



Black Road, Volume 1: The Holy North

Brian Wood (Writer) , Garry Brown (Illustrator) , Dave McCaig (Colorist)

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1000 A.D. The Christian conversion of pagan lands is well underway, turning the Viking north into a bleak war zone of occupation and violence. Magnus The Black is an ex-warrior turned fixer for the Church, only looking to ease his people through this painful time. But when a Vatican official under his care is murdered on the infamous "Black Road," he uncovers a secret, something so big it threatens to change the balance of power in all of Europe.

From *Northlanders* creator Brian Wood, artist Garry Brown (*Catwoman*, *The Massive*) and Dave McCaig (*Batman*, *Avengers*) comes a historical thriller with a shocking twist.

Collecting: *Black Road* 1-5

Black Road, Volume 1: The Holy North Details

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Author : Brian Wood (Writer) , Garry Brown (Illustrator) , Dave McCaig (Colorist)

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From Reader Review Black Road, Volume 1: The Holy North for online ebook

Donovan says

"Churches bubble up like blisters, and priests spread like lice."

Norssk, 1000 A.D. The Holy Roman Catholic Church is taking over. Magnus Black has lost everything, is disaffected, and searching for answers. Roman Cardinal Farina is viciously killed while under Magnus' protection on the Black Road. Farina's ward Julia, ex-Roman slave, orphan, and fighter, sees evil things to come, and Magnus guides her out of vengeance and confusion.

The artwork is fantastic. As it should be, because Garry Brown also illustrated *The Massive*. It's dark and painterly (think Jock), utilizing the white snow and black shadows to great effect for silhouettes. I mean, Magnus BLACK, the BLACK road. There's plenty of ink to embellish the tone. And Dave McCaig's subtle colors maintain this essential sparsity.

This is a tale of mystery, existential dread, survival, and companionship. Brian Wood's writing is appropriately sparse like his other work (*The Massive*, *Local*), although with the little and sporadic action, the story can feel slow. This is less adventure than it is drama, and the twist was well done if somewhat expected. So overall a pretty good read. Not mind blowing yet, but I get the feeling this will be a satisfying slow burn.

Trish says

I only discovered this because of Brian Wood who also created *Northlanders*, one of my favourite comics series. This, too, is about what is nowadays known as Scandinavia, the Vikings living there and what their lives were like.

The book is about the time the Christian Church took over and either burnt or enslaved all pagans in their way. It's also about Magnus the Black, a Viking who doesn't declare himself for either side of the war. He lost his wife and is now wandering the landscape, doing the odd job here and there for money. He's a tall fellow too, with lots of things having happened to him in the past.

Someone hires Magnus to take a Cardinal up north on the so-called Black Road, but they are being ambushed and the Cardinal killed. Apparently, Magnus has another beef with those men (it's not entirely clear yet) and swears vengeance.

This first volume was a nice introduction to the time and place of this story, with multiple battlegrounds, blood, gore, even (which is always surprising in American media) complete nudity, as well as gritty but cool art.

(They might not have been drawn completely realistically, but I LOVED these wolves!)

I was dreading the end of the aforementioned *Northlanders* series, which is why I didn't read all volumes one

after the other, but this could be a worthy substitute. The story isn't quite up to the magnificent quality of the Sven story yet, but we had enough action and mystery and different places which made for a very nice introduction. *wants next volume*

Crystal Starr Light says

Bullet Review:

In comparison to the other Brian Wood Viking graphic novel I am reading, The Anglo-Saxon Saga, this is a rather disjointed, confusing excursion. However, it has some fun Norsemen bits, so I wouldn't mind seeing where this goes.

Sud666 says

Magnus the Black is a character from the comic series Northlanders. In the Black Road he gets his own little mini-series. Without going into too many spoilers let us say that this is a mystery tale. Magnus is hired by a Christian Cardinal from Rome who intends to take the Black Road north. Along the way they are ambushed and the Cardinal killed. This starts the mystery as Magnus tries to make sense of his mission. Magnus stumbles across the Cardinal's bastard daughter and they both undertake the trip up north to solve this mystery. Though, all is not as it seems.

