its original serialized presentation; the story as a whole lacks a straightforward narrative unity in prose form. Whereas in the comics, each issue dealt with Batman going after one of the supervillains that had escaped from Arkham (part of a larger overarching conflict), having him deal with the Joker, the Riddler, the Ventiloquist, etc., one at a time makes the whole piece feel disjointed and episodic. A chronicle that was designed to work in comics form -- in 22-page bursts -- doesn't necessarily translate well to other media, particularly a long-form novel, which has its own narrative requirements. (Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* stands as a much better example of how *Knightfall*'s basic conceptual premise could be reduced and reshaped to serve a cohesive, thematically focused through-line, but more on that shortly.)

The lack of narrative cohesion isn't helped by the decision to collectively novelize all three parts of the trilogy: *Knightfall*, *Knightquest*, and *KnightsEnd*. Though O'Neil *does* reshuffle the sequence of events somewhat, presumably because he recognized exactly what I've pointed out here (that what works in a series of single-issue comics can't necessarily be translated verbatim into a novelized composite), there's no concealing the jarring shifts in focus from one segment to the next. For instance, the first section, *Knightfall*, is about a vengeful Bane versus a battered Batman -- fair enough. But Bane is vanquished early in the second

part, *Knightquest*, scarcely to be referenced again, and the focus then shifts to Jean-Paul Valley, a character who's barely been spotlighted up till that point. (More on the problem's with Valley's characterization shortly.) Bruce, meanwhile, is sent off on an adventure in England -- to rescue his therapist (Shondra Kinsolving) and Jack Drake (Robin's father) -- despite the fact that, ya know, *his back was recently broken!* Again, maybe all these concurrent plot threads worked in their original serialized presentation, but in novelistic form, it all seems so disjointed. Lot of things are *happening*, but none of it seems as though its *building* toward an inevitable climax. Novelizing the *Knightfall* trilogy was a noble creative experiment that, ultimately, doesn't cohere.

Now, all that said, the source material had some flaws in its own right, and those seeped into the text of this novel, as well. For instance: Rather than bestowing the mantle of the Bat on Valley, a temperamentally unstable assassin with whom Batman has barely established a baseline of trust, why not have Dick Grayson (Nightwing) do the honors in the interim? To be fair, this *is* addressed -- however fleetingly -- by Robin and/or Alfred, but Bruce unceremoniously dismisses the idea on the grounds that "Nightwing is his own man now."

*Huh?* That's pretty thin -- even by comic-book logic. There have been *plenty* of instances in which Nightwing has pinch-hit for Batman -- and certainly under circumstances as dire as these, Dick would do his part -- so that argument makes *no sense*, especially in light of the only other substitute available: the brainwashed, mercurial Azrael. Bruce doesn't waste so much as a *second* enlisting Valley into action; he spends as much time considering it as he did *dismissing* the possibility of calling up Nightwing. And the whole story is built on the premise that *somebody* needs to step in and deal with the supervillains running loose in Batman's stead, so in Bruce's desperation he turns to Azrael -- which turns out to be a catastrophic miscalculation. This aspect of the story, however, isn't convincingly handled, so the entire conceptual premise rests on a rotten foundation, alas. The whole house of cards comes a-tumblin' down under even rudimentary scrutiny.

I should also note, picking up on a thread I hinted at earlier, that some of the characterization is weak. Tim Drake's Robin has *never* been interesting; they made him *way* too much of a well-adjusted Boy Scout after being burned by criticism that Jason Todd was an unlikable snot. O'Neil establishes in this book that Tim is thirteen-going-on-fourteen, but he carries himself with the demeanor of a preternaturally confident seventeen-year-old; no one, it seems, knew how to write for this character, 'cause no one really bothered to figure out *who he was*. Jason and Damian, though far less admired by the readership than Dick and Tim, were infinitely more compelling and psychologically complex Robins.

