





TOP COW

LAPHAM DENHAM MILLA DREAMER

# The Darkness

Hell House  
Part 3 of 4



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**THE DARKNESS:**  
MAFIA HITMAN JACKIE  
ESTACADO WAS BOTH BLESSED  
AND CURSED ON HIS 21ST  
BIRTHDAY: HE BECAME THE  
BEARER OF THE DARKNESS,  
WITH ACCESS TO AN OTHER-  
WORLDLY DIMENSION AND THE  
DEMONS WHO DWELL THERE TO  
DO THIS BIDDING. WHEN MOB  
KINGPIN FRANKIE FRANCHETTI  
KILLED JENNY, THE ONLY  
WOMAN JACKIE EVER LOVED,  
JACKIE TURNED AGAINST HIS  
MAFIA FAMILY, KILLING BOTH  
FRANKIE AND HIMSELF. BUT  
THE DARKNESS BROUGHT  
JACKIE BACK TO LIFE, TO DO  
ITS OWN MYSTERIOUS BIDDING.

**HELL AND  
DAMNATION**

**Hell  
House**

Part 3 of 4

**THE DARKNESS**

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LETTERING: SPEHAR AND DREAMER DESIGN'S  
DENNIS HEISLER

COVER BY: DALE KEOWN

**RECENTLY:**  
AN EXHAUSTED JACKIE HAS MADE  
HIS WAY TO ATLANTIC CITY WHERE  
HE BREAKS UP AN ARGUMENT  
BETWEEN LOCAL MOBSTER MICKEY  
VERN AND A WOMAN IN HIS CASINO.  
THE WOMAN AND HER FRIEND TRY  
TO THANK JACKIE BUT HE SUC-  
CUMBS TO SLEEP. HE WAKES UP TO  
FIND THE WOMAN'S FRIEND EVIS-  
CERATED AND A VERY UNHAPPY  
MICKEY VERN WAITING FOR HIM. IN  
ORDER TO PROTECT THE WOMAN,  
JACKIE MAKES A DEAL TO "HANDLE"  
THREE PROBLEM PEOPLE FOR VERN.  
JUST AS JACKIE ELIMINATES THESE  
PROBLEMS A NEW ONE ARISES, AS  
ANOTHER MURDER OCCURS IN THE  
HOTEL. NOW VERN BELIEVES THAT  
JACKIE HAS DOUBLE-CROSSED HIM,  
AND ALL HELLS ABOUT TO BREAK  
LOOSE.

FOR  
**image**  
COMICS  
Erik Larson  
publisher

**TOP COW**  
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CAN YOU  
FEEL IT?

THERE'S  
SOMETHING  
IN THE AIR.

SOMETHING  
INTOXICATING.

IT'S SEXY, IT'S ADDICTIVE. IT  
MAKES YOUR EYES SPIN AND  
SENDS AN ELECTRIC CHARGE  
DOWN YOUR SPINE.

IT'S NOT THE ODDS.  
THE ODDS SUCK. IN  
FACT YOU CAN'T WIN.

UNDERESTIMATE  
THE HOUSE, YOU'LL  
LOSE YOUR SHIRT.

NO... THAT'S  
AT TRUMP'S.

THIS IS THE  
GRAND LUX.

HERE, YOU'LL  
LOSE YOUR SOUL.







MEANWHILE...

SANTORINI'S STILL ALIVE. WE'RE CHECKING ON THE OTHERS. EITHER ESTACADO SEVERELY BOTCHED THE JOB, OR HE'S SCREWIN' YOU, MICKEY.

THE COPS ARE CRAWLIN' ALL OVER THE BUILDING. THE CUSTOMERS ARE GETTIN' NERVOUS.

WHO THE HELL'D HE KILL, THEN? WHAT'S HIS GAME?

NNNN... I MISJUDGED THE KID. I THOUGHT HE WAS ON THE SQUARE.

WATCH IT, SWEETHEART, YOU'RE WRINKLIN' THE SHIRT.

BOSS! THE COPS'RE HERE!



MR. VERN, I'M DETECTIVE MARSH.

DETECTIVE MARSH! SO GLAD WE CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON ATLANTIC CITY'S FINEST WHEN THERE'S A CRISIS.

THESE ARE MY ASSOCIATES, CHARLIE AND LENNY.



WE GOT THREE DEAD AN OLD MAN, A WAITER, AND AN INSURANCE SALESMAN FROM PHILADELPHIA. SO FAR, THERE'S NO APPARENT CONNECTION...

BUT MY MONEY'S ON ONE SHOOTER...

HE MAY STILL BE IN THE BUILDING. WE'RE CONDUCTING A FLOOR BY FLOOR SEARCH.

SURE, SURE. WHATEVER ME OR MY STAFF CAN DO TO ASSIST...





IN FACT, LET  
MY HOSPITALITY  
CREW SHOW YA  
AROUND.

THEY'RE  
INTIMATELY AWARE  
OF ALL THE HOTEL'S  
NOOKS AND  
CRANNIES.

