

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS

FATALE



Number Twenty



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What if some day or night, a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say...



"This life as you now live it... You will have to live innumerable times more..."



...And there will be nothing new in it...



...but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh...



...And everything unutterably small or great in your life will return to you... All in the same sequence...



Even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment...



The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it...

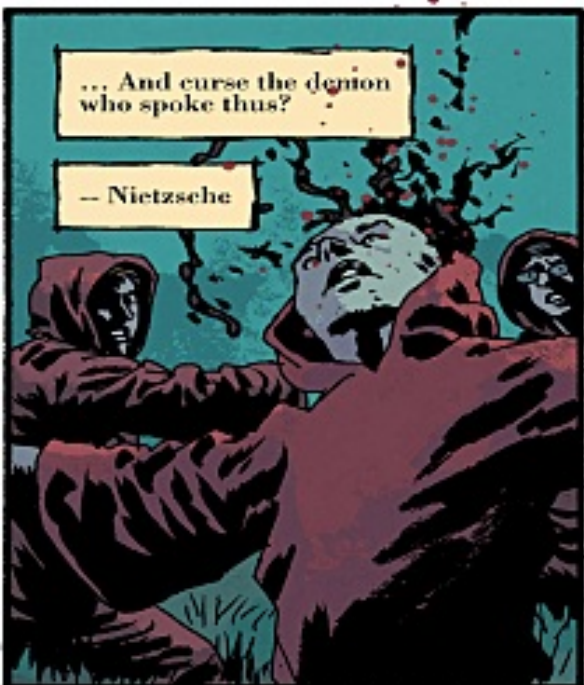


Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth...



... And curse the demon who spoke thus?

— Nietzsche



Curse The Demon



Northern California –
January, 2014

JO HAD BEEN ON THE
ROAD FOR WEEKS, AND
IT WAS GETTING TO HER.



SHE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO
BE OUT HERE YET AT ALL.



BUT WHEN SHE HEARD
ABOUT NICOLAS LASH'S
ESCAPE FROM CUSTODY,
HER CAREFULLY LAID
PLANS WENT RIGHT
OUT THE WINDOW.



SHE WASN'T READY
YET, SHE THOUGHT.

UH... ACTUALLY,
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT IT...



BUT NO AMOUNT OF
MENTALLY PREPARING FOR
ALL THESE EYES ON HER...



...ALL THESE
HANDS...



...WOULD EVER
BE ENOUGH.



SHE HATES THAT THIS IS HOW IT HAS TO BE...



...HATES THAT *THE LIBRARIAN* WAS RIGHT...



...AS SHE FEELS THE CURSE'S *POWER* GROWING INSIDE HER.



SHE SEES DEEP INTO THE HEARTS OF THESE MEN SHE'S BREAKING...



THEIR FRAGILE HOPES...



...THE FAMILIES THEY'RE CASTING ASIDE...

...AS THEIR LUST BECOMES A HUNGER THAT WILL LEAVE THEM EMPTY.



SO MANY EYES... SO MANY HANDS...



IT REMINDS HER OF THE EARLY DAYS... BEFORE SHE STOPPED TRYING TO KILL HERSELF.



Josephine's First Suicide

1935



...AN' I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YA'... I SWEAR...

YOU JUST GOTTA LISTEN, IS ALL... GOTTA LISTEN TO ME...

'CUZ YOU DON'T GET TO JUST PRETEND YOU DIDN'T DO NOTHIN'...

YOU WANTED THIS...

...JUST NEED TO GET YOU OUT SOMEWHERE...

SOMEWHERE WE CAN BE ALONE, SO I CAN EXPLAIN...

EACH DAY JUST GETS WORSE...

THEN, SEE... THEN YOU'LL KNOW...

THE MEN, LIKE
RABID DOGS...

HEY...

THEIR HANDS
ARE CLAWS...

MMMMHH--!

TEARING AT HER, LIKE
THE MONSTERS THAT
FILL HER DREAMS...

