

TOP GUN™

# THE DARKNESS

image

12 \$2.50

ennis  
coney  
silvestri  
weems



DC  
VES  
TRI  
WEEMS



**Garth Ennis**  
**Malachy Coney**

story

**Marc Silvestri**

**Billy Tan**

**Clarence Lansang**

**Richard Bennett**

**Cedric Nocon**

pencils

**Joe Weems V**

**Danny Miki**

**Richard Bennett**

**Victor Llamas**

**John Livesay**

**Jason Gorder**

inks

**Richard Isanove**  
**Liquid!**

**Tyson Wengler**

**Matt Nelson**

**Brian Buccellato**

**Steve Buccellato**

colors

**Dennis Heisler**

letters

**David Wohl**

editor

**Sonia Im**

associate editor

**Marc Silvestri**

**Joe Weems**

**Richard Isanove**

cover

**Brian Ching**

pencil assists

**Marco "Madman" Galli**

ink assists

**Robin Spehar**

lettering assists

**Peter Steigerwald**

tiger

**Nick Chun**

**Raul Arroyo**

**Brian McClendon**

**Alvin Coats**

production

**MARC SILVESTRI**  
chief executive officer

**BRAD FOXHOVEN**  
president

**DAVID WOHL**  
editor in chief

**SONIA IM**  
director of production

**KATE SHERWOOD**  
director of marketing

**TIM HERNANDEZ**  
director of creative affairs

**BRIAN SELZER**  
director of Top Cow Interactive

**NICHOLAS CHUN**  
Jack Lord's production manager

**AARON MICHEL**  
legal assistant to the president

**RENAE GEERLINGS**

the rugged who got a paper rose

**ALVIN COATS**

flat

**PETER STEIGERWALD**

has a crush on Mike Turner  
and brings him home cooked  
meats on deadline, but still never  
got his paper rose

**TOP COW**



For **image**  
C O M I C S

**LARRY MARDER**  
executive director

address correspondence to: 1223 Wilshire Blvd. #496 Santa Monica, Ca. 90401 E-Mail: The TOPCOW@aol.com  
visit us on the web at <http://www.topcow.com>

The DARKNESS Vol. 1, #12, FEBRUARY 1998, FIRST PRINTING. Published by Image Comics Inc. Office of Publication: 1440 N. Harbor Blvd. Suite #305  
Fullerton, CA 92635. \$2.50 US/\$3.65 in Canada. The DARKNESS™ logo and all related characters are™ & © 1998 Top Cow Productions Inc. ALL RIGHTS  
RESERVED. The entire contents of this book are™ & © 1998 Top Cow Productions Inc. Any similarities to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. With the  
exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reprinted in any form without the express written consent of Marc  
Silvestri or Top Cow Productions Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA

EVERY THE ANGELS  
FELL, THAT NIGHT...



ONE AND WHO HAD THE BUSINESS  
OF BLASCO ESTERCO PURSUED  
HIM ACROSS AMERICA, THROUGH  
ALL OF EUROPE, AND AT LAST, TO  
A FOREST IN SWEDEN.

IN A PLACE CALLED TUNGUSKA  
HE MADE HIS STAND, TURNING  
RIGHT TO THE WAKING HELL OF  
DARK.

SEPTEMBER, 1908.  
CLOSE TO THE ALT  
MOUNTAIN RANGE  
RUSSIA.

YOU'VE  
HONORING LEFT TO  
RUN YOU CONARDY  
BASTARD! STAND AND  
FIGHT WE I'LL HAVE  
YOUR HEAD YOUR  
BOUL!

COME ON  
YOU GOLF-HEARTED  
BITCH! I'LL SHOW YOU  
WHY YOU CALLED  
THE DARKNESS!





DARKNESS?!  
I'LL SHOW YOU  
DARKNESS! I'LL  
SEND YOU TO  
THE BLACKEST  
PIT OF  
HELL!



I'LL  
SEND YOU  
BACK TO THE  
BLACK WOMAN  
THAT SORE  
YOU!