WELL...  
I... UH...  
I DON'T--



BOYS, I WANT  
ESTACADO FOUND AND  
BROUGHT BACK HERE  
BEFORE THOSE CLOWNS  
GET ANYWHERE NEAR  
SNIFFIN' DISTANCE.



YOU'VE GOT  
PROBLEMS,  
JACKIE.

BIG, BIG  
PROBLEMS.

LET'S MAKE A  
DEAL, JACKIE.



SHOVE  
IT.

NOW THAT'S  
NOT VERY  
NICE--

PEST...  
JACKIE...



HURRY!

LORI?



I THOUGHT THEY GOT  
YOU! IT'S AWFUL-- AFTER  
YOU LEFT, MICKEY'S MEN  
GRABBED ME AND TOOK  
BACK THE MONEY.

I RAN, BUT  
THEN THE  
COPS SHOWED  
UP AND--

JACKIE,  
THEY'RE NOT  
LETTIN' ANYONE  
OUT OF THE  
BUILDING! WE'RE  
TRAPPED!

LORI, SLOW  
DOWN... YOU'RE  
SAFE. I'LL TAKE  
CARE OF  
EVERYTHING.



THAT'S NOT  
THE WORST PART.  
I OVERHEARD A  
FEW COPS  
TALKING...

THE MEN YOU  
KILLED... THEY  
WEREN'T MOBSTERS  
AND RAPISTS LIKE  
MICKEY SAID...











IT'S THEM  
OR US--

RAHH!

LISTEN TO THE  
FEMALE.



JACKIE?...

JACKIE!!!

LORI?...



KAAHHH!!

GET  
BACK!

I DON'T  
NEED  
YOU!



YOU'RE  
NOT  
GETTING  
OUT!

UNSH!

HE'S  
CRAZY!

ON  
SOMETHING!



NOT  
EVER!

TAKE HIM  
DOWN!



JACKIE,  
LOOK OUT!



ZZZZT!



MIKE  
GET OUT  
OF THE  
WAY!

ZZZT!

I GOT  
HIM!

ARGHH!

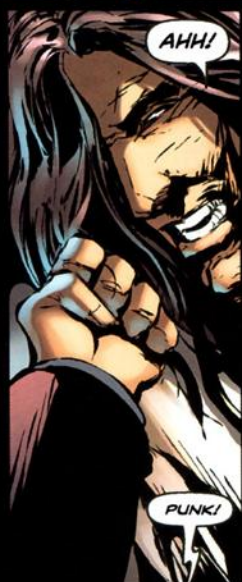
























HOW DID YOU  
GET OUT OF THE  
DARKNESS?

YOU LET US  
OUT, ONLY I AIN'T  
COME ALL THE WAY  
FROM THERE, JUST  
FROM INSIDE YOU.

IT'S WHERE I  
WAS BORN, UP IN  
THE MUCUS  
MEMBRANE IN THE  
BACK OF YOUR  
NOSE.

DON'T LOOK  
SO DISGUSTED.  
EVERYBODY'S GOT  
A COUPLE OF US  
IN 'EM.

ALL I'M SAYIN'  
IS, I'M PART OF  
YOU, AND HERE'S  
THE RUB...

...I'M  
YOUR BEST  
PART!



REALLY? CUZ  
YOU LOOK LIKE  
SOMETHING I'D  
FLUSH.

JACKIE,  
IT'S  
GETTING  
UP!

HEY, DON'T  
GET PERSONAL.  
I BEEN WITH YA SINCE  
THE DAY YOU WAS  
BORN, KID.

THE DARKNESS  
AIN'T A SIMPLE PLACE.  
YOU'D KNOW THAT IF  
YOU EVER VISITED.

I COULD TELL  
YA, BUT I GAVE MY  
WORD AND UNLIKE  
SOME FOLKS, NICKY  
VERN'S A STRAIGHT  
SHOOTER.



JACKIE...!

NNN... I  
SHOULDA BEEN  
A DAMN  
WOMAN--

KILL IT?







PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...

PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...



THEY'RE  
GOING.

WE SHOULD  
BE SAFE FOR  
A WHILE.

PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...



PSST...  
PSST...  
PSST...

LONG ENOUGH  
FOR ME TO MAKE A  
FEW PHONE CALLS  
AND GET US OUT OF  
THIS...

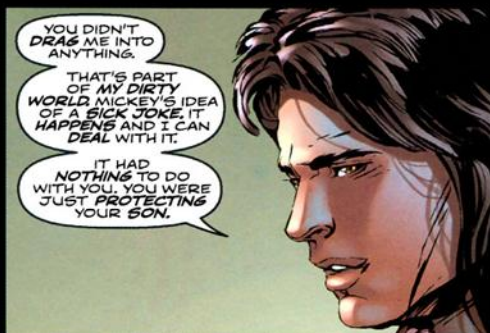
LORI,  
WHAT'S  
WRONG?

