

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS

FATALE™



Number Sixteen

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Chapter Two

IT HAD BEEN THREE DAYS AND WULF WAS STARTING TO THINK HE'D *IMAGINED* THE WOMAN.



HE'D BEEN HAUNTED BY HER FACE MOST OF HIS LIFE, ANYWAY...



MAYBE THIS WAS JUST ANOTHER PART OF HIS OBSESSION?



WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, HIS PARENTS HAD TAKEN THE FAMILY TO DISNEYLAND.



WULF HAD GOTTEN IN A FIGHT WITH HIS BROTHER AND RUN OFF...



AND IT WAS THEN, LOST IN THE CROWD, THAT HE HAD *SEEN HER* FOR THE FIRST TIME.





THEY WERE JUST
STAND-INS.
KNOCK-OFFS.

THE *RITUAL* WAS
WHAT HAD BECOME
IMPORTANT.

HE KNEW HE WAS CHASING
SOMETHING HE COULD
NEVER FIND...

...BUT THEN
HE HAD.

I'M SORRY...
IS THERE A
PROBLEM,
OFFICER?

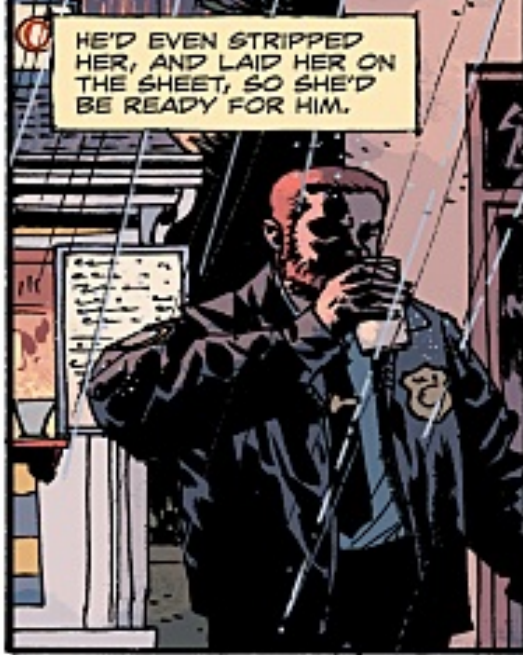
MAYBE HE *WAS*
LOSING HIS MIND.

THAT PROBABLY MADE MORE SENSE
THAN HER LOOKING *EXACTLY* THE
SAME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER.

BUT NO... HE HAD VIVID MEMORIES OF WATCHING HER DIE.



HE'D EVEN STRIPPED HER, AND LAID HER ON THE SHEET, SO SHE'D BE READY FOR HIM.



HE COULDN'T HAVE IMAGINED ALL THAT... COULD HE?



SON OF A BITCH.



HOW COULD HE HAVE DOUBTED HIMSELF?



HE MAKES A LIST OF THE WAYS HE'LL PUNISH HIMSELF LATER, AFTER HE'S FOUND HER AGAIN.





THE PAST FEW DAYS HAD BEEN A STRANGE WHIRLWIND FOR LANCE...

THE KIND HE THOUGHT WASN'T POSSIBLE FOR HIM ANYMORE.



BUT IT WAS LIKE SOME PART OF HIM HAD REAWAKENED WHEN HE FOUND HER ON THE ROAD.



HE HADN'T IMAGINED SHE WOULD STAY... BUT SHE SEEMED TO WANT TO.



SHE WAS LOST, WITH NO IDEA WHO SHE WAS, OR WHERE SHE CAME FROM...



AFTER A SHORT DISCUSSION, ALL OF THEM HAD AGREED SHE SHOULD CRASH HERE FOR NOW...



I MEAN, AT LEAST UNTIL HER MEMORY STARTS TO RETURN... RIGHT?

AND EVEN SKIP HAD GONE ALONG WITH IT WHEN HE CAME HOME, AFTER ALL HIS EARLIER COMPLAINING.



LANCE WAS SO RELIEVED HE BARELY EVEN NOTICED HOW ODD THAT WAS.



