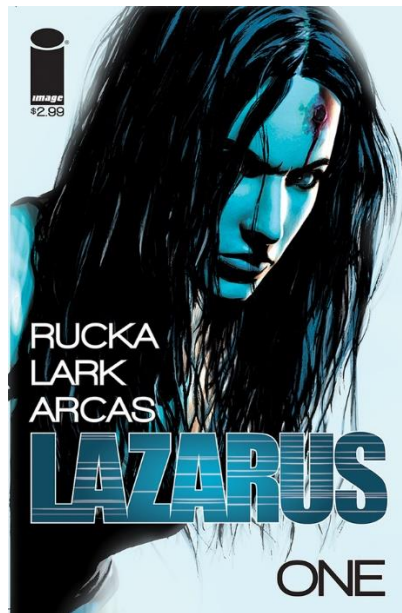




Lazarus by Greg Rucka & Michael Lark

[Science Fiction]



The most thoroughly thought-through and socio-politically searing speculative fiction currently under construction in comics, I promise that you will care about each individual inside.

In the very near future the world's economies have imploded, its political systems have collapsed and its former nation states have melted away replaced by territories ruled by the sixteen Families with the most money. Money buys food, money buys technology, money buys media and money buys people and guns: together these secure power.

We have reverted to a feudal system, an archetypal pyramid structure with each Family at the top, a thin strata of Serfs selected for their key skills useful to each Family underneath, and the Waste toiling the land or eking out whatever living they can with little or no protection while paying a punitive tax.





Each family has a Lazarus, a champion augmented according to the technology at their disposal, and Family Carlyle has bestowed this upon their youngest daughter. Trained to the peak of human physical fitness in armed and unarmed combat, Forever Carlisle possesses enhanced regenerative capabilities closely monitored and backed up at base so that she can take withstand a brutal beating before rising up to dish it back out. She now acts as the Family's chief assassin, military commander and ultimate bodyguard, and from a very young age Forever has been taught:

“Family Above All”.

And by “taught”, I mean indoctrinated.

And by “indoctrinated”, I mean *lied* to.



There is a secret at the heart of Family Carlyle which they have kept from her, and during the first four softcovers it will be played out right under your noses yet I swear that you will not spot it. Trust me: I've told all newcomers this going in, and not one individual has perceived it. Only on the final page of the fourth volume will that truth be revealed and your jaw will hit the floor. Go back to re-read the first four volumes and... oh yeah... That is some wicked collaborative storytelling.

The structure of the series – another pyramid entirely in keeping with the first – is as impeccable as the extrapolation of where we're heading from where we stand now, teetering on the brink of allowing ourselves to be lured into the thrall of those few with the most money for the sake of entertainment and the easiest life. In the first volume Rucka will introduce you to the family Carlyle and a serpent in its midst; in the second you'll encounter wider society; and in the third you'll discover the ruthless machinations for global hegemony as their repercussions tumble onto the world's stage.

None of which would matter were you not made to care.

Two extended sequences exemplify Michael Lark's and colourist Santi Arcas's exceptional ability to create empathy as well as his environmental prowess. In the second volume we encounter a family deemed Waste which loses its farm and so livelihood in prolonged storms and subsequent floods. Their only recourse is to travel thousands of miles to a city where the Family Carlyle are conducting an Elevation, a series of tests its citizens can subject themselves to in order to discover if they have any key skills which might elevate them from Waste to Serfdom.



Then all their needs would be taken care of. Not only does Lark have complete command of the rain but he understands intuitively how much detail the human eye can take in under such erosive circumstances and renders not one line more. Similarly in volume four with Forever leading military manoeuvres through a city under blizzard conditions, your own ability to spot lethal snipers through that snow is as limited as the foot soldiers' under her command. Your anxiety levels *will* be maxed out.