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Brian Wood , *Dean Ormston* (Illustrator) , *Vasilis Lolos* (Illustrator) , *Danijel Žeželj* (Illustrator) , *Davide Gianfelice* (Illustrator)

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This volume collects all of the NORTHLANDERS short stories (issues 9, 10, 17, 18, 19 and 20). Exploring everything from the art of Viking single combat, to the role of women in the Viking world, this volume also includes the return of the original Northlanders artist Davide Gianfelice to illustrate a coda to Volume 1.

Northlanders, Vol. 3: Blood in the Snow Details

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Author : Brian Wood , Dean Ormston (Illustrator) , Vasilis Lolos (Illustrator) , Danijel Žeželj (Illustrator) , Davide Gianfelice (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Northlanders, Vol. 3: Blood in the Snow for online ebook

Paul says

Collecting NORTHLANDERS #9,10, 17-20! This collection explores everything from the art of Viking single combat to the role of children and women in the Viking world.

For the most part, I consider Northlanders to be a highly unique series; it's a grim, realistic, historical drama, about the clash of Norsemen and Saxons, back in the legendary Viking era. I'm not sure everyone is likely to enjoy it (*due to its grimness and lack of superheroes of any kind*), but I personally find it extremely refreshing, especially when craving a good read that is different from the usual escapist fantasy.

The third volume of Northlanders: **Blood in the Snow** – is definitely the best volume in the series so far. It's comprised of four stand-alone short stories - each a unique and different point of view of different people who might have lived during the Viking era. All four stories are beautifully crafted and satisfyingly concise, with a decent sense of closure, and also strangely moving, in a subtle hold-back, desperate-emotions-stirring-underneath way.

The volume starts with a pretty intense story, set around the Viking raid of "**Lindisfarne**" in northern England. Our protagonist - a miserable little boy named Edwin - lives with abusive father and older brother. One night, all battered and starved (courtesy of pappy dearest), little Edwin does not return home; instead he heads down to the cold beach, where he intently prays to the pagan gods of his dead mother, the ones that "mean business," and also are far more lively than the tortured god whom the monks preach about. His prayers for freedom are magnificently answered in the form of Viking boats emerging from the foggy ocean, filled with fierce Norse warriors, about to descend upon the Saxon shore and slaughter the entire settlement – Edwin's father and older brother included.

Flash forward years later – our boy Edwin is now a man – and he is the only Saxon-born redhead warrior amongst his fellow Norse warriors, in the war party he now leads. He had found his freedom and solace as a Viking warrior. Though Edwin had been named after a Christian king, in his heart he always belonged to the pagan gods, and even as he honors these gods, he still cherishes the silver cross he collected from his father's dead body many years ago. Such is the clash between Pagan and Christianity, through the eyes of one boy in this intriguing story.

The second story – "**The Viking Art of Single Combat**" — takes place on two different levels. One level occurs in the drawings, where a single duel between two champions of two feuding lords is depicted. The other level is the narrating voice, pondering the various types of warriors you would have been likely to encounter in battle had you lived back then. For instance, there are the mushroom-stoned berserkers (don't be so shocked, some bad-ass Vikings did mushrooms). Then there are the simple farmers who were unfortunate enough to be levied to war by their lords; and let's not forget the famous of all - the pirating Viking entrepreneurs.

These petty fights amongst the Viking lords themselves – were probably foretoken to the Vikings' eventual demise – and in accordance to that notion, the story ends with the alleged words of Harald Sigurdsson, a Norwegian king whose death is said to have heralded the end of the Viking era - "*From copse to copse I crawl, and creep now. Worthless. Who knows how highly I will be heralded someday?*" - I'm not even sure what that means, but it sure sounds cool.

