

One might forgive the people of Gotham should they prefer cats to bats at this juncture. For one thing, felines are more cuddly. But for another, Selina Kyle, once known as Catwoman, is doing a better job of protecting Gotham from its enemies than is her friend, rival, and sometime-lover, Batman. Actually, in *Batman Eternal* #40 both of these heroes are victims of one of the great dangers of a weekly comic series, the failure of plotlines to cohere. A weekly comic has two main challenges. Should it continue for any length of time, it will inevitably require several separate storylines. However, all of these plot progressions, or at least the main ones, must come together in the end to form a unified narrative. In the meantime, the writers have to maintain a crucial pace, carefully timing each storyline so that their interactions and eventual synthesis occur at appropriate plot beats. In the case of *Batman Eternal*, four main stories arose early in the series and have continued forward. However, each of these has split, joined, and recombined to form new plotlines. *Batman Eternal* #40 dwells on two storylines, while referencing three others. In the main plots, Batman continues his confrontation with the Riddler at an empty snowbound mountain hotel while Selina faces the machinations of the mysterious ultimate enemy who arranges for many of the various villains apprehended in the course of the story to be released and armed with weapons from the former Bat caches. Each of these plots is handled well, as are the three subsidiary stories dealing with the attack on the Gotham Gazette, the nanovirus targeting the inhabitants of the narrows, and the fate of Jim Corrigan. In the case of the Selina arc, we see the implications of her new position as the head of the Calabrese crime family, as well as her decisions about how to use her new power for the benefit of Gotham. The story nicely dovetails with the characterizations in Genevieve Valentine's current Catwoman title and sets up the great reveal that Scott Snyder teased in *Batman* before the weekly series even began. The scenes with Batman and the Riddler prove less effective, in part because they merely extend and to a certain extent retread the conversation from last issue. However, further clues as to the identity of the ultimate villain do arise. If nothing else, the constant scenes of ice and snow in Riddler's chosen hideout strongly point to Lincoln March and the Court of Owls, as surely a villain of Riddler's acumen would know of March's undead servants and their vulnerability to cold. But each story exists in its own space, touching other tales only sporadically and briefly. At this point in the series, with only twelve issues to go, such incoherence does not bode well. Each plotline could easily provide the core of a perfectly acceptable Gotham story. But *Batman Eternal* has higher goals, and to reach them the stories need to come together, quickly. Davide Furno and Paolo Armitano use clear, medium lines and plentiful deep shadows to produce a slightly rough feel accented by the thick boundaries separating panels usually arranged in asymmetrical layouts. John Kalisz's murky colors, heavy on blues and greens, likewise emphasize this roughness. The visual impression is of grit and danger, perfectly appropriate for a city coming apart. The post *Batman Eternal* #40 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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