

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS

FATALE™



Number Seventeen

Colors by Elizabeth Breitweiser

MEDIA INQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO UTA - Agents Julien Thuan and Geoff Morley

IMAGE COMICS, INC.

Robert Kirkman - chief operating officer
 Erik Larson - chief financial officer
 Todd McFarlane - president
 Marc Silvestri - chief executive officer
 Jim Valentino - vice president
 Eric Stephenson - publisher
 Ben Richards - director of business development
 Jennifer de Goozen - jr. & marketing director
 Traverin Bigelowson - accounts manager
 Emily Miller - accounting assistant
 Jamie Parrino - marketing assistant
 Emilio Bonifacio - sales assistant
 Jaemie Debus - administrative assistant
 Kevin Yano - digital rights coordinator
 Tyler Stathilos - events coordinator
 David Deakins - content manager
 Jonathan Chan - production manager
 Drew Gill - art director
 Jane Gask - print manager
 Monica Garcia - senior production artist
 Vincent Kokas - production artist
 Jenna Savage - production artist
 Allison Drake - production artist
www.imagecomics.com

FATALE #17. September 2013. Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 2001 Center Street, 6th Floor, Berkeley, CA, 94704. Copyright © 2013 Basement Gang Inc. All rights reserved. FATALE™ (including all prominent characters featured herein), their logos and all character likenesses are trademarks of Basement Gang Inc, unless otherwise noted. Image Comics® is a trademark of Image Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for review purposes) without the express written permission of Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events and locale in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events or places, without satiric intent, is coincidental. DIGITAL EDITION

Interlude

Nelson was good at living on the run...



Or at least, he was good enough.



We'd travelled up the river for a few hours, then crossed into a forest.

STEP WHERE I STEP.

WHY? ARE WE HIKING THROUGH A MINE FIELD?

JUST TRUST ME...



...YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S IN THE WOODS.

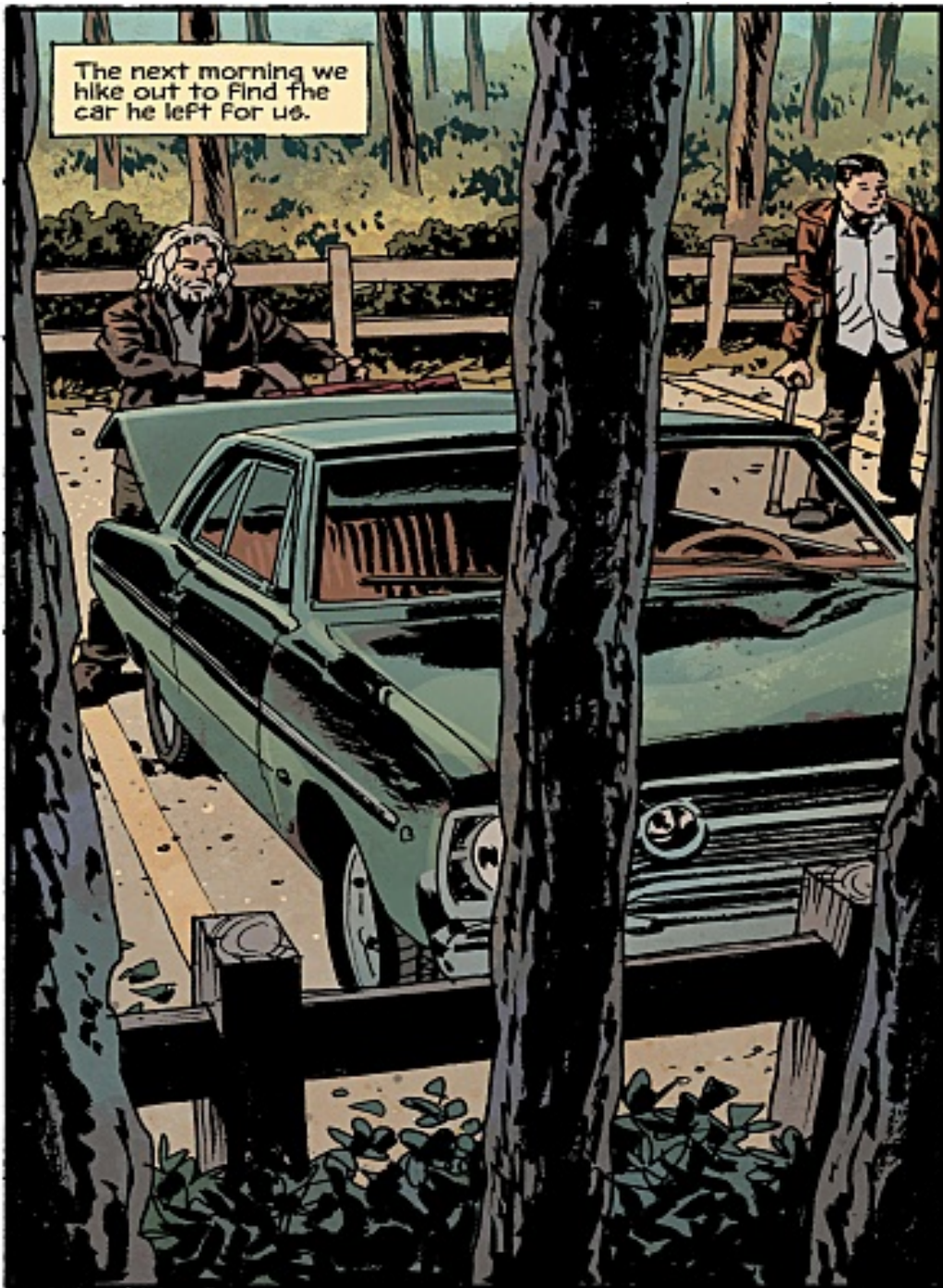
We camped out overnight, my first time camping since childhood... And I didn't like it any better this time.