And let's discuss, as promised, O'Neil's own creation, Jean-Paul Valley, who transitions overnight from harmless, insecure nerd to violent, entitled jerk. You don't empathize with Valley at all -- you're just waiting for the *real* Batman to come put him in his place. It would've been far more interesting to present a nuanced character who simply took a different approach to being Batman; that would've allowed for a philosophical counterpoint that would've brought thematic complexity to the saga's thesis question: *Is Batman -- with his inviolable code of ethics -- a 20th-century anachronism in an increasingly violent world on the verge of a new millennium?* Alas, that question gets the short shrift (an even more unforgivable transgression here in the novel than it was in the comic), because at no point is empathy established with Jean-Paul. Pity.

Shondra Kinsolving is also a woefully underdeveloped character, and even a somewhat offensive archetype: I mean, she's a *literal* "Magical Negro" -- (view spoiler). The character deserved a better grace note than that -- as did the story itself.

All that said, *Knightfall* was stripped for parts nearly two decades later, resulting in one of the best Batman

stories ever told in *any* medium: Christopher Nolan's cinematic masterpiece *The Dark Knight Rises*. Aside from Bane snapping Batman's back -- clearly the cornerstone image/event that influenced *Rises* -- consider these other shared story points: All of Gotham's supervillains are sprung from captivity to run roughshod over the city; there's a major action sequence in which an underground tunnel is flooded; and Alfred leaves Bruce Wayne's employ under acrimonious circumstances. But Nolan did what the creative personnel of the comics didn't have the freedom and/or courage to do: frame all of that in what would effectively be **the Last Batman Story** -- the account of what happened to the Caped Crusader at the end of his career. *KnightsEnd*, through an unfortunate bit of *deus ex machina*, depicts the restoration of the pre-*Knightfall* status quo (*of course it does*), but Nolan took the concept that was seeded in this story to its ultimate (and irreversible) conclusion, and in turn created what *I* consider to be the finest Batman story of them all. Unlike this novelization, *The Dark Knight Rises* has a focused plot, unified thematics, and a resolution that creates a *new* status quo rather than restoring the old one. And if the closing moments don't send chills down your spine -- a fitting turn of phrase, given the breaking of Batman's back in both stories -- what on earth ever will?

In short: If you're a fan of *The Dark Knight Rises*, or just a Batman enthusiast in general, *Knightfall* is a key story arc from the mythos worth experiencing, but I recommend Batman: *Knightfall* Omnibus Vol. 1 over this novelization. The one thing this book has going for it is a seven-page afterword written by O'Neil himself on the genesis of the project and the versatility of Batman as a folkloric character. Anyone who recalls O'Neil's "From the Den" columns on the letters page of the Batman comics he used to edit knows what a great essayist he is, and how eloquently he speaks to the subject of superhero fiction. Rather than a novelization of *Knightfall*, I'd have preferred this closing statement served as the basis for an entire book on O'Neil's experiences in the business and insights into superhero culture, à la Grant Morrison's *Supergods: What Masked Vigilantes, Miraculous Mutants, and a Sun God from Smallville Can Teach Us About Being Human*. That would be a book well worth reading. Ball's in your court, Mr. O'Neil...

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### **Jonathan Maas says**

I never thought any book could beat Greg Rucka's novelization of Batman: No Man's Land, and though this might not, they're tied for first.

While Batman: No Man's Land took on a great premise, and pushed plot, plot, plot - Batman: *Knightfall* is a bit more interested in introducing the new characters from this series. You think you know Bane? Well if you've just seen the Tom Hardy version, you don't know him until you've read the chapter of his life in this book.

Just a great book, and a great way to think about Batman in a whole new way.

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### **Sara J. (kefuwa) says**

I bought this and the "The Life & Death of Superman" novelisation around the same time. And I remember really enjoying both despite their original versions being graphic novels. This is a cheaper way to experience both storylines - despite the lack of art both were top-notch reads in my book.