NO!

IT HAS
TO END.

IT HAS TO.

BUT, OF COURSE,
IT DIDN'T.

IT NEVER
ENDED.

Josephine's Second Suicide

SHE LEARNED THAT
EVENTUALLY.

BUT SHE WAS SO
YOUNG BACK THEN...

Josephine's Fifth Suicide

...AND AS AFRAID OF
HERSELF AS SHE WAS OF
THE WORLD AROUND HER.

EVERY ACTION SHE
TOOK WAS OUT OF
DESPERATION.

Josephine's Seventeenth Suicide

AND SHE REMEMBERS WHAT
DESPERATION FEELS LIKE...

...EVEN IF SHE CAN'T
BELIEVE SHE WAS
EVER THAT YOUNG.



SHE'S GETTING
CLOSER NOW...
IT'S WORKING.

WHEN SHE SHUTS HER
EYES, SHE GOES TO
THE PLACE WHERE HER
DREAMS RUN WILD...

...AND SHE CAN SEE NICOLAS THERE.

SHE CAN FEEL HIS FEAR... HIS PANIC...



HE'S OUT THERE AHEAD OF HER, SOMEWHERE...


IT'S ALMOST LIKE HE'S AT THE END OF A LONG ROPE THAT TUGS AT HER INSIDES.



FOR SO LONG, SHE WORKED TO CUT THOSE ROPES OFF...

NOW SHE EMBRACES THEM... OPENLY.







BUT THERE ARE SIDE EFFECTS TO BEING SO OPEN... SO NAKED.




SHE CAN BE FOUND.



BUT THAT'S OKAY... THIS WAS ALWAYS PART OF THE PLAN.



SHE JUST WASN'T READY YET.



BUT SHE NEEDS TO BE POWERFUL NOW... SHE NEEDS TO FIND NICOLAS...

OR THERE MAY AS WELL NOT BE A PLAN AT ALL.



YOU'RE PRETTY... PRETTY LADY...

OH --



PRETTY LADY!

-- SHIT!



THE ASSHOLE BROUGHT HIS KID WITH HIM?

PRETTY!

STOP! FUCK -- !



SHE WANTS TO WAKE HIM FROM THE DEAD SO SHE CAN KILL HIM AGAIN.

AHH -- !

BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW
HOW TO DO THAT.

NO!
WAIT -- !

DON'T GO!
DON'T LEAVE
ME!

SHE ONLY KNOWS HOW TO PUT MEN
INTO GRAVES, NOT DIG THEM OUT.

SHE ONLY KNOWS
HOW TO RUIN THINGS.



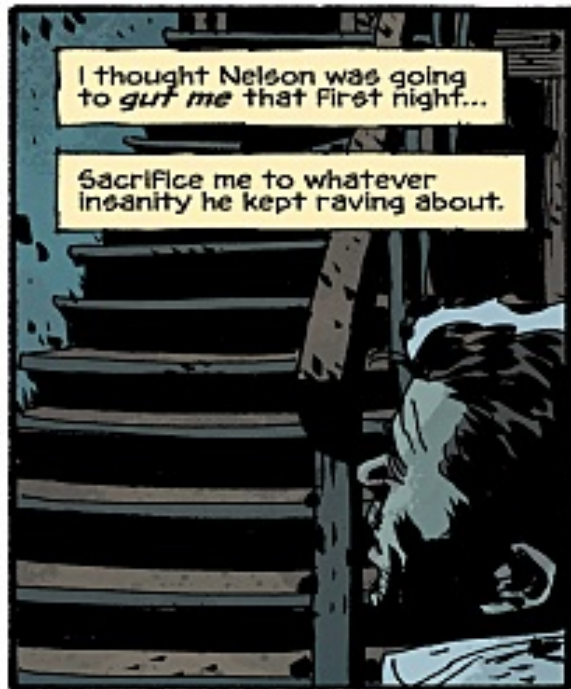
I'd lost track of time,
but I knew I'd been here
at least three days...