AND IF HE WASN'T ALREADY FALLING FOR HER, HE WOULD HAVE WHEN SHE PICKED HER NEW NAME...

NO, SERIOUSLY... JANE DOE.

HE HADN'T EXPECTED HER TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR ABOUT HER SITUATION.

I MEAN, WHY NOT, RIGHT?

BUT EVERYTHING ABOUT JANE WAS UNEXPECTED...

LIKE HOW EASY IT WAS TO BE AROUND HER... HOW EFFORTLESSLY SHE FIT INTO THEIR LIVES...

OR HER STRANGELY IMMENSE KNOWLEDGE OF 60S ROCK...

AND SHE LOVED HEARING HIS STORIES OF THEIR BAND AND ITS UPS AND DOWNS.

IT WAS SO NICE TO HAVE SOMEONE TO TALK TO WHO WASN'T SICK OF ALL THAT SHIT.





SHE MAKES LOVE LIKE
A FORCE OF NATURE.



AFTERWARDS, HE FEELS
NEARLY BROKEN...

BUT IT'S PURE
BLISS...



AT THE EDGE OF SLEEP,
WATCHING HER SWAY TO THE BEAT
OF ONE OF THEIR SONGS...

HE NEVER WANTS THIS
MOMENT TO END.



AND THEN HE REALIZES
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO.

WHAT?
WHAT'RE YOU
THINKING?



YOU WANT TO
BE IN OUR
VIDEO?

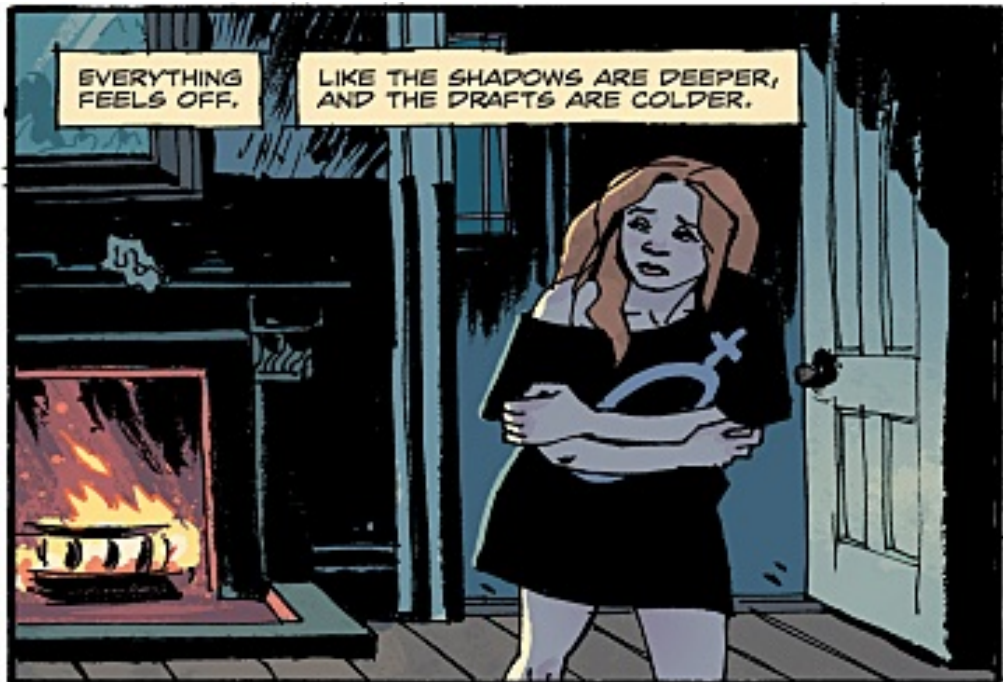


THE HOUSE IS DIFFERENT SINCE "JANE" ARRIVED, DARCY THINKS.



EVERYTHING FEELS OFF.

LIKE THE SHADOWS ARE DEEPER, AND THE DRAFTS ARE COLDER.



AND DON'T EVEN GET HER STARTED ON THE WAY THE GUYS ACT AROUND THIS CHICK.