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## **Gennadyi says**

do you remember the gorilla-like bane from the really really really really bad batman and robin movie (he was poison ivy's steroid pumped bodyguard) or the wrestler gone nuts character from the animated series? forget them.

this bane is cunning, strategic and utterly brilliant. quietly taking over gotham's underground he lures batman in and destroys him, in body, mind and reputation.

will there be a happy ending?

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## **Alejandro says**

### **Holy great prose novelization, Batman!**

#### **BAT-PROSE NOVEL**

I was real lucky to get this book when it was getting out to the market (back then in 1994) and so, getting the hardcover edition that I totally love it.

When the storyline of *Knightfall* was in comics, I wasn't able to buy them but I was quite eager to read the story.

Even on TPBs would require to buy several volumes, so when I met this gorgeous hardcover edition where in just one book you get the full *Knightfall* story (of course in prose presentation without any illustration) I thought that it was a wise move to buy it.

Not to mention that I saved a lot of the money with it.

Also, I had never read a prose novel with super-heroes (at that moment).

I have read a lot, I mean **A LOT** of comic books, but a prose novel about super-hero genre was something new to me.

So I thought that it was worthy to try it.

I'm truly glad that I did it.

I absolutely loved it!!!

Definitely Batman is a perfect character to read in prose format.

I loved the experience and I totally recommend to anyone who is fan of super-heroes to try this novel.

Also, the book is written by the great Dennis O'Neil who is a veteran in the universe of *Batman* so they couldn't find a better writer to give the job to do the novelization of the popular comic book storyline.

Even I like that here you appreciate that Bane clearly has a designed plan and he isn't just a brute with super strength.

### **BREAKING THE BATMAN**

Bane is coming to Gotham City and he has a plan...

...to break (literally) The Batman and taking the town.

Batman is taken to his physical limits, beyond that any man, even him, could endure and at his weakest moment...

...the Dark Knight falls.

For the first time since Bruce Wayne swore to revenge the death of his parents, protecting Gotham City...

...he is unable to keep the promise.

Gotham City is no longer under the watch of Batman.

Bruce Wayne needs to look a way to get back to his former self...

...and the only way is to leave Gotham and searching out, far away, for a solution which it won't be easy or quick.

So, Bruce Wayne needs to select a new Batman to leave in his place...

**...BUT...**

...his unexpected chosen one to take the mantle of The Batman will surprise everybody!

And the consequences will be terrible for Gotham City finding its fellow citizens "trapped" between a merciless Bane and a zealot new Batman.

This is one of pivotal moments in Batman's war on crime!

Let's go! To the Batmobile and read it!

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### **Rob says**

A friend loaned this to me last year before Dark Knight Rises came out. I wasn't really familiar with Bane, so he told me to check this out.

It was good, but not great. The Bane stuff was good, but I didn't care much for the other subplots.

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### **Alexander Draganov says**

Knightfall is an adaptation of a series of comic books of the same name. As a novel, it is structured in three parts - Knightfall, Kinghtquest and Knightsend. The first part of the novel, Knightfall is one of the most epic pieces of literature I have ever read. It chronicles the first battle between Batman and Bane, which forces the Dark Knight into temporary retirement and elevates Bane as one of his greatest enemies. The story of Bane is extremely powerful and the way in which he manages to outsmart and defeat Bats in absolutely chilling. I am particularly fond of the descriptions f the various madmen in Arkham - they are all fantastic. Based on the first part alone, "Knightfall" deserves a 5-star rating. Unfortunately the second and the third part of the book are definitely weaker. They tell the story of the new Batman - Jean Paul Valley, the former assassin Azrael - and his gradual descend into madness. Batman, who manages to get himself miraculously healed, must stop him and reclaim the mantle of the Dark Knight. This story too had potential, but it is not realized very well. The conflict between Azrael and Bane is resolved too quickly - it could have been developed as real Clash of the Titans and used to explain Jean Paul's madness. A totally unnecessary and fake sounding sub-plot is added with the story of the Asp psychics is added and because of it, the story never recovers. The final battle between Bruce and Jean-Paul is original, if a bit anticlimatic, but definitely not on the level of the first part of the novel. Rating - Knightfall - 5 stars, Knightquest- 3 stars, Knightsend - 3 stars, Overall - 4 stars.