Nelson's right, the darkness out here is different...

Deeper, endless... Unsettling.



The next morning we hike out to find the car he left for us.



And for the next week, we stay at cheap motels and *Travelodge*...



...Switching license plates every morning with some other car in the lot.



I was hoping he'd open up on the road, but anytime I ask about Josephine, he shuts me down.

SHIT.. I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHAT SIDE YOU'RE ON YET, NICK.



So I try telling him how I lost my leg... the strange men, Josephine and me being hit by a plane...



But all that does is make him laugh. Like it's the funniest thing he's ever heard in his life.



It's not until the Fourth night that I realize Nelson never sleeps.

He just stays up all night, muttering to himself.

One time, I wake up and hear him in the bathroom...

It sounds like he's crying, like some heartbroken teenager.

But the next day he's his usual self, ranting as we drive.

EVERYTHING WE SEE, ALL OF THIS... THE SKY AND DUST... THIS FUCKIN' ROAD...

IT'S ALL A SHAM, MAN... IT'S WHAT THEY WANT US TO SEE...

...I MEAN, IT'S ALL RIGHT IN FRONT OF YA' IF YOU'RE LOOKIN', MAN... IT'S ALL A CULT, Y'KNOW?

ALMOST THERE NOW, MAN... ALMOST HOME...

And I can't help but wonder why Jo would have sent someone so *unstable* to break me out...

Welcome to California

...Or if this is just what exposure to her does to you... *Cracks* you.

AH, *SHIT*... HAND ME THE BINOCULARS.

WHAT'S UP? WHAT'S *WRONG*...?

I know it's sure as hell broken *me*.

DAMN IT... I *DID* THE SPELL...

...HOW THE FUCK DID THEY *FIND* THIS PLACE?

LET ME...

THOSE ARE THE SAME GUYS YOU *SAW*... THE FIRST DAY YOU *MET* HER, RIGHT?

YEAH, WHO ARE THEY?

THE *GOON SQUAD*. PRETTY SURE THEY'RE *BARELY* HUMAN ANYMORE.

SO WHAT THE HELL DO WE DO? KEEP *RUNNING*?

HELL NO... JUST WAIT HERE...

No. This is bad.

SHIT.

That Fool's going to get us *both* killed.

Except, like I said...

-- NLUJ

-- LTT!

...Nelson is good at this stuff.





Chapter Three

WULF WAS SURPRISED THE GUY HADN'T GIVEN UP *ANYTHING* ABOUT THE GIRL, EVEN UNDER TORTURE.



HE COULD SEE HE *WANTED* TO, BUT SOMETHING HELD HIM BACK. LIKE THE WORDS COULDN'T FIND HIS TONGUE.



IN THE END, KILLING HIM FELT LIKE *MERCY*, WHICH HAD MADE WULF SICK.