I MEAN, WHAT IS SHE? THIRTY?

GROSS.



AT LEAST TOM SEEMS MOSTLY OBVIOUS TO WHATEVER ALLURE SHE HAS ON THE OTHERS.



THE PROBLEM WITH THAT, DARCY REALIZES...



...IS THAT TOM'S BEEN OBVIOUS ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS FOR A LONG TIME.





...AND WALKED RIGHT OUT OF GUITAR EXPO WITH A HOLLOW BODY RICKENBACKER SLUNG OVER HIS SHOULDER, AND NO ONE EVEN LOOKED TWICE.



LANCE FIGURED IT WAS THE YEARS HE'D SPENT SICK AS A KID. HIS GROWTH WAS STUNTED, BUT INSIDE THERE WAS MORE OF HIM... TRYING TO BREAK FREE.



IT'S WHAT MADE HIM SUCH A GREAT GUITARIST. THE UNSEEN SIDE OF HIM.



BUT... WHY SO SOON?

HOW MUCH DID I GET LAST WEEK?



LIKE EIGHTY THOUSAND...

WE CAN TOTALLY PULL THE SHOOT OFF FOR THAT.



NO... IF JANE IS GONNA BE IN THIS VIDEO, IT HAS TO BE PERFECT.



IT HAS TO BE IMPRESSIVE...



OF COURSE, IT HAD TO BE BECAUSE OF THE GIRL, JON THOUGHT.

HE KNEW SHE'D SPENT LAST NIGHT WITH LANCE, AND HE TRIED NOT TO BE BITTER ABOUT IT...

...BUT EVER SINCE JANE ARRIVED, HIS NIGHT TERRORS HAD RETURNED.

HE'D BE LOST IN A DESOLATE WASTELAND...

...EVERY SHADOW HIDING SOME SLITHERING MONSTER...

AND ACROSS THE EMPTINESS HE COULD JUST GLIMPSE HER...

...AS TENDRILS AND CLAWS TORE HIM APART...

HE FELT LIKE HE HADN'T SLEPT IN DAYS.



THE THING ABOUT JANE... IT'S LIKE SHE'S NOT A REAL PERSON...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



YOU KNOW, LIKE IN HARRYHAUSEN MOVIES, WHEN THE GODS WALK AMONG US?



THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE NEXT TO HER... LIKE SHE'S ON ANOTHER PLANE.

I THINK THAT'S JUST THE AMNESIA, MAN.

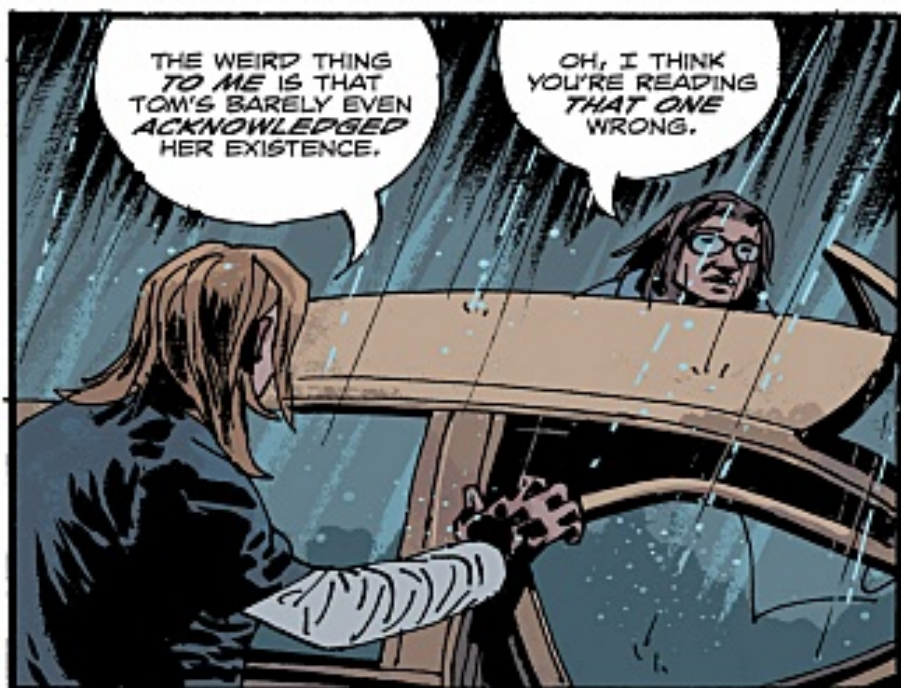


NO...