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### **Raúl says**

Pues seguimos con toda la saga de Bane, que va para largo. En serio, no sé qué le ve la gente a este enemigo de Batman. De los supuestamente "grandes", este es el peor de todos, aunque sea el más fuerte y sea inteligente, pero es que tiene cero de carisma.

Además de eso, lo único que hace esta saga es ser un número tras otro de enemigo tras enemigo, sin más. Eso sí, da paso a otras cosas que tienen que llegar (que dicho sea de paso, tampoco me gustan nada, son unos giros de tuerca demasiado forzados e inútiles)

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### **Amanda says**

The narrative was just utterly lacking. It read like the novelization of a movie, when writers try to capture every action or scene rather than paying attention to characterization or the meat of the story. Everything was 2-D and not interesting at all.

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### **Jerry says**

I'm a big fan of pretty much all comic-book superheroes, but Batman has a trait that no other DC or Marvel hero (that I know of, anyway) has: he doesn't have any actual superpowers. Instead of being a member of a powerful otherworldly race like Superman, or becoming endowed with superhuman abilities by accident as Spider-Man did, Bruce Wayne relies on nothing more than technology, intelligence, natural strength, and friends such as Robin and Alfred to fight crime. Many people think of Batman stories as being light-hearted,

thanks to the campy Adam West television classic, but the way "the bat" is presented in the movies is much closer to the original comics. *Knightfall* is sort of *Batman Beyond* meets *The Life and Death of Superman*. The story is engaging, if a little light on action; the writing is crisp; and, content-wise, the only concerns are some violence (as you'd expect, though it goes slightly overboard at times) and small doses of profanity. Fans of the Caped Crusader will most likely not be disappointed by *Knightfall*.

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## Johnny says

*Batman Knightfall* is not a graphic novel. It is a novel (*sans* graphics) based on three story arcs which ran in monthly comic books from 1993-94. One shouldn't make any assumptions based on the source material, however. Even though Dennis O'Neil wrote the book, *The DC Comics Guide to Writing Comics*, and many of the great comic arcs themselves (as well as putting in a great tenure as editor of the entire line), he notes in the afterword that comics and novels are two distinctly different (pardon the redundancy for emphasis) things. Indeed, he offers the careful observation that "...form *does* partially follow content." (p. 349) Since I mention three story arcs, you won't be surprised that the book is divided into three overlapping sections.

The novel format allowed O'Neil to get into head of a villain like Bane and help one how he was transformed into a monster and why he was so truly obsessed with the death of Batman. Then, he masterfully takes another character and evolves that "good guy" into something of a monster himself. Both villain and "good guy" (or, at least, anti-hero) see visions and are somewhat the creation of their fathers. Such psychological transformation can be visualized in a few graphic scenes, but not explored deeply without sufficient prose. Here, it is extremely vivid.

As if that wasn't interesting enough, there was also a brilliant consideration of vigilantism. We usually think of Batman as a hero. Yet, where would Batman have to go over the line in order to become the "criminal" which many law enforcement agencies and officers would consider him (if he existed in real life)? To be able to explore this idea in such vivid descriptions without compromising the integrity of Bruce Wayne was quite vivid.

If that isn't enough to commend this effort, please note that this is not simply filled with action scene after action scene. One would suspect that to be the case considering some of the superhero films which have come out in the last year and the dearth of "story" in many of the mainline comics (DC and Marvel) being published today, but Batman is known for the *Detective Comics* venue and there is one particular section of this tri-partite novel that is more detection and deduction than combat. Indeed, Bruce Wayne becomes something of a modern Sherlock Holmes, complete with Holmes' predilection for disguise. Of course, it also helps that this section takes place in England.