What about women in the Viking era? Surely they had a real tough life as it is, let alone the whole occasional ravaging going around. The third story called "**The Shield Maidens**" is a beautiful story about three Dane women who fled their occupied village – husbands, children, homes – all dead and burnt to the ground. They are chased by a war party of fifty Saxon warriors, but the three stand their ground and fight– which is pretty exceptional for women, especially back then I guess – to make such a stand. The story is entangled with beautiful quotes from Norse poetry, where the first and last scenes show the three women spinning wool (or weaving the fates of people – who knows?), just like the fates-women from the mythical prophecy.

"**Sven the Immortal**" is the last story of the volume, in which we meet again with Sven – the fierce warrior from the first volume of Northlanders. Now, decades after the events of the first volume, Sven is an old man, but is also a living legend of much renown. When a group of young Vikings land on the isolated island where Sven and his family live, we will find out whether the Viking still lives inside the old man.

The art of this volume is beautiful. Each story is illustrated by different artists but all make an effort to maintain a more or less uniform style. The drawings are mostly sketch-like, with much use of shading, and colored by dark muted colors, successfully conveying the roughness and hardship of it all.

This volume ended up being such a good read, that I've actually read it multiple times, and wouldn't mind reading it again. It's definitely for people who love Vikings (who doesn't really?) and are willing to hit Wikipedia here and there, in order to better understand the numerous historical references in these wonderful stories.

Sud666 says

Northlanders Vol 3 is a collection of short stories from the Northlanders series. Of the short stories I thought that the Art of Single combat was excellent (though the art is awful). It tells the story of two vikings in one on one combat.

The Shieldmaidens tells the story of three women whose husbands are off a viking and they are attacked by Mercians. This is a great story and I truly enjoyed it. In a day and age where EVERY woman you see portrayed is some beautiful but "strong" lethal war-goddess, it was good to see a great portrayal of tough, gritty Danish women who become shield maidens. No stupid sexy simpering here. Just brutal and vicious fighting. Very impressed.

The final story finishes off the Sven storyline from Vol 1. Sven is now old and some young Vikings come to kill him to make their reputations. Pity the poor fools who find out why Sven is now called Sven the Immortal.

All in all a great read. The only reason I do not give this series a consistent 5 star rating is that I can not say enough how disappointing the artwork is. It's not for me. But, hey it works...and I like a good viking story so who am I to argue with terrible art?

Amir says

Read the first three books, every one with the hope of next one might be better! I was wrong! I am not going to read the next three ones, if you live in Melbourne (Australia), drop me a line if you want the six books for free

Andrew says

The rare anthology in which each story is fantastic. It is worth the cover price for *Shield Maidens* alone.

Nancy says

This review (plus V2) can be found on my blog: <https://graphicnovelty2.com/2018/05/1...>

This volume is broken into several vignettes (similar to how Wood wrote *Rebels*), where as the two previous books dealt with one extended story at a time. While I at first only planned to read the last chapter about Sven, I was sucked into the other stories, that were all drawn by different artists.

Lindisfarne– Northern England AD 793: Teen Edwin hates his bitter father and older brother and when Vikings land near his home he leads them straight to his village. Conniving Edwin sides with the Northlanders and forever turns his back on his Saxon kin.

The Viking Act of Single Combat– Northern Europe AD 790-1100: Six generations of two neighboring lords battle regularly. Two ugly Vikings battle to the death. Whatever.

The Shield Maidens– Danish Mercia AD 868: Three widowed Danes escape and become shield maidens who were women warriors who fought alongside men in Scandinavian folklore and mythology. They escape to an abandoned Roman fort and defend themselves against the invading Saxons. Fate is intertwined into the story, so how they succeed seems less due to their own prowess than just luck. The very dark coloring and lack of individualization of the three women made this female-centric story less powerful than it could have been.

Sven The Immortal– Oslo Norway AD 1009: Sven and Enna are back! As is original artist Gianfelice and his issue with eyes! Sven has been in exile for several decades when young men who want to prove their manhood by killing the fabled Sven Of Orkney, decide to find him. Sven sends his two children into hiding, and he and Enna prepare for the attack. These young bucks underestimate the greying Sven but he shows them that he can still battle with the best of them. While I won't spoil how he and Enna persevere, I will say that I was extremely happy with the ending. Sven- who knew that your character would end up being so appealing to me?

