

GARTH ENNIS ADRIANO BATISTA

JENNIFER BLOOD



SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS



TIME
READ
OVER
2009

JENNIFER BLOOD™

written by **GARTH ENNIS**

illustrated by **AURIANO BATISTA**

lettered by **BOB STEEN**

colored by **ROMULO FAJARDO JR.**

cover A (main) by **TIM BRADSTREET**

cover B (1-in-10) by **JONATHAN LAU**

cover C (1-in-15) by **ALE GARZA**

cover D (1-in-15) by **JOHNNY DESJARDINS**

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MONDAY

Quiet day with nothing much going on. Andrew took the kids to school, which was a big help. What wasn't such a big help was he'd mixed up the laundry again, so I now have a very distinctive purple blouse. My fault in a way, by now I should know to check first before I let him do anything domestic. But I can't be mad at A, he's so sweet all the time, so easy to get on with. Life with him is such a pleasure-relief.

Minor dilemma while shopping- the ecologically friendly surface cleaner, which, if I'm honest, doesn't really work all that well, or the evil (and cheap) regular one that dissolves grease in seconds and probably turns the soil into an instant biohazard when it ends up as landfill? Oh, God. I am a bad person and I am going to a bad place.

My Diary

Treated myself to a manicure (toes only for obvious reasons). I was reading Guns + Ammo in the nail bar and it struck me how many articles were about 9mm weapons. Beretta, Glock, Sig-Sauer, Heckler + Koch- it was 9mm this, 9mm that, there wasn't a single mention of .38 or .45. What on earth's the point of having twice as many bullets if you have to use three times as many to actually put someone down?

Honestly.

1: WAR JOURNAL

Without knowing it, A earned himself a reprieve for the blouse by taking the afternoon off and picking the kids up on his way home. I was so happy when he called, I'd been all set to do it myself but now I had time for all sorts of little things. Sewed Alice's costume for the parade, hunted down Mark's missing sneaker, finally got a decent edge on that Ka-bar. Even cleaned the oven. Hear me roar.

Defrosted lamb chops as a thank you. I know Andrew gets on well with his boss, but he still has to work extra hard to get the time off. I'm lucky to have someone who makes us such a priority.

My family.

They make it all worthwhile.

MY FAVORITE, LUCKY MAN THAT I AM!

ALICE, STOP TRYING TO HIDE YOUR SPROUTS UNDER YOUR MASHED POTATOES, YOU'RE STILL GOING TO HAVE TO EAT THEM...

MOM...!





...NO,
TWO THREES.
TWO TIMES
THREE.

UM...

IF YOU HAVE
THREE BEANS AND
THEN THREE MORE BEANS,
HOW MANY IS THAT
ALTOGETHER?

OH, JEN,
I WAS GOING TO
MAYBE DRIVE DOWN
TO THE SHORE ON
SATURDAY...



EARLY...
YOU KNOW, YOU
DO GET A LOT OF
OCEAN-GOING DUCKS
PASSING THROUGH AT
THIS TIME OF YEAR,
SCOTER AND EIDER
AND SO ON...

UH-HUH.

*The reason for the
extra-helpful half day
was revealed later,
of course.*

*But I shouldn't be cynical.
If the extent of the man's
deviousness is earning
himself time to go
birdwatching, I should
probably thank my
lucky stars.*



I SAW A
PEREGRINE
DOWN THERE THIS
TIME LAST YEAR,
PROBABLY GOING
AFTER THE
DUCKS.

THOUGHT
I MIGHT, UM,
TAKE MY CAMERA,
SEE WHAT SHOWS
UP...

Besides, who am I to talk?



YOU
SHOULD.

YOU
DON'T MIND
TAKING ALICE TO
PRACTICE?

OR
LOOKING
AFTER
MARK.

YOU'RE THE
BEST!



I HAVE THE COOLEST WIFE IN THE WORLD.

THERE IS NOBODY ELSE LIKE YOU.

It was a nice end to a nice day. One of those goofy little hours that don't mean anything if you don't have kids, but mean the world if you do.



It was only later, when I was grinding up the valium (junior for Alice and Mark!) to put in their hot chocolate, that the one black cloud rose up above the horizon again.

Weird how they slide in, thoughts like that.



Earlier on, I took the Hyundai to the shop to get the brakes checked, as well as a couple of other little things. I could have done it all myself, but how would that have looked- me outside in overalls, covered in oil and dirt, with the whole neighborhood watching and wondering how Mrs. Mom knows stuff like this?



So I took it to the place on Eighth, which I've heard the local Dads recommend to Andrew. Regretted it the instant I got out of the car.

Felt the piggy little eyes before I saw them.



KATIE, YOU FIGURE OUT A PRICE FOR MRS. FELLOWS, OKAY?

YES, MISTER MCWATT.

DON'T FORGET PARTS. AN' LABOR. AN'...

RIGHT.



GOOD GIRL.
GIMME A SECOND
HERE.

NATURE
CALLS...



*One minute thirty seconds of "don't say
anything, don't say anything..."*

EXCUSE
ME?



YOU... DON'T HAVE
TO PUT UP WITH HIM
TOUCHING YOU LIKE
THAT, YOU KNOW.
IT'S IMPROPER.

YOU
GONNA GIVE
ME A JOB?