I DON'T KNOW.

MAYBE.



THE WEIRD THING TO ME IS THAT TOM'S BARELY EVEN ACKNOWLEDGED HER EXISTENCE.

OH, I THINK YOU'RE READING THAT ONE WRONG.



I THINK TOM'S JUST BEEN DUMBFUNDED SINCE HE SAW HER...

...PROBABLY THINKS SHE'S SOME HIPPY ANGEL SENT TO HELP HIM UNDERSTAND "THE UNIVERSE'S SECRET WEAVE" OR SOME CARLOS CASTANERA SHIT LIKE THAT.

FROM THE ROOFTOP,
YOU COULD SEE THE
LAKE.

TOM LIKED TO SMOKE
MUSHROOMS AND WATCH
THE SKY GO DARK...

JUST HIM AND THE
DARKNESS AND
LIGHTS FLICKERING
ON THE WATER.

HEY...

...I'M NOT
INTERRUPTING,
AM I?

WHAT?
NO...
NO...

IT'S A
FREE
ROOFTOP,
RIGHT?

I MEAN,
THIS IS
AMERICA.

MM HMM.

...



ARE YOU *SURE*
IT'S OKAY FOR
ME TO BE
HERE?



YOU WEREN'T
WORKING ON A SONG
IN YOUR *HEAD* OR
SOMETHING?

NO, I WAS JUST
WATCHING THE
PATTERNS...



SEE? THE
LIGHTS ON THE
WATER, FROM
THE *EAST*
SIDE?

IT'S
COMPLEX,
MAN...



OH,
SURE.

I CAN'T
WRITE MUSIC
ANYMORE. I
JUST... I...




YOU KNOW
SCOTT
WALKER?

"*THE SUN AIN'T
GONNA SHINE
ANYMORE?*"



THAT'S THE
WALKER
BROTHERS, BUT
HIS SOLO STUFF...
IT'S JUST MIND-
BLOWING...

ONE NIGHT I
LISTENED TO
*CLIMATE OF
HUNTER* OVER
AND OVER...



AND I
THOUGHT, I'LL
NEVER BE THIS
GOOD...

I'LL JUST BE
STUCK TRYING TO
WRITE HIT SINGLES
'CAUSE I GOT
LUCKY ONE
TIME...



SHIT...
SORRY...



I DON'T
KNOW WHY
I'M TALKING
ABOUT
THIS...

LISTEN TO ME...
YOU'RE *NOT*
A ONE-HIT
WONDER...



YOU'RE AN
ARTIST...
A *REAL*
ARTIST.



WELL,
THAT'S --



HEY - HEY
-- *HOLD
ON* --

WHAT'RE YOU - I THOUGHT YOU
WERE WITH
LANCE?



I'M NOBODY'S
PROPERTY,
TOM...



THIS IS
AMERICA,
REMEMBER?



SKIP HAD LEFT CLASS EARLY...
HE COULDN'T CONCENTRATE
ANYWAY, SO FUCK IT.

HE JUST KEPT
THINKING ABOUT
THE GIRL.

SHE WAS A PATIENT,
THIS WAS TOTALLY
UNPROFESSIONAL...
HE KNEW THAT.

BUT WHEN HE PICTURED
HER, HE GOT SHAKY...
LIKE HE WAS SUDDENLY
STARVING.

SO HE'D SPENT THE
NIGHT DRINKING AT
THE VOMIT...

AND THAT'S WHY HE GOT HOME
JUST IN TIME TO SEE HER
SNEAKING ACROSS THE YARD...

...BACK TO LANCE'S
ROOM OVER THE
GARAGE...