James DeSantis says

I almost went with a 2 star for this one. If it wasn't for the last two stories I would have. The first story revolves around a young lad helping vikings take over his city because his father and brother are dicks. Then we have a one shot of a warriors fighting till the bitter end. Then we have a story of 3 women fighting off a horde of angry Saxons after they murdered one of their men. Last story brings us back to Sven as he's much older with his wife and two children.

What I liked: Loved Sven story. While short it added a epilogue of sorts to a character we enjoyed a lot from

volume 1. His ending and fight is both gritty, scary, and well told. The story about the three women defending themselves on a base against the horde of men was great. Showed how well you can survive if you work together and wait on tactic instead of battle. I loved the ending and was nice to see some happiness in these stories. The art is still top notch as well.

What I didn't like: I didn't favor the first story much. I never got attached to the young kid despite his parent and brother being total dicks. I also didn't care enough when he became older and that we were supposed to like him? Maybe later but these two part issues didn't do much. I HATED the one shot issue of the warriors fighting. WAY too much talking, neither character clicked for me, and I just felt BORED as hell reading it.

The first half was pretty boring/bad but the second half for sure made up for it. If they were split the first half is around a 1.5 where the second half is around a 4.5. So I'ma settle around a 3. Hoping we get more like the second half, less like the first half.

Rituraj Kashyap says

This volume contains four short stories, including an epilogue of sorts to the story of Sven from Vol. 1. Among the four, "The Shield Maidens," a story about the revenge of three Viking widows after their village is raided by the Saxons, was my favorite. "The Viking art of Single Combat" was good too. I'm loving the art in this series. All the artists and colorists have been able to depict the mythical element of the Viking Age in these stories.

Nomad nimrod says

eh , disappointed.

Mike says

Visceral, illustrative, vivid writing. Which makes up for anything the "whizz"y art may miss out on. These stories somehow feel tighter, more direct and immediate than the longer tales of books 1 & 2, and stand on their own as great works.

Electric says

Vikings done right. Brutal, relentless, bloody, inventive. Besides you will learn a lot about the history of the fabled norsemen (and woman). I love the whole series but this collection of short stories is really outstanding.

Matt says

Holy crap best NL volume yet!! I had no idea I'd dig a Viking comic so much.

Sam Quixote says

"Northlanders" is a series of Viking stories set in the latter half of the first millennia AD. The series is different from other Vertigo series as it doesn't feature a single "quest" like storyline and a central cast of characters. Rather, writer Brian Wood chooses to write either book length stories per character/storyline or, like in "Blood in the Snow", a series of short stories. Because of this it makes the series more accessible as if you pick up this book (third in the series) or the fourth you won't have missed a huge chunk of story to render the book difficult to follow, but if you have been reading them all you'll get more out of it as Wood does bring back some characters.

The stories contained here are among the best of the series so far. "Lindisfarne" features some gorgeous artwork by Dean Ormston of the monk town of Lindisfarne before it is raided by Vikings and the townspeople murdered. It both captures the romance of the time and the bloodiness of the culture of the Vikings.

"The Shield Maidens" is worth this book alone. A two part story of three surviving wives of a recently razed village of Northmen by the Saxons, they escape and hole up in an abandoned Roman fortress, only to find the Saxons in pursuit, eventually laying siege to them. The story follows how that siege goes, and is brilliantly written by Wood who keeps the tension up and the action flowing nicely.

"Sven the Immortal" is another chapter in the life of Sven, the main character of the first Northlanders book. Here he must defend himself and his family from a group of young Northlanders out to prove themselves by slaying the legendary Sven the Returned. This too was an excellent story and a welcome reunion between Wood and artist Davide Gianfelice who produces beautiful scenes for this closing chapter of the book.