Maybe
Five.



I thought Nelson was going
to *gut me* that First night...

Sacrifice me to whatever
insanity he kept raving about.



But apparently there
was a *schedule*... and
it wasn't time yet.



So I was
still *alive*...

EAT.





C'MON...
DON'T MAKE ME
FORCE IT DOWN
YOUR THROAT,
NICK...

BECAUSE
I FUCKIN'
WILL.



THAT'S IT...
GOOD.



NEED YOU
STRONG...
'CHUZ IT'S
LOOKING LIKE
IT'S TONIGHT,
NICK...



WHAT?

YEAH. GOTTA
CHECK MY CHARTS
AGAIN... MAKE
SURE THE MOON'S
RIGHT...



WAIT -
PLEASE -
THIS IS -

YOU CAN'T
DO THIS -
YOU HAVE
TO LISTEN
TO --

KRAAK

TOLD YOU
TO CUT
THAT SHIT
OUT!

I DON'T WANNA
DO THIS, NICK...
BUT WE'RE
NOTHIN'...

JUST SPECKS...
INSIGNIFICANT...

ACCEPT
IT.

Last night he strung
my chain up over the
rafters...

And drew things -
symbols - on me...

...While mumbling in
a language I'd never
heard before.

And I won't lie,
I'm pretty sure
I went insane...

At least for those *hours*, while I hung there...



I remember screaming a lot...



When I wake later, everything hurts, and I'm afraid to close my eyes again...



So I just lie there on the hard concrete... and wish I'd never met Jo...



I hate myself for even thinking that...



But then I count everything I've lost, starting with my leg...



...And I wish it again...



And that's what I'm thinking now,
as my mind races, desperate...



Scrambling For
one last way out.



I can barely stifle
the scream when
my thumb breaks...



...But
I do.



...C'MON...



FUCK!





And all that *wishing* that I'd never *met* her?

OH MY GOD...

Those thoughts evaporate the second I see her again...

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE*, LANCE...?

ME? YOU DID THIS... YOU LEFT ME...

As if they never existed at all...

AND WHAT, NOW YOU WANT HIM? INSTEAD OF ME?

As if I always knew she'd show up and save me.

HE'S NOTHING! A *FUCKING* CRIPPLE!

WELL... AREN'T WE ALL?



AW... C'MON,
JANE... YOU
GOTTA SEE,
I JUST...

I DID IT ALL
FOR YOU...
ALL OF IT...

BUT JO
DOES SEE...



...AND WHAT SHE
SEES SICKENS HER.

THE OTHER MEN WHO'S
LIVES SHE TOUCHED...



...AND THIS DAMAGED
CREATURE SHE MADE,
DRAWN TO THEM...



DRAWN TO THEIR
BLOOD...



AND FOR A MOMENT, HER
POWER OVERWHELMS HER...

YOU GOTTA
BELIEVE
ME...

SHHHH...
JUST
SHHHH...



SHE DOES SOMETHING
SHE KNOWS SHE'LL
HATE HERSELF FOR...

BUT SHE DOES
IT ANYWAY...

SHE LETS ALL OF HER
NIGHTMARES FLOW
THROUGH HER LIPS...

AND EVERY COLD THING
THAT'S BEEN HIDING IN THE
SHADOWS OF ETERNITY...

JUST OUT OF SIGHT
OF HIS MIND'S EYE...

...REVEALS ITSELF.

IT'S
ALL
OVER
NOW
A
NEW
RACE
HAS
BEGUN

WHAT -
WHAT DID
YOU -

IT'S OKAY...
HE WON'T HURT
ANYBODY
ANYMORE...





To Be Continued

The Secret Ingredient Is...