SHE HADN'T EVEN
NOTICED HIM.

HE'D NEVER FELT
THIS INSIGNIFICANT
IN HIS ENTIRE LIFE.



...HEY,
IS THAT...
IS THAT
NEW...?

SHHHH...
GO BACK TO
SLEEP...



...I THINK I
HAVE
SOMETHING
HERE...



DO YOU
HEAR
THAT?



IS
THAT A
TAPE?

NO...
THAT'S
TOM. HE'S
PLAYING.




HOLY
SHIT.




HEY... MAYBE
WE'RE NOT
DOOMED
AFTER
ALL...

MAYBE
NOT.

A man with long blonde hair, wearing a dark jacket, stands in a bedroom. He is looking out a window. A woman with dark hair is sleeping in a bed in the foreground. A dresser with a lamp is visible.


LANCE OPENED THE WINDOWS SO HE COULD HEAR TOM'S PLAYING... IT WAS AMAZING.

A close-up of the man's face as he smokes a cigarette. He has a contemplative expression.


LIKE ALL THE TIME OFF HAD SOMEHOW MADE HIM BETTER.

A woman with dark hair is lying in bed, sleeping peacefully. Her hands are clasped near her face.

BUT AS THE SONG ECHOED ACROSS THE YARD, ITS MELODY BEGAN TO BREAK HIS HEART...

A close-up of the woman's face as she sleeps. Her eyes are closed, and her expression is serene.


...BECAUSE HE *KNEW*.

The man is sitting on the edge of the bed, looking down at the woman who is still sleeping. He is holding a lit cigarette.


HE *KNEW* WHY TOM WAS MAKING MUSIC AGAIN.

A man is lying in bed, looking thoughtful. He is partially covered by a blue blanket.

SKIP HEARS THE NEW SONG, TOO... BUT HE'S MORE CONCERNED WITH HOW *RAW* HIS PENIS FEELS.

A close-up of the man's face. He has a pained or uncomfortable expression, with his teeth clenched.

IT'S PAINFUL TO THE TOUCH.

A close-up of the man's face, showing him holding back tears. His eyes are closed, and his expression is one of intense emotional struggle.

HE HAS TO HOLD BACK *TEARS* AS HE JACKS HIMSELF TO SLEEP.



GOD DAWN
IT...

WHERE THE HELL
WAS THIS GUY?



GAVIN HAD FELT SICK
EVER SINCE JOSEPHINE
HAD *DISAPPEARED*
WITH HIS CAR.



BY THE SECOND DAY, HE COULDN'T
KEEP FOOD DOWN...AND HIS HANDS
SHOOK LIKE HE WAS GOING
THROUGH WITHDRAWAL.



HE WISHED HE COULD
HAVE GONE TO THE
POLICE, BUT HE'D
KNOWN JO LONG
ENOUGH TO KNOW
BETTER THAN THAT.



POLICE HAVE THE KIND
OF QUESTIONS A WOMAN
LIKE HER DIDN'T NEED.



SO HERE HE WAS,
COMBING THE STREETS
OF THIS UNKNOWN TOWN...



HANGING UP FLYERS WITH THE
ONLY HALF-ASSED PICTURE
OF HER HE EVEN HAD.

HE FELT LIKE BREAKING THINGS AND SCREAMING... OR DRAINING THE MINI-BAR AND THROWING HIMSELF INTO THE BAY...



AND THEY WEREN'T EVEN LOVERS.



HE COULDN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH WORSE THAT WOULD BE.



BUT JO HADN'T LET ANY MAN TOUCH HER SINCE LONG BEFORE THEY MET.



SHE'D TOLD HIM THAT LIKE IT WAS A MERCY, LIKE SHE WAS SPARING HIM.

TRUST ME, GAVIN... YOU'RE BETTER OFF.



GOD DAMN IT... WHY HAD THE LIBRARIAN MADE THEM COME HERE?



THESE FUCKING BOOKS SHE BOUGHT AT THAT OCCULT FAIR MADE NO SENSE AT ALL.