This first Volume ended without any conclusion to the main story line and really left me with more questions than anything. The artwork, in keeping with the Northlander's style, is underwhelming. It is not awful, as some of the artists were in the main series, but it's not great either. Perhaps a 3/5 at most. Some may prefer this style, but it is not really to my taste.

Mostly this is a story about Magnus, seen through various flashbacks. That part it does well. The main story is a bit confusing, but I am willing to wait till Vol 2 to see where this was headed. All in all-not a bad volume, but the lack of resolution to the main story hampers the overall tale. The rest of the story, sans flashbacks, is more of a Magnus revealing his past and getting to know the Cardinal's daughter. Let's wait for Volume 2 and see where this ends.

Kenny says

Brian Wood does sword and hammer better than anyone. Against the bleak Nordic landscape where the corruption of Christianity impacts the economy and culture of the Vikings, a Viking mercenary hired by the church confronts his demons both spiritually and physically. A tour de force. And more to come.

Ctgt says

Magnus the Black is hired to escort a church official to a investigate circumstances in a town to the north. Despite his better judgement he allows the official to take the quickest route...The Black Road. Let's just say there's a reason they call it The Black Road. Gritty, violent, with some mystery and double dealing that

makes for an entertaining story.

Really strong artwork with a rough style that fits well with the story.

8/10

Martin says

Is *Black Road* Brian Wood's new *Northlanders*? I hope so!

The *Northlanders* series was well-researched, engrossing, unique, and some of the best, consistently good comics I've read, and I was sad to see it end. And then this comes along, a suspenseful, mystery-tinged series set in the days of the Christian conversion of the Norsemen. I found this inaugural volume captivating, and I'm eagerly looking forward to the next volume.

Ανδρ?ας Μιχαηλ?δης says

I really didn't think I would go back to a Brian Wood title, after some missteps with *Northlanders* and the fiasco that was his run on *Conan the Barbarian*. However, a free preview from a few pages of the *Black Road* convinced me to give it a chance and as far as the first volume goes, I was not disappointed.

The year is somewhere around 900 AD in conversion-era Scandinavia, where Christianity is afoot tearing down and subjugating the Old Faith. Magnus is a bitter monolith of a man, who seems to only care for his next score, although he is deeply conflicted about the essence of Christianity (although not its political practices).

Then comes along a mysterious, Roman Cardinal, wanting to visit an even more mysterious locale in the far north. That is where all the troubles begin...

There is brutality, icy emptiness and some honor thrown in for good measure. Magnus the Black falls somewhere between a noble monster and Kurosawa's Yojimbo or Sanjuro, a reluctant father figure to the mysterious, crossbow-wielding Julia.

This first volume is basically "the way there" and an opportunity to show why the *Black Road* is named thus. I love how most of the storytelling is purely visual and text is rather sparse. To be sure, there is quite a bit to be explained in the second volume, but so far I am intrigued.

Nancy says

This review can also be found on my blog: <https://graphicnovelty2.com/2018/12/1...> (It is the compilation edition that also includes *V2-A Pagan Death*)

Black Road continues Wood's take on emo Vikings. Set in Norway in AD 1000, Magnus The Black is a warrior who discovers a secret among the new Christian priests who are laying waste to the Norskk culture and landscape. This isn't an extension of *Northlanders*, instead this series is set up to be a mystery thriller and not as historically accurate.

Magnus is a bear of a man, who respects his pagan upbringing, yet realizes that Christianity is taking over the region and wants to help his people through the transition. However, this makes him unpopular with both sides, as neither fully trust him. A former soldier, he is grieving the loss of his beloved wife and wants reassurances from the Catholic priests that they will be reunited in Heaven together. He takes on a job of escorting a Cardinal from the Vatican up the "Black Road" to a new compound up North. The job goes sideways, and he joins up with Julia, the Cardinal's adopted daughter and the local blacksmith, Kitta, to finish the journey northward. There they find a rogue priest, Bishop Oakenfort, who wishes to shift the power of the Vatican from Rome to Norway and for him to be in charge. Chaos ensues.

