

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS

FATALE



Number Twelve



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A *Lovely Sort Of Death*



France -
1286 A.D.

MATHILDA HAD
ALWAYS KNOWN
THIS WAS HOW HER
STORY WOULD END.



EVER SINCE THE DAY
SHE'D AWOKEN NAKED,
WITH NO MEMORY OF
HER LIFE BEFORE.

FORTY TWO
YEARS AGO.



FORTY TWO YEARS
WHERE SHE HADN'T
AGED A DAY.

AND WHERE
TRAGEDY HAD
FOLLOWED HER
EVERY STEP.



SHE'D COME TO THE
LANGUEDOC REGION
FLEEING THINGS SHE
WOULDN'T SPEAK OF...



...AND WITHIN MONTHS, HER
SICKNESS HAD INFECTED
THE NEARBY VILLAGE.



THE WOMEN COMPLAINING
OF THEIR HUSBANDS
RAVENOUS APPETITES...

OR HOW THEY WOKE IN
THE NIGHT, FEVERISH
FROM DREAMS ABOUT
THE WOMAN LIVING AT
THE EDGE OF THE
FOREST.

SO IT WAS ONLY A
MATTER OF TIME BEFORE
THE WHITE BROTHERHOOD
CAME FOR HER.

FOR THE WITCH.

AND WHATEVER INFLUENCE SHE HAD
OVER MEN, IN THESE INQUISITORS,
IT'S ONLY EFFECT WAS TO MAKE
THEM MORE CRUEL...

AS THEY SAW THE WOUNDS
THEY GAVE HER HEAL
BEFORE THEIR EYES.

WHEN THEY
FINALLY PUT HER
TO THE FLAME...

...IT WAS ALMOST
A RELIEF.

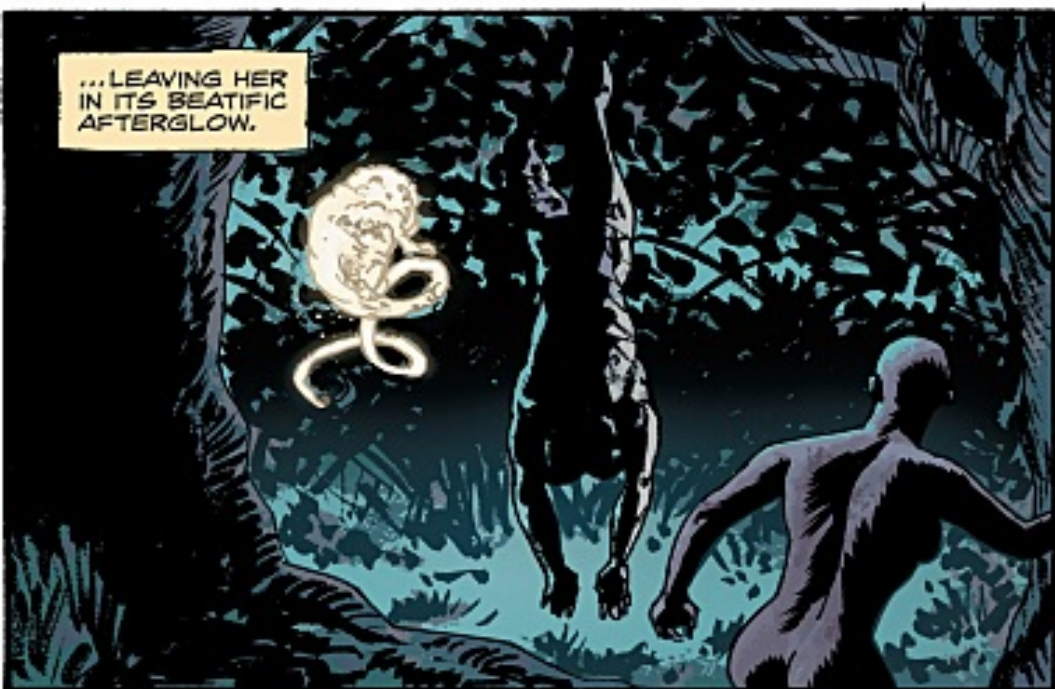
SHE WAS
READY TO DIE.







