

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS

FATALE™



Number
Twenty Two



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FOUR DAYS. SHE'S ONLY FOUR DAYS AHEAD OF THEM.

MASTER?

TAKE CARE OF IT.

THE WHOLE SITE'S DEAD NOW... SHE FUCKING KILLED IT.



CHRIST, SOMMERSET THINKS, HE CAN ALMOST TASTE HER SCENT... OVER THE DECAY.



AND WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THEIR CONGREGATION?

TAKE CARE OF THEM, TOO. THEY'RE USELESS.



YES SIR.

WAIT - WHAT? WHAT DID HE -



IN ALL THEIR HISTORIES, HE'D NEVER READ OF ONE OF THEM FIGHTING BACK...



BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER, HER FATE HAD BEEN SEALED EVER SINCE HER FIRST DEATH...



JUST LIKE HIS HAD BEEN.

San Francisco
- 1906

HE REMEMBERS WHAT IT
WAS LIKE THAT DAY...
HOW MUCH IT HURT TO
BE REBORN...

EVEN IF IT WAS INTO
A HELL ON EARTH
THAT BROUGHT
TEARS TO HIS EYES...

THIS WAS THEIR
GIFT TO HIM.

THEIR *SECOND*
GIFT IN ONE DAY.



THE CEREMONY WAS OVER...
AND HE ALREADY MISSED
THEIR COLD EMBRACE.

...HEY... HEY
KID...

BUT THAT WAS
WEAKNESS...

...AND HIS GODS WOULD NOT
LOVE HIM IF HE WAS WEAK.

...I'M
STUCK... MY
LEGS...

HE WAS THEIR
BISHOP NOW...

...CAN
YOU HELP
ME...?

SURE,
MISTER.

I'LL HELP...
JUST HOLD
ON.

...AND HE WOULD
NOT LET THEM DOWN.

HEY -- !



SO LONG AGO,
HE THINKS.

IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE
ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD
MADE HIM FEEL THAT WAY...



SINCE IT WAS ANYTHING
BUT A CHORE TO DEAL
WITH THESE... HUMANS.



EVEN HIS OWN
SERVANTS
DISGUSTED
HIM NOW.

HERE
YOU ARE,
MASTER.

WHAT KIND OF MAN WOULD
GIVE UP NEARLY EVERYTHING
THAT MADE THEM A MAN...



...JUST TO SERVE
AT HIS PLEASURE?



HE WONDERS IF ALL
SHEPHERDS HATE
THEIR SHEEP.



IT HADN'T BEEN
LIKE THAT AT FIRST.



IN THE EARLY YEARS,
EVERY MOMENT GAVE
HIM PLEASURE...



FROM HIS
BODY...



TO HIS
MIND...



AND TO DARKER
PLACES STILL...



EVEN THIS SHELL WORLD,
THIS NOTHING PLANE...

...HAD SEEMED FULL OF
POSSIBILITIES THEN.

THE TOUCH OF HIS GODS
WAS STILL FRESH...

...AND HE SMILED TO
SEE HIS *LESSERS*
BENDING TO HIS WILL.

HE WAS THEIR *BISHOP*, AND HE
KNEW THE TRUTH OF THIS PLACE...

AND THAT TRUTH WAS
WRITTEN FOR *HIM*, NOT
FOR THOSE AT HIS FEET.

BUT THEY PREFERRED TO BELIEVE LIES, ANYWAY.

THE CHRISTIANS WERE THE WORST, WITH THEIR MARTYR AND HIS RELIGION OF PEACE.

PEACE WAS THE *BIGGEST LIE* THERE WAS... RIGHT NEXT TO *FAITH*...

HIS GODS DIDN'T REQUIRE FAITH, THEY GAVE *PROOF*.



PROOF THE UNIVERSE WAS FAR MORE VAST AND CRUEL THAN ANYTHING HE COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

MEN FLOATING ON CLOUDS... MEN WITH WINGS...

WHAT A JOKE.



THERE ARE FISH THAT GROW LARGER AND LARGER DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE BODY OF WATER THEY LIVE IN...

...JUST LIKE TAPEWORMS INSIDE A BODY WILL.

THAT WAS HOW *TRUE GODS* WERE, THEY GREW TO FILL EVERY CORNER...

...TO BLOCK OUT ALL SOURCES OF LIGHT...

BISHOP? SIR...? IS THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO TO --

SHUT UP.

I NEED TO HEAR THE TREE.





ALL HIS LIFE HE'D KNOWN IT, BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL THE *FIRST WORLD WAR* THAT HE SAW THE TRUTH FOR HIMSELF...



THIS WAS THE TRUE STATE OF MANKIND... SAVAGE AND PURE...

EYES FULL OF BLOOD AND HATE...