CAN YOU  
FEEL IT, ESTACADO?  
CAN YOU FEEL YOUR  
PITIFUL END?



THINKING SHE HAD STRUCK  
A MORTAL BLOW, THE ANGEL'S  
SCARED SO TERRIBLE WAS HER  
SONG, THAT ANY WHO SURVIVED  
THAT NIGHT SWORE THEY HAD  
HEARD THE SOUND OF  
JUDGMENT DAY.



BUT WHY WAS RELASCO  
ESTACADO IN THE WAYS  
OF THE DARKNESS...

UGHNN!  
CALM DOWN  
BOYS! THE  
MOMENT HAS  
BEEN PREPARED  
FOR.

DON'T JUST  
STAND THERE, YOU  
BLOODY BASTARDS,  
HELP ME OUT

ONLY ONE LONG-LIVED  
ON THE DARK PATH  
COULD HAVE FASHIONED  
A DOUBT FROM THE  
DARKNESS ITSELF.

THIS WILL  
ONLY FOOL HER IF  
WE DO IT EXACTLY  
RIGHT. AHHHH!  
GET THIS DAMN  
THING OUT OF  
ME...

AAAAAAAAAAAA



DAMMIT,  
THAT HURT! HOLD  
ME UP, BOYS. I'M  
AS WEAK AS A  
KITTEN.

YOU  
KNOW WHAT  
YOU HAVE  
TO DO.

GET  
ON WITH  
IT.



HURRY,  
BOYS. I CAN  
ALMOST HEAR THE  
WINGS OF THE  
ANGEL OF DEATH.

YOU GO ON  
NOW. USE WHAT LIFE  
I HAVE GIVEN YOU TO  
BUY ME WHAT TIME  
YOU CAN.




LIVE FAST,  
DIE YOUNG. LEAVE A  
GOOD-LOOKING CORPSE.  
YOU GET TO DO ALL THESE  
THINGS FOR ME.



I  
THANK  
YOU.



NOW GET  
ME THE HELL  
OUT OF  
HERE!



IT WAS A TRICK THAT  
WOULD NEVER HAVE FOOLED  
HIS GREATEST ENEMY, WERE  
SHE NOT AS BATTLE WEARY  
AS SHE WAS...



THE END WAS  
NOT LONG COMING



IT IS OVER,  
ESTACADO. THE  
DARKNESS ENDS  
HERE.

I AM  
FREE AT  
LAST.



IT IS SAID HER SHOUT  
OF VICTORY SHOOK THE  
HEAVENS. ONE CAN ONLY  
IMAGINE HER FURY, WHEN  
SHE LEARNED SHE HAD  
BEEN OUTWITTED BY HER  
HATED ENEMY.

OUTWITTED...BY  
THE WILDEST OF  
THE ESTACADO  
BLOODLINE.

IN TIME, BELASCO  
ESTACADO MET AS  
SCORED AN END AS  
ANY OF HIS BREED  
FACE DOWN ON THE  
BED OF A WOMAN.  
THE LIFE THAT KILLED  
HIM ALREADY GROWING  
IN HER WOMB.



IT'S THE WAY  
THEY ALL GO IN THE  
END. IN THE BEDS OF  
THE WOMEN THEY RUT  
WITH, THE POWERS  
OF THE DARKNESS...  
AND IT'S ULTIMATE  
COST.

P-P-PLEASE...  
I AM SO TIRED...  
I MUST HAVE  
REST...

REST  
MY ASS!  
DON'T STOP  
NOW, YOU  
BASTARD! TELL  
ME EVERY-  
THING!

I WANT  
IT ALL!



EASY, MISS FRANCHETTI. THE POOR MAN IS VERY TIRED WHAT HE NEEDS IS A NICE CUP OF HOT SWEET TEA...

AND THEN I WILL COMPLETE THE TORTURE. AFTER THAT, HE'LL BE READY TO RECITE WAR AND PEACE TO YOU...



THANK YOU, MISTER VESPAZIAN. YOU ARE RIGHT, OF COURSE.