I'd also like to know Wood's true view on Christianity and about his faith journey, as many of his works portray the Church in a very negative light. While historically accurate in many respects, his bleak and dark views only show the negative side of this era's conversions, and is not a balanced viewpoint. But I obviously find it fascinating, as I keep on reading his graphic novels.

The artwork was solid, by Garry Brown who did the artwork for Wood's The Massive series. His style is rather blocky, which doesn't always translate for faces, yet his backgrounds are detailed and the Scandinavian landscapes are well drawn. Dave McCraig does the coloring, as he did for the entire Northlanders series, and effectively guides you through the changing chronology with color changes to signal Magnus's flashbacks. I read the compilation of the series which included V1-The Holy North & V2-A Pagan Death. At the end of the book it included a mock up of the first issue, after which Wood changed direction and re-wrote parts of it, which was interesting to see the evolution of the story.

This Norse saga will appeal to all Northlanders fans, although like I said earlier, it is not a continuation of that series. Magnus The Black is a layered individual with conflicting desires, and this story has the potential to say something fresh about faith and conversion, so while I doubt the series will continue, I'd read more if it does.

Roman Colombo says

This was so damn good. Like Viking Noir. Garry Brown and Dave McCraig's art is brilliant too. Really excited to read more.

Jonathan Maas says

Great tale - but be warned, this one isn't good vs. evil - it has a few twists

This one starts off with good vs. evil, or rather - good vs. a predatory world. There is a betrayal, and the quest turns into that of vengeance -

But then good become bad and vice versa - until you have no one to root for but the hero, who walks the fine line between pagan and Christian.

I fell in love with Brian Wood's style with Local - <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...> - which is quite different than this.

Local was a modern-day drama of drifters, like the best independent film you have ever seen.

Black Road is 1000 AD in a chaotic world.

Like Local, it's great - and the series looks to be even better - this is a great start to a new tale.

Scott Lee says

Just enough here to be curious about the next volume.

Michael Finocchiaro says

Black Road is about the arrival of Christianity in the Nordics during the time of the Vikings. While the premise is interesting and the art is good, the story is just so-so and I didn't find any of the characters incredibly engaging. Perhaps the second volume will give them more weight and pathos...

Chad says

Basically an extension of Northlanders, Magnus the black is our hero and at the same time a royal bastard. The Church has come north, brutally forcing Christianity upon the Norsemen. When the Cardinal he was protecting on the Black Road is murdered, Magnus vows to hunt the killers down. So he and the Cardinal's adopted daughter head north to the Christian outpost there. The last issue takes an odd turn, one I didn't quite 'get', as to motivations. The book ends in the middle of the story which I found quite annoying.

I didn't care for Garry Brown's art nor the coloring at all. The art looks like it was carved into a desk with a pocket knife. It's scratchy and poorly defined. In some panels I wasn't sure what I was even looking at. Wood and Brown have crafted a harsh, unforgiving world down in the muck, scrabbling for what meager resources there are.

Erica says

Is the show "Vikings" bringing about a resurgence of northlands tales? It's been awhile since the last proliferation of Nordic-peoples stories and now here's a graphic novel to go with everything else that's been pillaging and ransacking popular media as of late.

This is the standard Christianity Ruins Everything tale where that one guy just wanted the hearty life he was supposed to have before shuffling off to Valhalla but then his wife was killed in a petty skirmish with a rival lord's gang and God's people came in and condemned everyone's beliefs and what's a beefy guy like Magnus the Black supposed to do?

Get a job for the Church and move on, I guess.

And he does.

But then intrigue and a Moorish blacksmith and secrets and a little girl and snow and burnings and a lot of walking and blood and no way! and revenge. Always revenge. There's really nothing else to live for. Just ask William Wallace or Rob Roy. They know. Oh, also Magnus' penis. That gets more airtime than you usually find in a graphic novel. Good on you, Garry Brown. The world is NOT just made of boobs and asses. Thank

you for knowing that.

The art is all scraggly and full of jarring heavy, black lines. The colors are dark or muted, except for red and white, of course. Blood and snow. The pages look as violent and bleak as the words that tell the story and while this is by no means new territory, it's still a good read and I appreciate the inclusion of women (of two colors!) in a tale that is typically all angry white dudes.