EVEN THOSE *TOO WEAK* TO SEE THE WORLD AS HE AND HIS KIND DID COULD KILL THEIR ENEMIES WITH THEIR OWN HANDS...

LIKE THEIR PRIMITIVE ANCESTORS HAD...



THEY'D JUST WEEP ABOUT IT LATER, OR
SUFFER IN NIGHTMARES... LAMENTING
THEIR WOUNDED "HUMANITY."

LYING. DENYING
THEMSELVES.

AND FELT THE BLOOD
SOAKING *DEEP* INTO THE
EARTH BELOW HIS FEET...

FELT THE POWER OF IT,
KNOWING HIS *MASTERS*
WERE FEELING IT, TOO...

AND THAT IT WOULD BEGIN
THEIR *AWAKENING*.

HE LAUGHED INSIDE ON THOSE NIGHTS,
WATCHING PRIESTS AND SOLDIERS
PRAYING OVER THEIR DEAD COMRADES...

SAYING THEY'D GONE TO
A BETTER PLACE...



BECAUSE HE KNEW
THERE WAS NO
BETTER PLACE...

NOT THE WAY
THEY MEANT...



THERE WAS JUST OBLIVION...
OR ITS OPPOSITE.

THE ETERNAL, PAINFUL
TRUTH OF HIS MASTERS...



IT WAS THE YEARS BETWEEN THE WARS WHEN HE NOTICED HOW TEDIOUS THIS WORLD HAD BECOME.

WHEN EVEN TOYING WITH THESE "PEOPLE" LOST ALL APPEAL.



HE HAD DISAPPEARED FOR YEARS THEN, ROAMING THE GLOBE...

LOOKING FOR PLACES WHERE THE TRUTH WAS NOT HIDDEN...

WHERE MEN STILL HELD OTHER MEN AS SLAVES...



WHERE TRIBES HELD CENTURIES-LONG BLOOD FEUDS ON THE AFRICAN SANDS...



BUT NO MATTER WHERE HE WENT, THE WEARINESS GREW INSIDE HIM.

HE WAS READY FOR IT TO BE OVER...

HIS TIME IN THIS PLACE.



AND AS THE NEXT GREAT WAR CREEPT ACROSS EUROPE, HIS PRIESTS BEGAN TELLING HIM OF THE SIGNS, AND THE ALIGNMENT OF THE STARS...



BLOOD RAINS IN SOUTH AMERICAN JUNGLES...



TIDES OF DEAD BODIES ALONG THE COAST OF SPAIN...



THE WINDOW FOR HIS FINAL COMMUNION WAS OPENING...



AND THE MEN LEFT BLEEDING
ACROSS FRANCE AND RUSSIA
AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS...



THEY WERE DRAWN TO THEIR
SACRIFICES, NEVER KNOWING
WHAT PURPOSE THEY SERVED...



THIS WAS HOW THE WORLD
WAS MEANT TO TURN...



AND EVEN THE *WOMAN* MUST
HAVE KNOWN THAT SOMEWHERE,
DEEP INSIDE HER SOUL.



BECAUSE *SHE* FOLLOWED
THE PULL, TOO, TO WHAT
WAS MEANT TO BE HER END...

BUT IT HAD GONE
WRONG...



SHE'D ESCAPED WITH
ONE OF HER FOOLS
AND HE'D LOST.



HIS BLACK HEART HAD
SHATTERED THEN...



AND BEEN GRIND TO DUST WHEN HIS
RIVAL IN JAPAN HAD TAKEN THE VICTORY
THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HIS.



HE STAYED IN BED FOR FIVE YEARS... KILLING ANYONE WHO TRIED TO FEED HIM OR TAKE CARE OF HIS NEEDS.



AND IN THOSE YEARS THE BITCH HAD LEARNED TO HIDE...



AND HER PLAYTHING HAD PROVEN TO BE MORE THAN MOST MEN WERE...



HE'D LEARNED TO READ THE GODS' WORDS...

FOOL, YOU CAN'T KILL ME...

I KNOW. I'M NOT TRYING TO...



AND HE HAD TAKEN THE BISHOP'S EYES...

...SO HE COULDN'T FIND HER ON ANY PLANE OF REALITY.



SO HE WAS LEFT *BLIND* AND
TRAPPED IN THIS PLACE...



UNTIL IT HAD COME TO
FEEL LIKE A PRISON...



UNTIL EACH DAY OF HIS
ENDLESS SENTENCE FELT
LIKE ANOTHER INSULT...



AND NOW THE SIGNS
ARE COMING AGAIN...
CLOSER AND CLOSER...



AND AGAIN *SHE'S* DRAWN
TO THE CONVERGENCE,
JUST AS *HE* IS...



BUT *AGAIN*, THIS ONE
HAS TO BE DIFFICULT...
HAS TO BE DIFFERENT...