THEN HE'D SEARCHED THE ROOM AND FOUND NOTHING... EXCEPT FOR THE BOOKS.



ONLY ONE WAS IN ENGLISH, AND IT MADE NO SENSE.

HE THOUGHT ANOTHER WAS AN ANCIENT COLLECTION OF FAIRY TALES, MAYBE IN RUSSIAN?



THEIR COVERS CRACKED AND THREATENED TO FALL APART AS HE TURNED THE PAGES... BUT HE COULDN'T STOP STUDYING THEM.



THEY WERE CONNECTED TO HER... AND THEY'D BEEN PLACED BEFORE HIM, LIKE A *SIGN*.

AFTER TWO DAYS, THE WORDS ON SOME PAGES BEGAN TO COME ALIVE AND SWIM AROUND...

...AND HE FELT PIECES OF HIS MIND CATCHING FIRE, LIKE WHEN HE WAS A KID.

AFTER THAT, THE WORLD CHANGED. LIKE HE'D TORN DOWN ONE OF ITS SECRET WALLS...

...AND HE COULD SEE *MORE* OF WHAT IT HAD BEEN HIDING.

HE'D ALWAYS KNOWN THAT ALL AROUND HIM WERE MONSTERS AND DEMONS AND THINGS WITHOUT NAMES.

THIS WAS THE *REASON* HE'D FOUND THE BOOKS, TO OPEN HIS EYES WIDER...

...SO HE COULD *FIND* HER...



AND DARCY DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT, BUT SHE KNEW EXACTLY WHERE HIS NEW INSPIRATION HAD COME FROM.

YOU READY TO ROLL, JANIE-O?



READY AS I'LL EVER BE...



WHERE ARE THEY GOING SO EARLY?

SOME SECRET FUCKING MISSION.



JESUS, TAKE IT EASY... JANE'S COOL.



OH REALLY? IS SHE COOL, SKIP?

OR ARE YOU JUST WAITING YOUR TURN...



...SINCE SHE'S CLEARLY SCREWING EVERYONE ELSE IN THE BAND?



LANCE HADN'T PLANNED
ON BRINGING JANE ALONG
ON THE *BANK JOB*...

HE HADN'T PLANNED
ON EVEN *TELLING*
HER ABOUT IT...



BUT WHEN SHE MENTIONED
TOM'S NEW *SONGS*, HE FOUND
HIMSELF *BRAGGING*...



AND OF COURSE, SHE WASN'T
SHOCKED, SHE WANTED *IN*... LIKE A KID
JUST DISCOVERING ROLLERCOASTERS.



AND WATCHING
HER IN ACTION...



...LANCE REALIZED SHE
AND JON *BOTH* HAD MORE
RAW NERVE THAN HIM.



THE MEN IN THE BANK WERE CALM, EVEN OBEIENT, AS SHE TOOK THEIR MONEY.



AND THE TELLERS STUFFED THE BAG MORE THAN THEY HAD FOR HIM.



SHIT, THE SECURITY GUARD EVEN TIPPED HIS HAT...

MA'AM.



MAYBE THAT'S WHY LANCE DID IT...



KRAAK

AHTT -- !







JON WAS THE SMARTEST OF THEM,
AND HE COULD SEE *EXACTLY* WHAT
JANE WAS DOING TO HIS FRIENDS...

BUT HE COULDN'T
SEE IT WHEN SHE
DID IT TO *HIM*.



SO WHEN SHE DECLARES A NIGHT OF
CELEBRATION, PULLING THEM ALONG
IN HER WAKE...

...WHATEVER FEARS HE
HAD SIMPLY DISAPPEAR.



IT'S LIKE HE'D FORGIVE
HER ANYTHING, JUST TO
BE PART OF THIS NIGHT...

TO MY
BUTCH AND
SUNDANCE.



HE FEELS ALIVE AND
DANGEROUS, AND NOT AT
ALL LIKE A THIRD WHEEL...

BECAUSE SHE'S NOT A *YOKO* OR A
COURTNEY... IF ANYTHING, IT FEELS
MORE LIKE THEY'RE A BAND THAN EVER...

A BAND OF
OUTLAWS...



AND SURE, THERE'S A PART
OF HIM, A SEED OF DOUBT
DEEP IN HIS MIND...



