

ED BRUBAKER SEAN PHILLIPS



Number  
Twenty Two



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Colors by Elizabeth Breitweiser



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HOW LONG?

HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN HERE?

UH... FOUR DAYS, SIR.

AT LEAST, I MEAN... THAT'S WHEN THEY CAME OUT HERE.

I EXPECTED ANIMALS TO HAVE GOTTEN TO THEM BY NOW... BUT...

NO... NO WOLF WOULD COME NEAR THIS PLACE...  
ANIMALS KNOW WHEN TO BE AFRAID.



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...



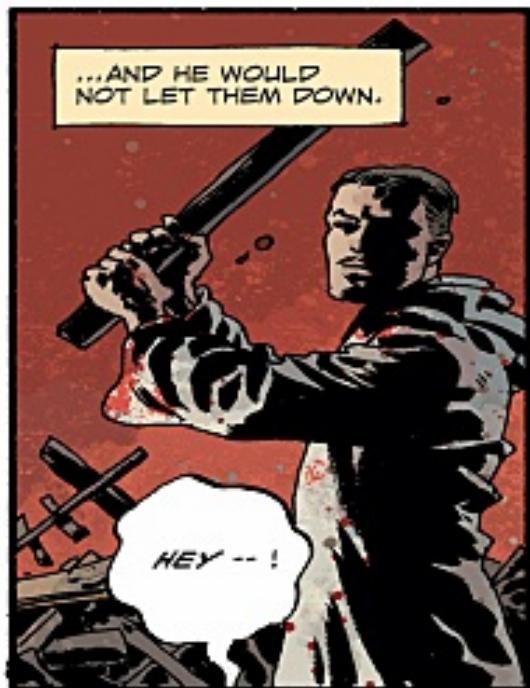
HE WAS THEIR  
BISHOP NOW...

...CAN  
YOU HELP  
ME...?

SURE,  
MISTER.

I'LL HELP...  
JUST HOLD  
ON.

...AND HE WOULD  
NOT LET THEM DOWN.





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.





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.

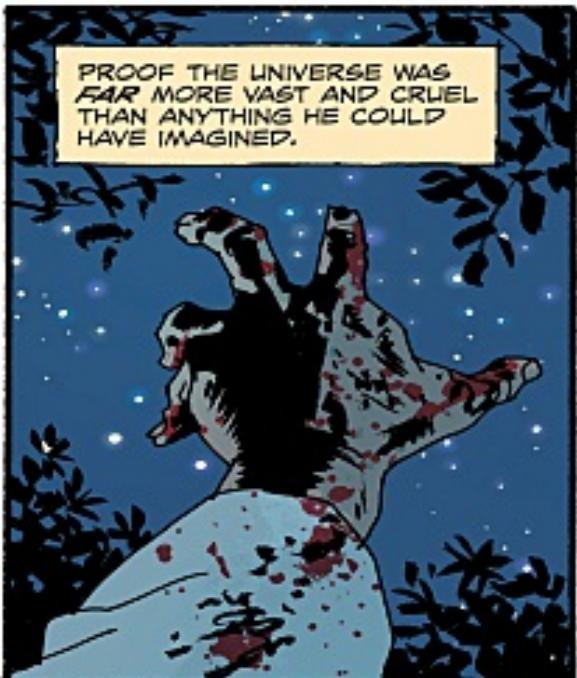


BUT THEY PREFERRED TO BELIEVE LIES, ANYWAY.

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.



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...





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...