BRINGING THE FIGHT TO HIM
AND HIS FOLLOWERS...



TRYING TO PUT HIM
OFF-BALANCE...



TAUNTING HIM WITH
HIS *OWN* EYES...

SHOWING HIM WHAT HE'S
SURE ARE *EMPTY* CLUES...



WE'VE
ARRIVED,
MASTER...

THINKING HE'LL BE LIKE ONE OF THE FOOLS UNDER HER SPELL...

I CALLED AS SOON AS HE WAS TRANSFERRED HERE, SIR...

THEY TOLD YOU THAT, RIGHT?



THAT HE CAN BE MANIPULATED.

YES, FERRON, DON'T WORRY... YOU'LL GET YOUR REWARD.



NO, HE'S GOT PLANS OF HIS OWN.

I HEARD ON THE RADIO THAT HE'D BEEN CAPTURED...



BECAUSE SHE MAY HAVE GOTTEN SMARTER OVER THESE LONG YEARS, ALL HER TIME IN HIDING...

...BUT HOW DID THEY MANAGE TO KEEP HIS INCARCERATION HERE OUT OF THE PRESS?



BUT SHE'S STILL MADE MISTAKES...

I'M NOT SURE... WE'VE HAD FAMOUS PATIENTS BEFORE...





...BUT NONE THE WHOLE WORLD THOUGHT WAS DEAD THE LAST TWENTY YEARS.

SHE'S LEFT A *TRAIL*, WHETHER SHE INTENDED TO OR NOT...



STILL, I THINK ONCE THEY REALIZED HE WASN'T GOING TO BE GIVING ANY *STATEMENTS*...



IT'S JUST HER NATURE...

...OR GOING TO TRIAL...



I THINK THE PRESS MOSTLY JUST LOST INTEREST.

HMMPH...




AND NOW HE'LL USE THAT AGAINST HER...

YOU KNOW, I ACTUALLY OWN THE LABEL HE USED TO RECORD ON...

WELL, I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE GETTING ANY MORE HITS OUT OF THIS ONE.



NO... BUT THAT'S FINE...



...THIS ONE WAS
ALWAYS WORTH
MORE TO ME AS
A DEAD MAN.

SO HE CAN SEE HIS GODS
AGAIN... AND BE EMBRACED
AS ONE OF THEM...

IN THE
INFINITE
TRUTH.

To Be Continued

The Secret Ingredient Is...

So, it's strange, but the closer we get to the end of this story, the less inclined I am to want to talk about it.

That's one of the weird things about doing serialized fiction... when you're deep in the process, or somewhere lost in the woods, as I tend to think of it, you can talk about what you're doing, or little things you're weaving into the larger narrative. But as the end approaches, it starts to feel like a more complete work, or maybe like something that should be left to the reader to figure out on their own. If that makes any sense.

I saw this thing online the other day, with David Lynch saying something like: "When you put out a movie, everyone wants you to talk about it... but, the movie is the talking." And I kind of feel the same way, I guess.

But I will say it feels odd to finally be writing scenes I planned around the time of *FATALE* #1. I'm looking forward to what comes after *FATALE*, but I'm enjoying these last issues more than you can imagine. This must be how a gardener feels right before the harvest. Maybe.

So what can I talk about, then?

Well, most of you probably know that I used to write *Captain America*, and that my story "The Winter Soldier" has been partly adapted into the new *Captain America* movie. It's not a direct adaptation, but the heart of it got into the movie, and in my unbiased opinion, it's the best of the *Marvel* movies so far.

And hey, I'm in a scene with Robert Redford and Sebastian Stan, who played the Winter Soldier. So that's pretty amazing, too. I am not an actor, and that day on set was quite enough of that life for me. I don't think I've worried how I looked or what I was doing with my hands that much in my entire life. (By the way, pro acting tip: Don't do anything with your hands).

Anyway, that has been a very surreal experience. When Steve Epting and I launched that comic, I never imagined we'd be a hit (I'd never had a real hit book before that), let alone that the Winter Soldier would become such a big part of *Marvel* and now part of pop culture. I saw a commercial the other day with little kids dressed as *Captain America* and the Winter Soldier. And I keep hearing from friends that their kids want to be the Winter Soldier for Halloween. I am hoping for some Slurpee cups, personally.

So yeah, it's been a bizarre week around here. As would any week where something you wrote served as inspiration for the #1 movie in the world.

Okay, so we've only got two issues left, and I really want to run some letters in the back pages here, so please write us something short but sweet, about the series and what it's meant to you, or why you hate it... whatever, but make it interesting, and send it to: criminallycomic@gmail.com

We'll be back next month looking like this:





FATALE Number Twenty Two Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips

Rated M / Mature