And we're back... And if any of you were paying attention to comics news the past month, you'll already know this issue begins the final arc of *FATALE*. Sean and I announced a new publishing deal with Image at the *IMAGE EXPO* in early January, and for anyone who missed it, here is the official announcement press release:

ED BRUBAKER & SEAN PHILLIPS SIGN UNPRECEDENTED DEAL WITH IMAGE COMICS TO HAVE FIVE YEARS OF FREE REIGN

Ed Brubaker (*Batman*, *Captain America*, *FATALE*, *CRIMINAL*) and Sean Phillips (*INCOGNITO* and *SLEEPER*) and Image Comics have signed an unprecedented deal in comics publishing, a five year deal to do anything they want with total freedom, total control, and total ownership over their projects.

"Everyone at Image loves working with Ed and Sean," said Eric Stephenson, Publisher at Image Comics. "They're one of the best creative teams working in comics today, with an absolutely stunning catalog of work, and I personally consider bringing *Fatale* to Image one of the best things to happen to us over what has been a pretty amazing last couple years. One of the great things about this business is the opportunities we're given to work with good people, and it's really gratifying to see directly how talent like Ed and Sean respond to the unparalleled freedom and support we offer at Image."

"This is amazing. It's like having an overall deal with a studio, except we get to greenlight our own projects," said Brubaker. "Sean and I have been making comics together for fifteen years, and in the early days before we built the passionate readership we have now, we struggled to survive, so a deal like this is exactly what I was looking for. I've already got more than enough ideas to fill those five years, and both Sean and me are looking forward to experimenting and really pushing the boundaries."

The first project on this new deal for the award-winning creators is *THE FADE OUT*, debuting this summer, following the conclusion of *FATALE* with issue #24.

"*The Fade Out* is my ultimate noir story. It's a brutal crime story set in late '40s Hollywood, and all spinning around the mysterious death of an up-and-coming starlet," said Brubaker. "For people who've been waiting for us to return to *CRIMINAL*, this will be exactly what they're looking for, but on a much more epic scale—going from studio backlots to the debauchery of the rich and famous, and even stretching back to the horrors of World War Two."

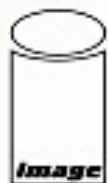
Several of Brubaker and Phillips previous projects are currently in development as films, with Kim Jee-Woon (*A Bittersweet Life*, *I Saw The Devil*) recently signing on to direct *COWARD*, the inaugural story arc of their celebrated series *Criminal*, and *SLEEPER* being produced by Ben Affleck (*Argo*) and Matt Damon (*Bourne Identity*) at Warner Bros.

The FADE OUT

Ed Brubaker
Sean Phillips



Summer 2014





So, that's the big news I was talking about last issue. I don't want to get into talking about our next project too much yet, because we're still working on FATALE and that's what I want you all thinking about.

But I do want to take a moment to say that we couldn't do this deal without all of you. I've said it over and over again since CRIMINAL launched, but those of you who buy our single issues and who turn their friends onto our work, who keep following us from project to project, you're the reason we were able to get a deal like this. Your support has kept us going and made it so our readership just keeps growing with every project. So thanks, because you made this all happen, and please keep coming back. I promise we've got lots of big stuff planned.

Also, I didn't talk about it last month, but SLEEPER is back on as a movie at Warner Bros. and this time, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon are involved, which for me, is pretty exciting. I think both those guys have great taste in material, and the writers are Shawn Ryan and David Wiener, one of whom created one of the best cops shows of the last ten years – THE SHIELD. Unfortunately, that's all the news I have on it, because Sean and I don't own SLEEPER, it was part of Wildstorm at DC, so we're not as intimately involved as we are with other projects we've got in development. But as I find out new information, I will keep you all in the loop as much as I'm allowed to. But I have high hopes.

Okay, there's finally some great crime shows on TV again... So I will point you at some of the best ones.

TRUE DETECTIVE on HBO is only one episode in as I write this, and I have no idea what the hell it's about yet, really. As much a character study as it is a cop show/mystery, this one feels like it'll be a slow burn. Each season will be a totally different cast and case, and any longtime readers will know that's totally my kind of thing. Great performances from McConaughey and Harrelson and a structure that jumps back and forth from the mid-90s to modern times. You have to give it a look.

