

In the midst of catastrophe, the universe contracts to a single point, as if a constricting sphere of pain and loneliness has enclosed the victim in a suffocating hold that can only end in death. Batman Eternal #35 finds Batman trapped in such a point of agony with only the support of a neophyte assistant and the dubious comfort of his rage. As the issue opens, Bruce Wayne learns from Lucius Fox that the federal government has seized all of Wayne Enterprise's assets, thus taking most of Bruce's money as well. To make things vastly worse, Lucius and several other former employees of Wayne Enterprises have come to see Batman as a menace to Gotham, and they have agreed to help the authorities led by Police Commissioner Jason Bard capture the vigilante. Bruce has now lost his company, many of his friends, his house (as detailed in Arkham Asylum, now like Grayson firmly locked into at least a loose concurrence with Batman Eternal), and to add annoyance to injury must keep Hush, whom he captured in the last issue, imprisoned in a glass cell in the Bat Cave since he dare not turn the villain over to the corrupt justice system that is holding Jim Gordon in Blackgate. There are as many different versions of Batman as there are Batman creators, and perhaps as many as there are Batman readers. However, over the past twenty years or so one popular and very effective characterization of the Dark Knight emphasizes the contrast between his outer demeanor and his inner emotions. This school of Batman writing and art depicts Bruce as outwardly cold and controlled because he perpetually seethes with anger and fear. In this tradition a sharp challenge to Batman's control, often in the form of a threat to his loved ones, brings forth an eruption of grimaces, threats, and punishing blows. What it doesn't usually bring forth is stupidity, but unfortunately in this issue Batman proceeds to storm off in response to an obvious provocation, ignoring the wise advice of Julia and heading straight into a clear trap. It may be all a clever ruse on Batman's part, but the rage and pain he evinces as he speeds to the confrontation are convincing. Yet, has he forgotten his conversation with Lucius? Has he forgotten that Bard now has access to the people who designed his technology and who know all its weaknesses? Perhaps it is all part of Batman's plan, but, given his newly-impooverished circumstances, wouldn't it be wiser to devise something that didn't involve the destruction of an incredibly expensive Batmobile? We know that Bruce will win at the end of the story, of course. If nothing else, we have seen that in the pages of Batman, which is now telling a tale set after Batman Eternal. Still, certainty of victory doesn't excuse wastefulness. The other main storyline of this issue proves more believable. Vicki Vale, curious as to the motivations of her acquaintance and would-be companion Jason Bard, has traced his past to Detroit. There she discovers that the policeman's life was ruined by the actions of a costumed vigilante, leaving him with a perfect motive for cooperating in the destruction of Gotham and the Dark Knight. The art for this issue does not get in the way of the story, but does not help much, either. Fernando Blanco's figures, Marcelo Maiolo's colors, and Steve Wands' letters fall squarely within the quasi-naturalistic style that has characterized much of Batman Eternal. The post Batman Eternal #35 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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