I'LL LEAVE YOU GENTLEMEN TO IT.



I'LL RETURN LATER, AND BELIEVE ME, I WILL WANT IT ALL.

EVERYTHING... ALL I'VE EVER WANTED IS EVERYTHING...



NOW, MISTER WENDERS...



HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR TEA?

YOU KIDS TODAY  
YA GOT NO RESPECT  
FOR YOUR ELDERS...

IT'S BAD  
MANNERS TO DO  
BUSINESS IN MY  
NEIGHBORHOOD.  
WITHOUT ASKIN' MY  
PERMISSION  
FIRST, YOU DUNNO  
THAT?

HUH?

FORGIVE US,  
DON FRANCHETTI, WE  
MEANT NO DISRESPECT.  
WE WOULD'VE SHOWN  
YOU OUR GRATITUDE AS  
SOON AS WE FINISHED  
OUR BUSINESS.

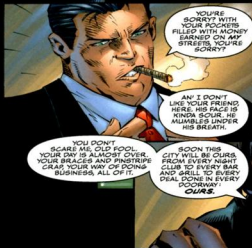
YOU...  
YOU GOT MY  
WORD ON  
MY MAMA'S  
LIFE.

YOU'RE  
SORRY? WITH  
YOUR POCKETS  
FILLED WITH MONEY  
EARNED ON MY  
STREETS, YOU'RE  
SORRY?

AN' I DON'T  
LIKE YOUR FRIEND,  
HERE, HIS FACE IS  
KINDA SOUR, HE  
MUMBLES UNDER  
HIS BREATH.

YOU DON'T  
SCARE ME, OLD FOOL.  
YOUR DAY IS ALMOST OVER.  
YOUR BRACES AND PINSTRIPE  
CRAP, YOUR WAY OF DOING  
BUSINESS, ALL OF IT.

SOON THIS  
CITY WILL BE OURS.  
FROM EVERY NIGHT  
CLUB TO EVERY BAR  
AND DRILL TO EVERY  
DEAL DONE IN EVERY  
DOORWAY:  
**OURS.**





LOOK AT YOU...YOU'RE AN OLD JOKE. A DUMB GOOMBA, NOTHING BUT A PILE OF SPAGHETTI AND MEAT BALLS.



YOU'RE A DINOSAUR WITH A BULLET IN ITS BRAIN. TOO STUPID TO EVER KNOW IT'S DEAD!



I'LL OUTLIVE YOU, YOU SMART ASS PUNK.



GUESS AGAIN!



BLAM!

JACKIE BOY, YOU ARE FASTER THAN MY OWN RIGHT ARM...

NO PROBLEM, UNCLE FRANKIE.





WHAT  
ABOUT KAISER  
SOZE, HERE?



NO LET HIM  
GO. I WANT HIM  
TO TELL HIS FRIENDS  
SOMETHIN' FROM  
ME.



TELL 'EM  
FRANKIE FRANCHETTI  
SHOWED YOU MERCY  
CAUSE YOU SHOWED  
HIM RESPECT. THAT'S  
ALL IT TAKES.

A LITTLE  
RESPECT GOES  
A LONG WAY. NO  
RESPECT, TAKES  
YOU THE WRONG  
WAY.

JESUS, BEEN  
WIPIN' CRAP LIKE  
THEM OFF MY SHOES  
FOR YEARS. EVERY NOW  
AND AGAIN YOU DO  
SOMETHIN' LIKE THIS  
JUST TO REMIND 'EM  
WHO'S BOSS.

WHAT  
ABOUT THE  
BODY?



ALREADY  
TAKEN CARE  
OF.



HELLO DON  
FRANCHETTI. HI,  
JACKIE.

HEY,  
BUTCHER.



I'LL CATCH UP.  
I WANT A WORD WITH  
BUTCHER JOYCE. THANK  
HIM FOR CLEANING UP  
MY PLACE THAT TIME.

HEY, IT'S  
HIS JOB. BUT  
SURE, WHAT-  
EVER.