Yet, there is also a love story knit into this tri-partite story. It is full of seeming betrayal and offers enough emotion to make you put down the book for a few moments. If you have ever, yourself, fallen madly in love with someone, you'll understand both the promise and the danger of such a connection, such an interweaving of lives.

*Knightfall* has all of these elements and more—including familiar characters in the classic cast which make appearances whenever it would be logical. There is little more to say that wouldn't create spoilers, but I'm glad this doesn't follow the comics to the letter because *Knightfall* is a richer experience.

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## Sara says

This is not a brilliant book. But it is entertaining--enough that I set aside the three other books I'm currently juggling to finish this one--and it's in line with my current Batman obsession (for which I blame Batman: Arkham Asylum). Compared to the other Batman novel I attempted to read (The Batman Murders), it's a downright masterpiece.

The action is good--but I have the same complaint I've noted in other reviews: it's very clear the author is accustomed to writing comic book scripts, and not novel-form prose. Comics are a team effort--and the job of description falls to the artist. Hence a notable lack of decent descriptive narrative in *Nightfall*, alas. O'Neil made some attempts, but they were inconsistent at best. (As an example, a crippled Bruce Wayne is described doing something he probably shouldn't be able to do--and then we're told he's using canes. Now, I'm a super-speedreader, so I probably missed said canes' first mention, but all the same, he switches back and forth from wheelchair to canes with rapidity that even a 'comic-book' suspension of disbelief like mine finds hard to swallow.)

My biggest complaint overall is the characterization, though I'm not certain how the author could possibly have satisfied me, or any other reader: as he mentions in the afterword, Batman has been around as a comic book hero for more than fifty years (sixty plus by now), and has been interpreted in so many different ways, from grim, unbalanced obsessive to self-mocking comedian. It's rather hard to pin down ONE characterization of Bruce Wayne/Batman. My favorite interpretation is not necessarily the next person's favorite interpretation. Some people love Michael Keaton's Batman, for example. I couldn't stand him, though I love Keaton in other things. I love the Batman in the Chris Nolan films, but while I appreciate the camp of the 60s TV show, it makes me cringe and view it as 'not-really-Batman.' O'Neil, I think, in attempting to draw on all the varied interpretations of Batman there were in the mid-nineties, ended up presenting a fairly shallow character. I never got the feeling that Bruce Wayne was truly traumatized by the fact that he was paralyzed. The lack of a sense of time in the book (it seemed bare days or weeks from Bane breaking Batman to Bruce Wayne's full, miraculous recovery, when I guess it was meant to be a year or more) did not help this. Unfortunately, this was a common theme throughout: emotional situations and events, which are incredibly difficult to portray in comic book format but which shine in novel form were glossed over or skipped, seemingly in an effort to 'get on with the action.' If I'd wanted that, frankly, I'd have gone and read the comics themselves. Shandra Kinsolver--arguably a vital character in the Batman-got-broke situation--gets glossed over in characterization. We see she's treating a crippled Bruce Wayne, sure, and she's kind of cool--but we're given no solid reasons for Bruce Wayne deciding (apparently on a whim) to tell her everything and ask her to marry him (unless this is one hell of a patient-in-love-with-his-doctor problem). Naturally this gets derailed, but I would have liked to see a better development of their relationship, which would in turn have made me rather sorrier at her semi-tragic fate.

The saving grace in the dearth of characterization is, I think, the portrayal of Alfred and his erstwhile charge-and-employer's relationship. Alfred has long been a favorite character of mine (now set in granite since Michael Caine's performance), and he, at least, does not have a hundred different interpretations of his character to hinder his writing. Alfred is as he always was: steadfast, sarcastic, funny, and more interested in the well being of his surrogate son(s) Bruce Wayne (and Tim Drake) than he is in the pursuit of vigilante justice. Bruce compares their partnership at one point to Wooster and Jeeves, to which Alfred takes mild offense. It is his resignation that finally serves as a much-needed slap-upside-the-head for Bruce Wayne, though sadly the author did not resolve how it is Alfred comes back by the end of the book. Dick Grayson, and a number of other characters, were also sadly absent, Dick Grayson being the most inexplicable, since next to Alfred he's clearly established as the closest thing Batman has to genuine family, and should have

been handed the cowl over Jean Paul the loony (which, as I understand it, he eventually was, together with an apology from Bruce for being an idiot, in the comics).