AS SHE WALKED IN THESE SHADOWS, HER PAIN SUBSIDED...



...LEAVING HER IN ITS BEATIFIC AFTERGLOW.



IT WAS LIKE THE PRISM OF THE WORLD HAD ROTATED.



SO SHE COULD SEE ITS SECRET PATHS...

...AND THE THINGS THAT WALKED UPON THEM.



AS SHE OFTEN DID IN HER DREAMS.



BUT SHE DIDN'T CARE WHICH WORLD SHE WALKED THROUGH.



SHE'D KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE LAYER TO THE SKY.





AHH, SO
AT LAST IT
COMES TO
PASS...



AND I
DON'T
KNOW
ANY.



STAY AWAY
FROM ME. I
WARN YOU.




YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO FEAR FROM ME.


IT'S A LONG TIME SINCE I WAS ANY KIND OF THREAT TO ANYONE.



I'M GANIH. FROM THE MOUNTAINS... ORIGINALLY.




MATHILDA.



HERE... MUST BE STARVING.


YOU'VE BEEN ASLEEP SEVEN DAYS SINCE I FOUND YOU.



IN THE FOREST?




YES, CURLED UP LIKE SOME SPRITE AMONG THE ROOTS AND BRAMBLE...



I WATCHED THREE WOLVES DECIDE *NOT* TO EAT YOU AS YOU SLEPT.




MY FRIENDS WOULD SAY I'M A FOOL FOR BRINGING ANYTHING FOUND IN THESE WOODS INTO MY HOME.




YOU HEAR ALL KINDS OF SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT HERE... FROM WHO KNOWS WHAT.




SO, WHY DID YOU BRING ME, THEN?




I DON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS, SO WHO CARES WHAT THEY THINK?



BUT... YOU'RE NOT HERE TO SUCK MY SOUL INTO HELL, ARE YOU?




NO... NO, I'M NOT.




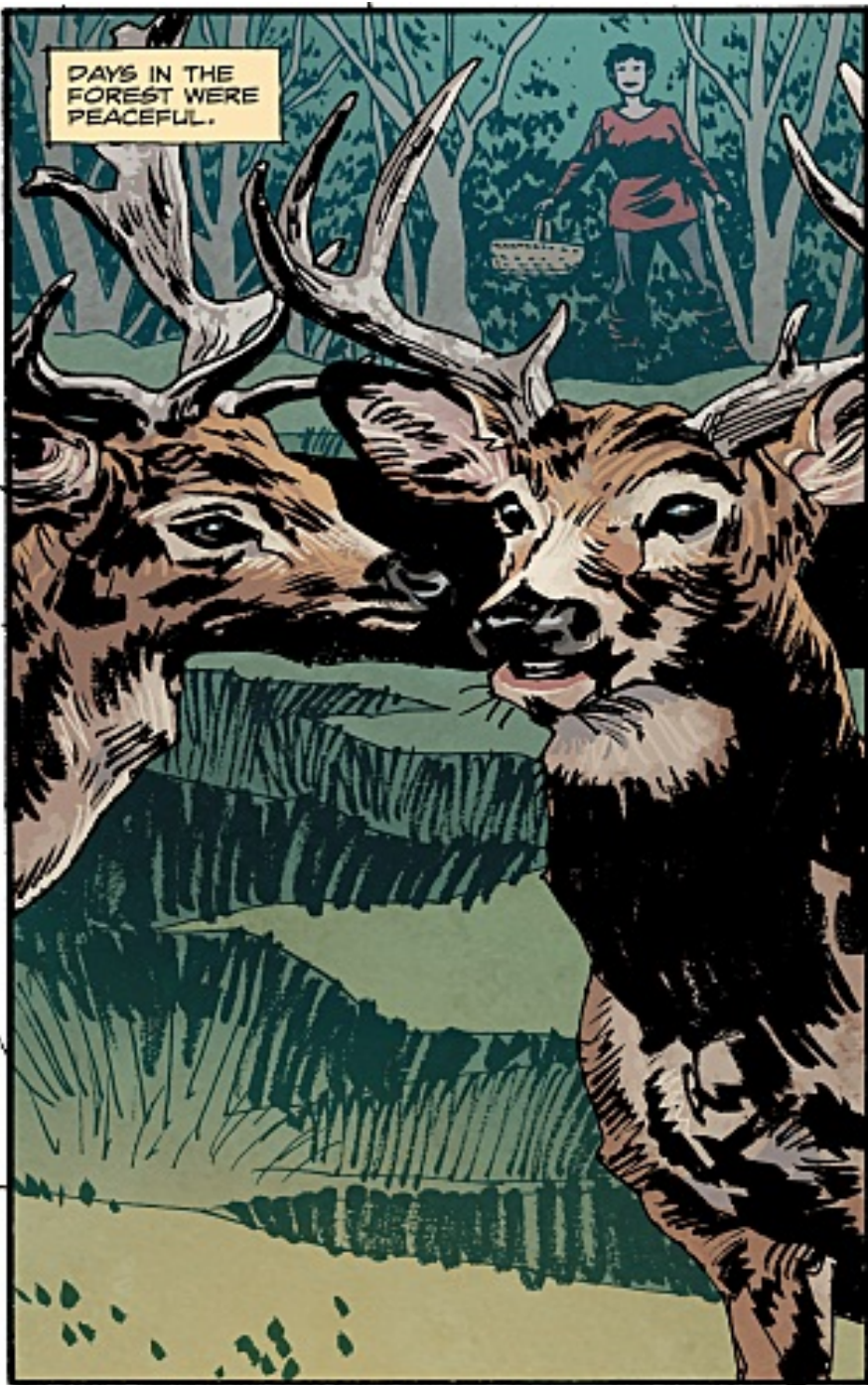
THEN YOU CAN STAY AS LONG AS YOU NEED...