JUST DON'T  
FORGET YOU'RE JOINING  
APOLONIA AND HER  
MOTHER AND ME FOR  
DINNER, OKAY?

TONIGHT  
WE'RE GONNA HAVE  
US SOME QUALITY  
TIME.

CAN'T  
WAIT.



HEY, JACKIE.  
HEY, WHAT WAS  
ALL THAT WEIRD  
STUFF GOIN' ON  
AT YOUR PLACE.  
LAST TIME I SAW  
YOU? ALL THOSE  
FREAKS?

IT'S  
ALL UNDER  
CONTROL,  
BUTCHER.

LISTEN, YOU  
BEEN WORKING FOR  
FRANKIE A LONG TIME.  
WHAT HAPPENED TO  
FRANKIE'S WIFE?

WHAT  
TURNED A GOOD  
WOMAN INTO A  
POTATO?



AH, THE  
DON TORTURED  
HER LOVER TO  
DEATH IN FRONT  
OF HER.

SHE  
TOOK IT  
KINDA  
HARD.





DON FRANCHETTI  
CAME UP AT A VERY EARLY  
AGE. HE WAS SMART AN'  
BRUTAL, FEARED AN' RESPECTED  
BEYOND HIS YEARS. HE HAD THIS  
KINDA... **CONTROLLED RAGE**,  
MADE HIM A LEGEND AMONG  
THE FAMILIES...

HIS WIFE WASN'T OF THE BLOOD  
BLONDE, BLUE EYED, WHAT THEY  
CALLED A WASP. I GUESS EVERYONE  
THOUGHT THE MARRIAGE WAS A BAD  
IDEA—BUT WHO'S GONNA TELL A  
GUY LIKE FRANKIE HOW TO PICK  
HIS WIFE, RIGHT?

ALL THE SAME, NO ONE  
BUT FRANKIE WAS SURPRISED  
WHEN SHE BETRAYED HIM.

I'LL  
SHOW YOU  
I LOVE  
YOU...

I'LL SHOW  
YOU I LOVE YOU!  
I'LL SHOW YOU  
I LOVE YOU!

GOD!  
NO!  
FRANKIE!  
PLEASE!  
NOOO!



THAT WAS MY FIRST JOB FOR THE DON. COME TO THINK OF IT, TRUTH BE TOLD, HE GOT IN SUCH A TEMPER, THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT TO GET RID OF.



ANYHOW, I GUESS A LIFETIME OF GOOD HOME COOKING AND APPLE PIE DOESN'T PREPARE YOU FOR AN ANGRY SICILIAN WITH A BLOW TORCH.



YOU OUGHTA GO ON OPRAH, BUTCHER.

YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND, JACKIE, A MAN OF WILL LIKE DON FRANCHETTI, HE DOESN'T PLAY BY ANYONE ELSE'S RULES.

HURT HIM BAD, HE HURTS YOU WORSE. MEN LIKE HIM, THEY CARRY A LOTTA DARKNESS INSIDE 'EM, A LOTTA RAGE.



BUT HELL, WHO DOESN'T? I BET EVEN A NICE GUY LIKE YOU HAS A DARK SIDE.



BUT DOES A DARK GUY LIKE ME HAVE A NICE SIDE?

SEE YOU, BUTCHER.

I WANT TO  
THANK YOU FOR THIS TIME  
WE HAVE SPENT TOGETHER.  
MISTER WENDERS. IT REALLY HAS  
BEEN A MOST REWARDING  
EXPERIENCE.



...YUH...YUH  
...YOU'RE  
WELCOME...

SOME PEOPLE  
ARE REPELLED BY THE  
WORK I DO. YOU'D BE  
SURPRISED THE THINGS  
THEY SAY ABOUT  
ME.

I KNOW  
I AM.



I USED TO  
KILL PEOPLE AT  
THIS POINT, UNTIL I  
REALIZED A SIMPLE  
TRUTH.



IF I KILL YOU,  
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE  
LEARNED ANYTHING,  
WHICH WOULD MAKE  
THIS TIME WE'VE SHARED  
A RATHER HOLLOW  
EXPERIENCE, WOULDN'T  
IT?