The deep flaws in the book notwithstanding, I did enjoy it, and I would recommend it to Batman fans. There were moments of genuine, wicked humor that I was glad to see from Batman (something I loved about the most recent film interpretations of the character), including a response to Gordon speculating that Batman is a ninja: (paraphrased) "I took a correspondence course. It was either ninja or air conditioning repair, and since I already had a black suit..."

And Bane, at least, was a fairly interesting (though again not as well developed as he could have been) villain. Unlike that horrifying version of him in the equally-horrifying Batman & Robin film... I look forward to seeing what is done with him in The Dark Knight Rises...

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### **Avery (ThePagemaster) says**

My favorite superhero as a kid has always been Batman. The Dark Knight reawakened my child-like admiration for the character. How much of a fan am I? Enough to read a novelization of a well-known, iconic even, story line that I've only read some pages of.

From what I got from this adaptation is that there are three separate stories going on:

1.) What Knightfall is most known for is the established introduction of the Batman villain, Bane, the son of a mercenary who abandoned him and his mother at birth, and who has served a life prison sentence in his father's place since birth. Through time, Bane has learned to become a great fighter and, with doctors analyzing from afar, introduces him to a drug called "Venom", which enhances his strength to near superhuman power and with the aide of other prisoners, escape prison and emigrate towards Gotham City. Not long after arriving at Gotham does he know of Batman guarding and watching.

Knightfall is also known for one of the most iconic moment in Batman lore by breaking his back on his knee. 2.) With Bruce Wayne incapacitated and left paraplegic, with what looks like a Batman career ending back injury to Alfred and the normal population, believes that he'll recover in no time. However, while he heals, he hires a stand-in: Jean-Paul Valley, a drifter who hides a very secret past, helps Bruce Wayne in the biggest way possible. However, Wayne's plan backfires as Jean-Paul, with each passing night, becomes more and more attached to the Batman persona. To almost obsessive and dangerous levels.

3.) Dr. Shondra Kinsolving, a renowned doctor assigned to help Bruce Wayne with rehabilitation, who also aides Tim Drake(Robin)'s father with his rehabilitation. Like Jean-Paul, a mysterious past that soon comes back to haunt her and jeopardizes Bruce's chances of full recovery.

What else can I say other than this book entertained the shit out of me? It may not be the graphic novel with this was adapted by one of the co-writers, so it's close enough, for now. Plus, the Knightfall comics are in three omnibus, 600 pages each, roughly. So, if no one has time for that, this is a good, fast pick-me-up. I also liked that I got to see Tim Drake; he seems to be the underrated Robin. Everyone always flocks to Dick Grayson or Damian Wayne. He's considered to be the best detective out of all the Robins--even more so than Batman. You see the genesis and almost aging of Time Drake from the first page, then when you have read the last page.

Knightfall, in comic form or novel form, is an essential read for any Batman fan.

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### **Aly Gaafar says**

The ultimate graphic novel. It is essentially the best graphic novel period. What I liked is that Batman is stripped of all his abilities. It is proven that there can only be one Batman. When Paul Valley takes over He start to develop his own updated more violent version of batman. He chases criminals using force and attempting to murder them. Which destroys what Batman stands for. On the other hand the Idea of bane breaking all the inmates at Gothom out is enough to lead Batman on a wild ride;dealing with all his arch enemies. I think that this is the most action packed novel you get out of batman. Each issue deals with every villain batman has faced. What more can you ask for? This is an excellent piece of art.

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