I SUPPOSE IT'LL BE GOOD TO HAVE COMPANY.



AND THAT'S HOW MATHILDA MET THE OLD MAN WHO CHANGED HER LIFE.





DAYS IN THE FOREST WERE PEACEFUL.



SHE HELPED TEND GANIX'S GARDEN AND GATHER FOOD.



AND SOMETIMES SHE JUST SAT FOR HOURS, LISTENING TO THE STREAM THAT RAN THROUGH THE WOODS...



LETTING ITS MUSIC ERASE THE SCARS IN HER MIND THAT HAD ALREADY HEALED ON HER BODY.



LETTING HERSELF FORGET WHAT MEN HAD DONE TO HER.

AS MUCH AS SHE EVER COULD.

SOMETIMES AT NIGHT,
GANIX WOULD READ TO
HER FROM HIS BOOK.

HE COLLECTED TALES OF
FAE AND MONSTERS THAT
PARENTS TOLD CHILDREN.



SOME WERE BRUTAL AND
TERRIFYING... SOME WERE
RIDICULOUS AND FUNNY...

AND SHE LOVED
THEM ALL.



EVEN THE ONES SHE'D
HEARD BEFORE.

...THEN SHE SAW
THE OWL, WITH THE
THREAD OF THE
WORLD IN ITS
CLAW...



AS THE FIRE DIED OUT,
THEY'D FINALLY SLEEP...

...AND TRUE TO HIS
WORD, GANIX NEVER
LAID A HAND ON HER.



HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT
THE FOREST, TOO.

IT HOWLED AND SHRIEKED
UNTIL THE MORNING CAME.

MATHILDA OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE IN THE CITIES OR THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGES.



BUT AS TIME PASSED AND SHE GREW STRONGER...



SHE FELT NO URGE TO RETURN TO THAT WORLD.



AND SHE SOMETIMES WONDERED IF SHE EVEN COULD.

WOULD THE TREES LET HER FIND THE PATH THAT LED OUT OF THIS PLACE?