I mentioned JUSTIFIED being back last time, and so far it's been fucking awesome. They just announced the other day that it's only getting one more season after this one, so now's the time to get caught up if you're behind. It's a really fun show, and feels very Elmore Leonard, as it should, going from laughs and gunfire and heartbreak with incredible ease.

THE AMERICANS starts in a few weeks, and I'm telling you now, go watch the first season and get ready. This show kicked my ass last year. So well-written, great period detail and Cold War tension, and a finale that left me hooked for whatever comes next.

And it's not a crime movie, but I found it a crime that INSIDE LLEWYN DAVIS got so snubbed at the Oscars. I don't put much stock in them, but that was probably my favorite movie of 2013, so if you somehow missed it, stick it to the Academy by going and seeing it before it goes away (or order the Bluray if it's already gone).

That's all I've got this month. Write to us at: criminalcomic@gmail.com and tell us what you think.

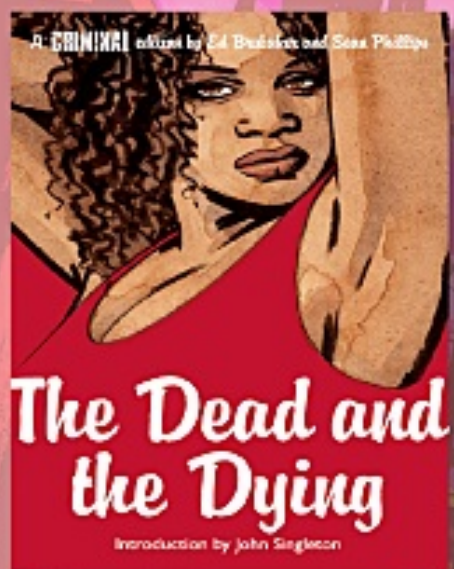
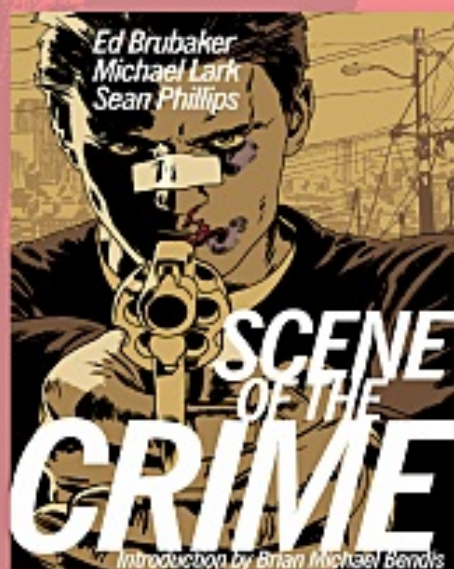
Our fourth trade PRAY FOR RAIN is out this week, so check it out, buy several copies for all your friends who should be reading this book but aren't, and come back to see us next issue, when we'll look like this:



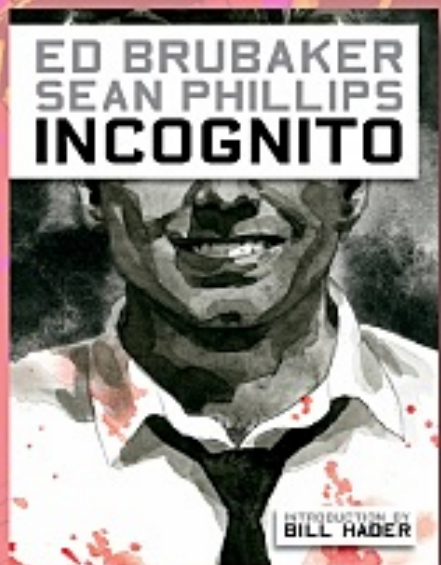


***Dare You
Enter The World
Of Brubaker And
Phillips?***

“Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips have earned a place in the AV Club



...ce among the classic partnerships in comic books.”





FATALE Number Twenty Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips

Rated M / Mature