OLD DIARIES... AND BOOKS OF LISTS...



WHY DID EVERYTHING
HAVE TO BE A MYSTERY
WITH HER?

**KNKK
KNKK**

OH, THANK
FUCKING
GOD...

HI, I'M GAVIN...
YOU SAID YOUR
NAME WAS
RALPH ON THE
PHONE?

YEAH... NICE
TO MEET
YOU.

SO, YOU'VE
REALLY SEEN
MY MISSING
FRIEND,
RALPH?

PLEASE
DON'T BE
SCAMMING
ME.

OH NO... NO, I
DEFINITELY
SAW HER...

GREAT... THEN
YOU BETTER
COME IN...

I'VE GOT
A MAP IN
HERE...

...I DON'T
KNOW THIS
GOD DAMN
CITY AT
ALL.

To Be Continued

The Secret Ingredient Is...

managed to watch the new Netflix show, **ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK**. I wasn't planning to watch it at all. Prison shows make me claustrophobic, and I didn't have high hopes for a minimum security women's prison making for a very interesting show. Well, I was fucking wrong. It's a great show. It's got a few places here and there, in the last four or five episodes, where it gets a little too cute like "Weeds" was, but it comes back together by the end. And I think it's the first of the Netflix original shows that really hits the binge-watch thing the right way.

Oh, and I had a chance to read an advance copy of Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky's **SEX CRIMINALS**. I don't want to ruin it for you, but if that book isn't on your pull list, you need to put it there. One of the best comics I've read in years. It's funny and heartbreaking and real all at once, while also being about sex and crime.

If you read the comics news online, you'll know that I announced a new project at the **IMAGE EXPO** in early July. It took me years, but I finally got Steve Epting to come do a new book with me, and we've got the wonderful Mrs. Bettie Breitweiser on the colors, just like we do here on **FATALE**.

The book is called **VELVET** and it's a cold war espionage story with a twist. On the next few pages, you can see our "teaser trailer" for it. I actually had the idea for **VELVET** five years before I came up with **FATALE**, and I almost can't believe it's finally happening. I hope you'll all check it out this October, and spread the word.

A lot more of you have been writing in lately, which is really appreciated. So please keep it up, write to us at: criminalcomic@gmail.com and we'll see you next month, when we look like this:

This has been a weird month. Kind of a good news/had news month, and I'm not allowed to talk about the good news, and I don't want to talk about the bad news, so... I'll probably keep this brief this time. I tend to look at this page as a kind of journal, where I just tell you guys/gals whatever's on my mind, sort of like the print version of a blog, that comes out monthly(ish).

So, what CAN I talk about? Hmm...

I spent a few days moping around the house recently and





LET ME EXPLAIN THE SITUATION TO YOU...

JEFFERSON KELLER IS DEAD.



"OF COURSE, YOU AND I KNOW JEFFERSON WAS ALSO AGENT X-14... THE WORLD'S TOP SECRET AGENT.

"NOT AN EASY MAN TO KILL..."



...SO WHY DID YOU DO IT?

BEFORE THIS GETS WORSE, I WANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT ONE THING...

...I'M INNOCENT.



WORSE? YOU'RE IN LOCK-UP IN A TOP SECRET AERIAL FACILITY...

THIS IS AS BAD AS IT GETS, MISS TEMPLETON.



TRUST ME...IT ISN'T.

From ED BRUBAKER and STEVE EPTING -

"I HAVE TWO AGENTS
ON LIFE-SUPPORT.



"FOURTEEN
WITH BROKEN
BONES...

"ONE WITH A
FRACTURED
SKULL.



"...AND
A MISSING
STEALTH
SUIT.



"JUST WHO IS THIS
WOMAN, SIR?"





-creators of "CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER"





"...IT'S ALL CLASSIFIED."



"BUT, LET'S JUST SAY...SHE WASN'T A SECRETARY."



WELVET



HIS GIRL FRIDAY IS THE MOST DANGEROUS WOMAN ALIVE



**FATALE Number Sixteen Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips \$3.50 Different In Canada
Rated M / Mature**