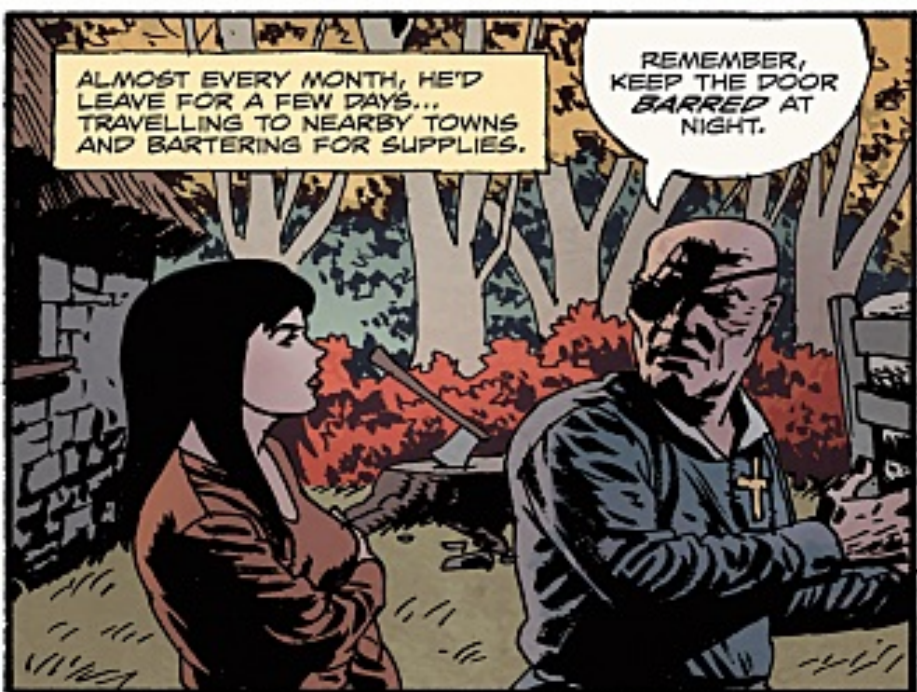


BUT GANIX HAD NO TROUBLE FINDING HIS WAY AMONG THEM.



ALMOST EVERY MONTH, HE'D LEAVE FOR A FEW DAYS... TRAVELLING TO NEARBY TOWNS AND BARTERING FOR SUPPLIES.

REMEMBER, KEEP THE DOOR BARRED AT NIGHT.



WHEN HE TRAVELLED, HE WORE A TUNIC WITH A YELLOW CROSS SEWN TO IT...

AND THE SHUTTERS.



I KNOW, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME...

WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF, OLD MAN.



...AND SHE KNEW WHAT THAT MEANT.

YOU THINK I DON'T?



BUT GANIX DIDN'T TALK ABOUT HIS PAST... EXCEPT FOR A FEW DRUNKEN NIGHTS WHEN AGE AND MELANCHOLY MOVED HIS TONGUE.



THEN HE TOLD HER ABOUT NEARLY STARVING IN A SIEGE, LONG AGO...



ABOUT WATCHING HUNDREDS OF HIS BROTHERS SLAUGHTERED AND BURNED...



...CAN STILL SMELL IT, WHEN I THINK BACK, I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE STINK.

THE BASTARDS...
BASTARDS...



HE WOULD NEVER REMEMBER THESE TALKS THE NEXT DAY.



AND SO IT WENT FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

UNTIL IT DIDN'T.





RUN! GET INTO THE WOODS - NOW!

WHAT? GANIX, WHAT IS IT?



THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND ME. GO!



AND STAY OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL I CALL!