"Blood in the Snow" is an excellent read for all fans of comic books and needn't be read as the third book in the series but instead works fine as a standalone work. "Northlanders" continues to be a fascinating series and one of Vertigo's best, I highly recommend checking it out.

Aaron says

Considerably better than the first two volumes if for no other reason than the stories are too short to drag on for long. I can't say that any of them thrilled me all that much, or opened my eyes to any real sharp take on Vikings or their culture, but a few of the stories in here did at least offer some interesting characters.

First up is "Lindisfarne," a story of a young boy essentially turning his back on his Saxon heritage. This was my favorite of the bunch. Most of Northlanders thus far has been very cut-and-dry with little moral ambiguity, just sheer blunt-force storytelling with little nuance. This is the first exception, and it was a welcome one. Wood paints a conflicted picture of the boy in question, and allows you to simultaneously feel sorry for and despise him. It's a quick, 2-issue tale, and really gets the job done. I wish all of Northlanders was this driven by humanity and relatable decisions instead of just men stabbing each other a lot.

Next is "The Viking Art Of Single Combat," which is just men stabbing each other a lot. Yes, there's an

attempt to enlighten the reader about what Viking combat and war was like, but it's very ham-fisted and related via long slogs of narration that do little more than slow down the action. There's no real sense of purpose to the characters in this story that isn't explained to you via clunky exposition, and as such, it just feels flat.

Then we've got "The Shield Maidens," which I also kind of enjoyed. This is the story of three Danish women on the run from some Saxons who have to hole up in an old Roman fortress to defend themselves. The idea behind the story is solid, but the execution is pretty lacking. I really wanted to understand how the women were managing to survive wave after wave of Saxon men. What their tactics were, how they were accomplishing this heroic feat. Instead they just kind of... succeed. Mix in the fact that none of them really get much in the way of character development (and a dash of a cop-out ending) and you've got an ultimately unsatisfying story.

Then, lastly, we return to the original Northlanders "hero," Sven the Returned, in a one-shot story called "Sven the Immortal." I don't know why Wood felt the need to revisit this character in the first place, much less to tell a story as empty as this. Rather than tell us anything new about Sven, whose story was pretty well wrapped up in volume one of this series, we just see him doing the same shit as an old man. I thought we'd get some heightened stakes or a twist on Sven's seeming inability to be bested in battle, but nope. It's just the same thing only Sven has grey hair. Oh well.

Still can't really recommend this series, which I'm finding to be mediocre-to-bad. There are certainly worse things on the shelves, but overall this is pretty rote storytelling wrapped up in a historical package.

Darren says

This is a collection of shorter tales. The one I liked best was *The Shield Maidens*. Also enjoyed *Sven the Immortal*, though it's a weird one. Why seven young men would attack Sven for his pile of unfarmable rocks is beyond me.

Trish says

That was fun - again.

This volume, in contrast to the last, consists of several independent stories. The first is of Edwin, a Saxon boy who doesn't really belong with his dreadful and fanatical Christian father. The second is about single combat, its tactics and weapons used (quite a nice way to get educated). The third is about the famous shield maidens. The fourth and last is about Sven, whom we know from volume one.

It was quite unnerving to read all the fanatical religious stuff, mostly from the Christians, but I endured it in the knowledge that they probably would die a bloody and painful death. *evil grin*

The story about what became of Sven and his little family was quite nice too, although it was a bit short (I would have liked to see more of the fight).

The art is ... well ... in my review of the first comic I said it was gritty and fit the story so I liked it pretty

much. But in this volume, unfortunately, there were quite a few panels that I didn't like at all. Just my personal taste but while I do not expect the art to be "pretty" in the coming volumes, I do hope it will get back to the level it was in volume 1 at least.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed it a lot (my favourite art panel, by the way, was the life tree where the three Norns spun the threads of fate). *Fate is relentless.*