IT JUST  
RINGS AND  
RINGS...



















JACKIE...



WITH THIS  
POWER, YOUR  
POWER, WE COULD  
CHANGE THE  
WORLD.

MAKE A PLACE  
WHERE THERE'RE  
NO MORE IVANS AND  
MICKEYS...

DID I TELL  
YOU, YOU'RE  
AMAZING?



I DON'T EVEN  
HEAR THE VOICES  
ANYMORE.

I'VE BEEN  
WATCHING YOU.  
I THINK YOU CAN DO  
SO MUCH MORE  
THAN YOU THINK  
YOU CAN.



**BOOM!**

I CAN  
HELP YOU,  
AND WE...



DON'T MOVE!  
DON'T MOVE!

HANDS  
WHERE WE  
CAN SEE  
THEM!

DON'T MOVE!











**GRAND LUX**

TO BE  
CONTINUED...

FEBRUARY  
2005

# THE TOP COW WORLD MOOS

## THE TOP COW BIBLE COMING IN MARCH 2005!

Written by editor Scott Tucker, the *Top Cow Bible* reveals the secrets of the Top Cow Universe in a "handbook" style format. The 96-page tome contains new material, including in-depth character bios covering Top Cow's library going back to the early days of Top Cow (with *Cyberforce*, *Weapon Zero* and more!), as well as Top Cow's latest offerings *Hunter-Killer* and *Necromancer*. The book also includes redesigns of 10 Top Cow characters to be seen for the first time. Scott promises that there will be something new revealed about all the characters featured.

Scott had an interesting strategy through which he got his job at Top Cow. After meeting Editor Renae Geerlings at a convention, Scott emailed daily until an intern position opened up. There he worked his way to line editor and left his lucrative job as a therapist.

"Talking to the various creators, digging up ideas as well as plans for these characters not yet revealed, has been a big task. This book will help establish continuity and really set the groundwork for future writers of these characters. It's a great job, said editor Scott Tucker."



### Staff Profile

(Surprise, we have lives!)



Name: **ERIC BASALDUA**  
Date and place of birth:  
August 26, 1980, East L.A.

Job Title: Penciler/Inker

What I do: I draw purdy pictures and sometimes I ink them.

How I got my job: My Mom shoved my portfolio (literally) in Marc Silvestri's face.

Best part of my job: Playin' H.A.L.O. time!!

Worst part of my job: When my editors yell at me.

Favorite ice cream flavor: Cheeseburgers! Get cracking on this, Ben & Jerry.

Favorite hobby: Playin' H.A.L.O. and drawin', of course.

Favorite TV show: Currently, *Smallville*.

Favorite movie: Too embarrassed to say.

Comics you currently read: Not many.

### The Outside World (More than just Cows)

Ask anyone at Top Cow. I have been carrying my two dog-eared copies of issues #1 and #2 of *W3* around and forcing them on everyone I know. Every single person has agreed that this is indeed a rare treasure! Now, it's your turn. You MUST read this book!

Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely weave a tale of hard-hitting poignancy around some of the most chilling violence you've ever seen. From the first amazing bullet riddled spread in issue #1 to the heart-wrenching scene of the self-berating pooch in issue #2, you'll find yourself pouring over every line of dialogue and art, mining them for all they're worth. And in this book, you'll strike gold. These three animals will steal your heart... AND scare the crap out of you!

Think of me when you in turn tell YOUR friends, "You have to read this book!"

—VP of publishing, Renae Geerlings

### ON SALE NOW!

**The Darkness: Black Sails**  
High seas adventure, Darkness style

**Battle of the Planets:  
Princess #5 (of 6)**  
Keyop captured, Princess to the rescue

**Strykeforce Vol. 1 TPB**  
Nine issues in one book!

**Top Cow 2005 Preview Book**  
The future is here, the time is now

### NEWEST COVERS (Bow before our majestic beauty)



**Hunter-Killer #3**  
(W) Mark Wald  
(P) Marc Silvestri



**Witchblade #85**  
(W) Ron Marz  
(P) Michael Choi  
(Cov) Adam Hughes



**Darkness #20**  
(W) David Lapham  
(A) Lapham/Brian Denham  
(Cov) Dale Keown

### ROAD WARRIORS! Appearances

Orlando Megacon, Florida, Feb 25-27

Come see *Hunter-Killer* writer Mark Wald and *Witchblade* writer Ron Marz appearing as well as artists Tyler Kirkham, George Perez, Ethan Van Sciver, Michael Avon Oeming, and inker Jay Liesten. Packed this one, I tell ya. [www.megaconvention.com](http://www.megaconvention.com)

Wizard World L.A., California, March 18-20

Sci-Fi scribe Josh Ortega, *Hunter-Killer* writer Mark Wald and artist Marc Silvestri! Also appearing are artists Eric Basaldua, Michael Choi, J.G. Jones, colorist Brian Buccellato and inker Joe Weems and Rick Basaldua. The big show gets bigger this year!