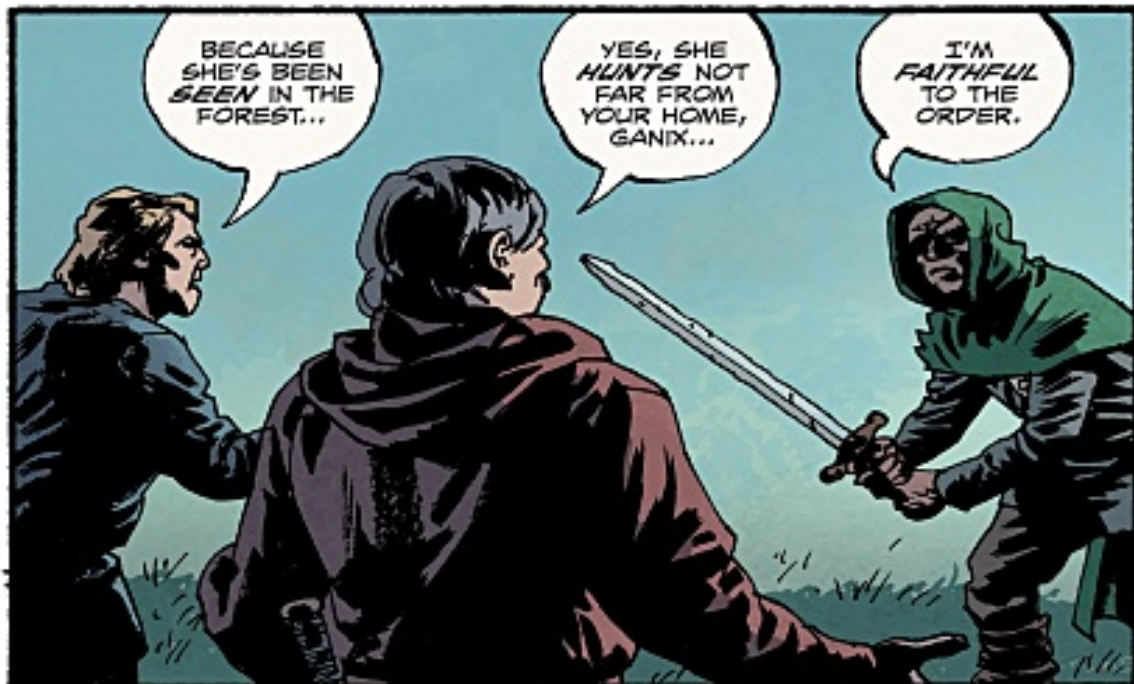
YOU'VE BEEN HOLDING OUT ON US, OLD MAN.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN BY THAT...



THEN WHY DRAW YOUR SWORD?

UNLESS YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE.



BECAUSE SHE'S BEEN SEEN IN THE FOREST...

YES, SHE HUNTS NOT FAR FROM YOUR HOME, GANIX...

I'M FAITHFUL TO THE ORDER.



I ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.



THE BISHOP THINKS YOU'VE BEEN CORRUPTED.



ARE YOU TRYING TO KEEP HER FOR YOURSELF?

YES. DOES YOUR COCK EVEN WORK ANYMORE?



AAHHHH -- !



YOU'LL FIND OUT... WHEN I FUCK YOUR CORPSES...



RAAHHH -- !



SHE THOUGHT SHE HAD *ESCAPED* HER CURSE...

BUT NOW GANIX WOULD SUFFER, LIKE SO MANY HAD BEFORE.



SHE COULDN'T LET THAT HAPPEN, EVEN IF IT MEANT GOING INTO THE FOREST AFTER DARK.



BUT THE WOODS WERE QUIET THAT NIGHT...



AND THE TRACKS OF THE MEN'S CART WERE EASY TO FOLLOW.



IT WAS ALMOST AS IF THE FOREST WAS HELPING HER.

MAYBE THE TREES WANTED TO SAVE GANIX, TOO?



BUT OF COURSE, THAT WASN'T THE CASE.

YOU DISAPPOINT ME, OLD FRIEND...

DO YOU THINK I CAN'T SMELL HER ON YOU?

DO YOU THINK I'M A FOOL?

I DIDN'T USED TO.

BUT NOW, YES.

IT'S PITIFUL, REALLY...

A WATCHMAN FALLING IN LOVE WITH HIS PREY...

I SUPPOSE WE'LL SEE IF SHE FEELS THE SAME WAY.

WAIT -

SHHK

HKK -



SHHINK

KKK -



ANGER SCREAMS
THROUGH HER.

THIS WAS
A TRAP.



YET ANOTHER GROUP
OF MEN COME TO DRAG
THE DEMON WITCH AWAY.

YES...



AND SHE THINKS, THEY HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT SHE REALLY IS.

SO SHE'LL
SHOW THEM.












THEY SAY THE FOREST BURNED THAT NIGHT.



THEY SAY MEN IN THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGES COULD HEAR HER SCREAMING IN THEIR DREAMS...




BUT MATHILDA WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN.



THE ONLY REMNANT OF HER TIME IN THESE WOODS WAS A *BOOK*...

...SALVAGED FROM A BURNED-OUT SHACK, ABANDONED YEARS BEFORE...



...AND CARRIED OFF BY LONG-FORGOTTEN HANDS.



FATALE Number Twelve Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips

Rated M / Mature