

## **Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again**

Frank and Varley, Lynn Miller



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The Dark Knight Strikes Again is Frank Miller's follow-up to his hugely successful Batman: the Dark Knight Returns, one of the few comics that is widely recognized as not only reinventing the genre but also bringing it to a wider audience. Set three years after the events of The Dark Knight Returns, The Dark Knight Strikes Again follows a similar structure: once again, Batman hauls himself out of his self-imposed retirement in order to set things right. However, where DKR was about him cleaning up his home city, Gotham, DKSA has him casting his net much wider: he's out to save the world. The thing is, most of the world doesn't realize that it needs to be saved--least of all Superman and Wonder Woman, who have become little more than superpowered enforcers of the status quo. So, the notoriously solitary Batman is forced to recruit some different superpowered allies. He also has his ever-present trusty sidekick, Robin, except that he is a she, and she is calling herself Catwoman. Together, these super-friends uncover a vast and far-reaching conspiracy that leads to the President of the United States (Lex Luthor) and beyond. The Dark Knight Strikes Again is largely an entertaining comic, but much of what made The Dark Knight Returns so good just doesn't work here. Miller's gritty, untidy artwork was perfect for DKR's grim depiction of the dark and seedy Gotham City, but it jars a bit for DKSA, which is meant to depict an ultra-glossy, futuristic technocracy. Lynn Varley's garish coloring attempts to add a slicker sheen, but the artwork is ultimately let down by that which worked so well for DKR--this time around, it just feels sloppy and rushed. The same is true of the book's denouement, which happens so quickly that it leaves the reader reeling and looking for more of an explanation. Moreover, DKSA is packed full of characters who will mean little to those unfamiliar with the DC Comics universe (e.g., the Atom, the Elongated Man, the Question). Perhaps the book's biggest failing is that where The Dark Knight Returns gave comic book fans a base from which to evangelize to theuninitiated, The Dark Knight Strikes Again is just preaching to the converted. Comic book superhero fans will find much to enjoy here, but others would be better off sticking with the original. --Robert Burrow

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