... THAT KNOWS THERE'S SOMETHING
UNNATURAL AND CRAZY AT WORK HERE.



BUT IT'S OVERPOWERED BY HOW
MUCH HE WANTS TO BE NEAR
HER... TO HEAR HER LAUGH...



TO MAKE
HER LAUGH...



HE'S BARELY
EVEN JEALOUS
WHEN HE WAKES
UP AT 3 A.M. ...



... TO FIND THEM
MAKING LOVE
ON THE COUCH.



BUT HE CAN'T
LOOK AWAY.



AND THAT IMAGE IS STILL BURNED INTO HIS MIND THE NEXT MORNING...

SO...
WHAT'D YOU
THINK?

WE GET THE
BAND UP HERE,
PLAYING...

AND WE GET A
FEW CAMERAS
AIMING BACK THIS
WAY, FOR THE
DANCERS...

NO.

WHAT? YOU
WANNA GO
HANDHELD?

I MEAN
THERE'S
JUST ONE
DANCER.

AND EVERYONE
IS LOOKING AT
HER... I'M
SINGING TO
HER...

LIKE SHE'S THE
CENTER OF THE
UNIVERSE... GOING
SUPERNOVA...

HE'S GOT A
VISION.

SO I
GATHER...

HOPE THIS
GIRL HE'S
TALKIN'
ABOUT'S THE
REAL DEAL...

OH, SHE IS,
ANDY... TRUST
ME...

...NO ONE'S EVER GONNA FORGET THIS GIRL.

...REMEMBER...



AHHH -- !

WHY THEM?
WHY'D YOU
HAVE TO DO
THAT?

I'M THE ONE
WHO FUCKING
TOOK CARE
OF YOU... ME...
NOT THEM...







JUST BEFORE THE CORPORATE
JET LANDS, MR SOMMERSET
FEELS IT AGAIN...

DEEP IN HIS THROAT
AND DOWN INTO HIS
CHEST...



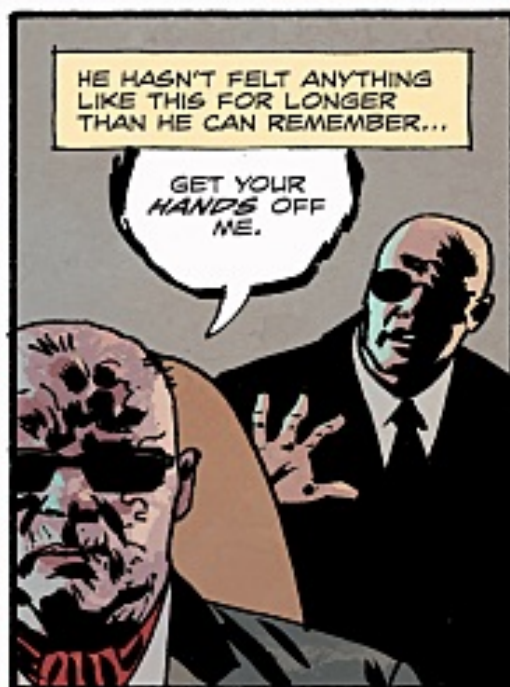
...A KIND OF
PULLING OR
TUGGING.

ARE YOU
READY,
SIR?



HE HASN'T FELT ANYTHING
LIKE THIS FOR LONGER
THAN HE CAN REMEMBER...

GET YOUR
HANDS OFF
ME.



SINCE LONG BEFORE
HE BECAME THIS
SHELL OF A MAN.

SORRY,
SIR.

I WASN'T
TALKING TO
YOU...



BUT THE PAST WEEK, SOMETHING WAS
DRAGGING HIM HERE... TO SEATTLE.



AND EVEN BLIND, PARTLY CRIPPLED, AND COVERED IN BURNS...

SIR, THE CAR IS -

SHHH.

...THIS HUNTER KNOWS THE SCENT OF HIS PREY.

I'M BUSY.

SHE'S CLOSE... AND UNSHIELDED...

WHY WOULD SHE BE OUT IN THE OPEN?

A TRAP? NO... SHE COULDN'T BE --

GULUHMM -
LHHH -

BISHOP!

...SO STRONG...

SIR, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

SHE'S SO STRONG RIGHT NOW...

"...WHAT THE HELL CAN SHE BE DOING?"



To Be Continued



FATALE Number Seventeen Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips

Rated M / Mature