I TAKE IT YOU'VE FINISHED THEN, MISTER VESPASIAN. WHAT HAS HE TOLD YOU?

IT'S ALL ON TAPE, EXCEPT... THE KNOWLEDGE YOU REQUIRED, ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT ASSUME THE MANTLE OF THIS ANGELUS...

HE SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE THAT INFORMATION.

SO HE KNOWS EVERYTHING BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING: WHAT A SORRY PIECE OF--

BUT WHY TALK TO THE ONLY RAG WHEN YOU CAN TALK TO THE MECHANIC?

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

THAT PATHETIC TALISMAN OF THE EQUALLY PATHETIC WENDERS. IT WORKS BOTH WAYS, WHICH JUST GOES TO SHOW YOU, IF YOU GAZE INTO THE ABYSS LONG ENOUGH, THE ABYSS GAZES RIGHT BACK AT YOU.

YOU'VE GOT ABOUT TEN SECONDS TO LIVE, CHROMEDOME.

BUT I AM THE MAN WITH ALL THE ANSWERS, MY DEAR. WHAT I WANT IN RETURN IS YOUR UNDYING GRATITUDE, OBEDIENCE AND LOYALTY. IN SHORT, YOUR SOUL.



JACKIE BOY, GLAD  
YOU COULD MAKE IT.

WOULDN'T  
HAVE MISSED  
IT FOR THE  
WORLD.

GOOD BOY,  
THAT'S GOOD. WE SHOULD'VE  
DONE THIS A LONG TIME AGO.  
I DON'T REMEMBER THE LAST  
TIME I SAT DOWN A TABLE TO  
BREAK BREAD WITH MY  
FAMILY.

WHAT DO WE  
WORK SO HARD FOR?  
WHY DO WE STRUGGLE  
IF NOT TO IMPROVE LIFE  
FOR OUR LOVED  
ONES?

I DUNNO  
UNCLE FRANKIE. I  
HAVEN'T HAD A LOT  
OF EXPERIENCE  
OF FAMILY.

SURE YOU  
HAVE. YOU'VE ALWAYS  
BEEN LIKE A SON TO ME,  
LIKE THE SON I NEVER  
HAD. MY FAMILY IS YOUR  
FAMILY.

THAT'S WHY  
IT DOES MY HEART  
GOOD TO SEE YOU  
AND APOLONIA  
TOGETHER. YOU TWO  
KIDS ARE LIKE  
BROTHER AND  
SISTER.

AND TONIGHT  
I HAVE ALL MY LOVED  
ONES UNDER MY ROOF  
FOR THE FIRST TIME  
IN YEARS.

TO  
FAMILY!

TO BEING  
LUCKY ENOUGH  
TO HAVE ONE.



SORRY TO  
KEEP YOU LADIES  
WAITING. YOU KNOW  
HOW IT IS. TWO GUYS  
GET TO CHATTING.  
IT'S ALL YADA, YADA,  
YADA...

YOU LOOK  
BEAUTIFUL, BABY.  
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE  
YOUR POPPA'S  
LITTLE GIRL.



THANK YOU,  
POPPA.



I'VE SAID  
IT ALREADY, BUT  
WHAT THE HELL!  
HERE'S TO  
FAMILY.



LURE





WELL, HERE WE ARE. JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS TAKES YOU BACK, DOESN'T IT, JACKIE?



ABSOLUTELY. IT'S EXACTLY THE WAY I REMEMBER IT.



I KNEW YOU TWO WOULD ENJOY THIS. I SIT HERE, AT THIS TABLE, AND IT'S LIKE TIME HAS STOOD STILL...

ALL I SEE IS MY TWO KIDS, WITH THEIR WHOLE LIVES AHEAD OF THEM.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.



I HEARD A VERY INTERESTING STORY TODAY, JACKIE. SORT OF AN OLD RUSSIAN FOLK TALE.





GUESS  
WHO'S COMING  
TO DINNER?

SONATINE!

UUA

TO BE  
CONTINUED