

## “IMPALER” Volume 2 (Comics Review)

Written by Michael Koopmans  
Sunday, 09 May 2010 08:54

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Getting sick of all those handsome, young, well-dressed, romantic, glittery, wimpy vampires that keep popping up as of late? Do you crave the good ol' days when the best way to deal with creatures of the night was to stake them, not kiss them? Do you prefer crimson blood over glistening sparkles? Well, take Top Cow Productions' five-issue miniseries IMPALER Volume 2, and call me in the morning. That is, if you can survive the night.

This chapter picks up right where the previous story arc left off: Overrun by vampires and blocked off from the rest of the world, New York City is nuked by the U.S. military in an attempt to stop the quickly rising bloodsucker population. Right from the start, we discover that the tactical strike was too little, too late. Within days, Boston and Philadelphia are added to the list of cities whose entire population is now either dead or undead. This time around, the story not only follows Vlad III, “The Impaler,” and NYPD detective Victor Dailey’s fights to survive, but also focuses on two additional groups of characters. The first is Lt. George Wagner and his men, holed up in the Washington Monument, hunting by day, hiding by night. The second is Lt. Wagner’s wife Darlene and their children fleeing the East Coast horror to New Mexico. They soon find out that when cornered, humans can be just as cruel as the fanged ones.



International Horror Guild Award finalist William Harms returns his relentless pen to paper with this new chapter of the fresh yet familiar vampire epic. Much like his work on the first chapter, Harms' writing here is tight, precise and swift. He sets the pace on the first page and never looks back. I found myself feeling as if I was running a marathon with him—out of breath, yet fully satisfied upon completion. I usually prefer a slow burn, but couldn't help appreciating the artistry with which this story was told.

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With the multiple groups of protagonists involved, we constantly bounce around between them and their respective fights for survival. Although some culminate in nail-biting climaxes and others fizzle out and die, all are thought-provoking and foreboding. The constant sense of hopelessness never goes away, and at no point did I get the impression that everything was going to be OK. Although I hoped for the best, I assumed the worst. The edge-of-your-seat moments are less like a rollercoaster and more like an ever-growing snowball rolling down a hill.

While keeping up this lightning-quick, action-packed pace, Harms leaves most of the emotion to penciller/inker/colorist Matt Timson. At first glance, I was upset that the previous volume’s Nick Postic didn’t return with his pitch-dark, mood-setting artwork. But after finishing the first issue, I became convinced that Timson was destined to illustrate this title. The emotion that lacks in the writing is more than made up for in the visuals. At any given point, the panels are spot-on in conveying the temper of the story, while outstanding colors bring life to the lifeless. At times, I felt slightly nauseated by the smell of copper that filled my nose while staring at one of the many brown, orange and red-shaded, bloodsoaked pages, but I never imagined I’d be hypnotized by a panel of two specks of men standing in a field of unforgiving, lonely white snow.

It took the team over a year from start to finish to complete this chapter, but it was well worth the wait. There isn’t much in the way of closure at the end of the final issue, so hopefully that means we will one day see a third. If we’re lucky, it’ll be written and illustrated by the same pitiless pair.

The final issue of IMPALER Volume 2 swooped onto comic-shop shelves this past March. Top Cow will be releasing a trade paperback of the set sometime this summer, and I’m told it will be stuffed to the brim with bonus material, including deleted scenes, sketches, a cover gallery, storyboards and an introduction by multiple Bram Stoker Award-winning author Jonathan Maberry! This comic is a nonstop, balls-to-the-wall bloodbath, without an apology in sight—exactly what is needed to counteract those increasingly popular sparkly vampires.



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