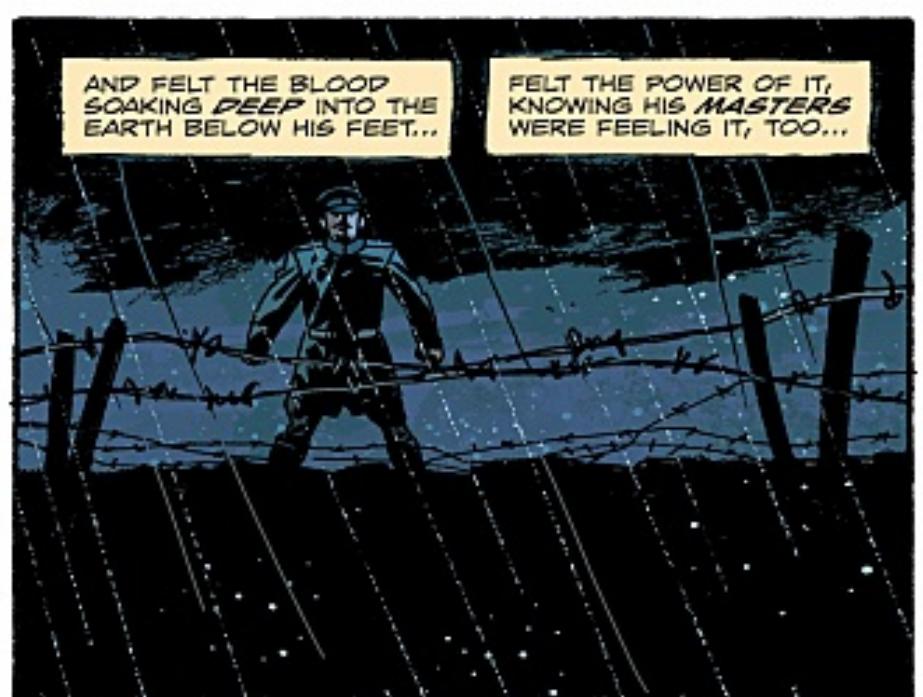


THEY'D JUST WEEP ABOUT IT LATER, OR SUFFER IN NIGHTMARES... LAMENTING THEIR WOUNDED "HUMANITY."

LYING. DENYING THEMSELVES.



WHILE THE BISHOP WALKED THE TRENCHES AND BARBED WIRE...



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...



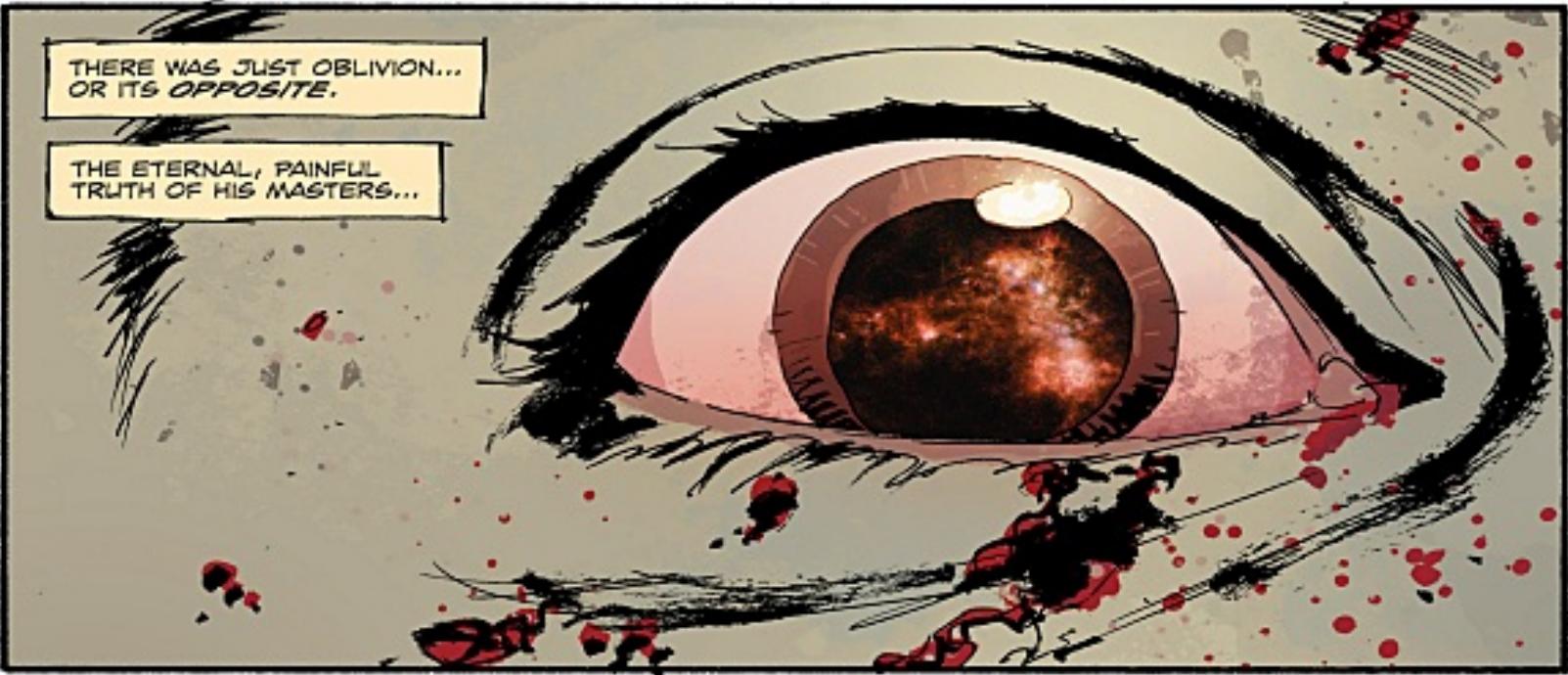
BECUSE HE KNEW  
THERE WAS NO  
BETTER PLACE...

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 CREPTE 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.



BECUSE 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 GROUND 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...

KEE  
RIG

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...





...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.

# The Secret Ingredient Is...

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: [criminalescomic@gmail.com](mailto:criminalescomic@gmail.com)

We'll be back next month looking like this:

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.





FATALE Number Twenty Two Ed Brubaker Sean Phillips

Rated M / Mature