WELL, I
KNOW HE'S YOUR
BOSS, BUT THAT
DOESN'T GIVE HIM
THE RIGHT TO--

YEAH.



IT REALLY
ISN'T ANY OF YOUR
BUSINESS.



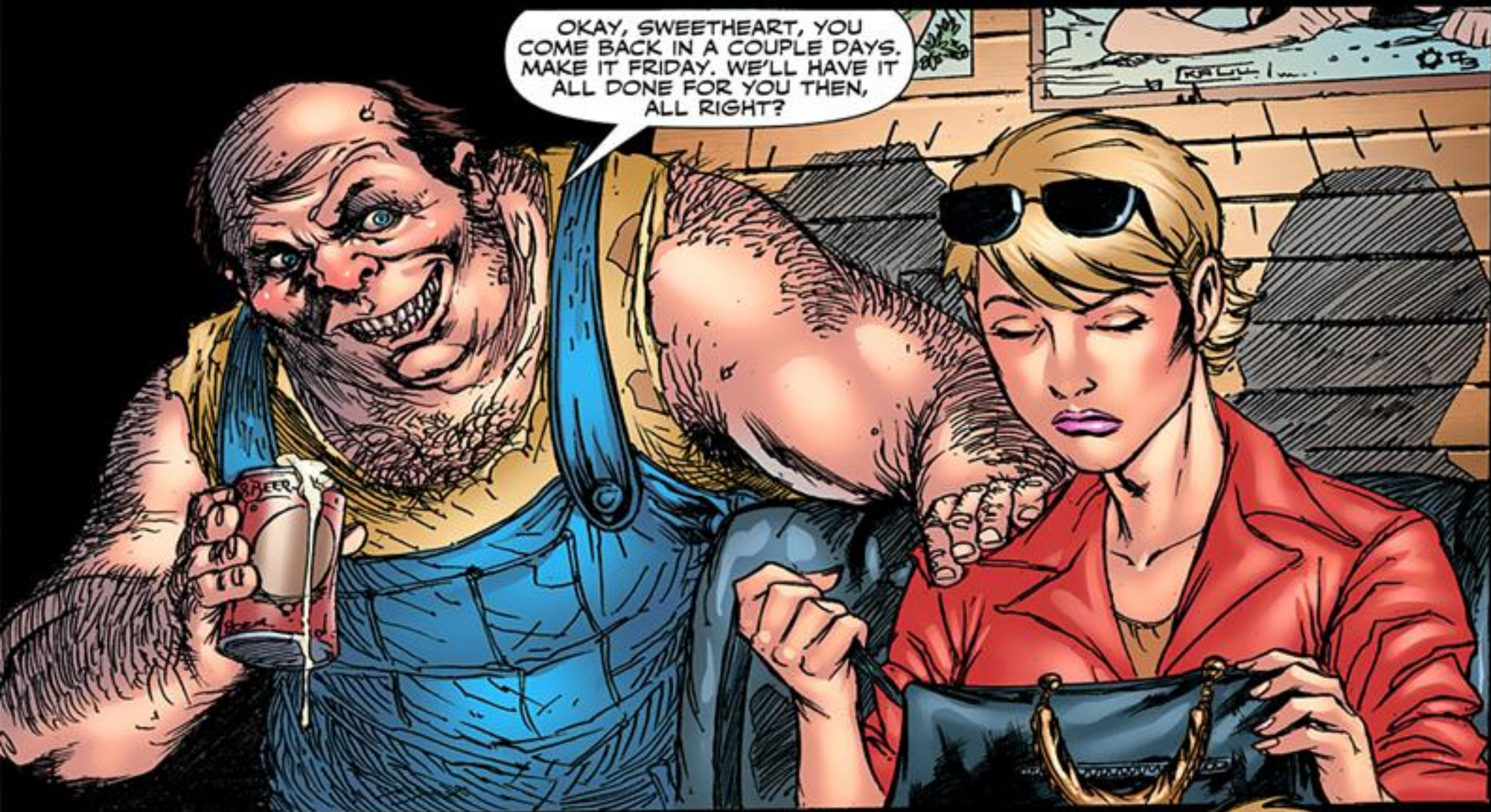
...YOU'RE
ABSOLUTELY
RIGHT.
I APOLOGIZE.



OKAY THEN!
ALL SET?



JUST
FINISHING UP
NOW.



OKAY, SWEETHEART, YOU
COME BACK IN A COUPLE DAYS.
MAKE IT FRIDAY. WE'LL HAVE IT
ALL DONE FOR YOU THEN,
ALL RIGHT?



NO.
HUH?

I'VE
ACTUALLY
DECIDED
TO TAKE MY
BUSINESS
ELSEWHERE.
THANK
YOU.



*I thought about her all the
way home. Eventually, I made
one of my mental notes.*

*Which is not a thing
I ever do lightly.*

Night turned out to be a little more lively.

Thinking back on it now, I'd give myself about a 9 or 10 out of 10 for marksmanship, a 7 for tactical improvisation, but only a 3 or 4 for preparation. More time spent on reconnaissance would have made all the difference.



So on the whole not bad, but not that great either.

And certainly no room for complacency.



On my way out I had a bit of a twinge, and almost went up to look in on A and the kids. Guilt, I suppose. It's bad enough I built an armory in our home the weekend he took them to see his parents, but the rest of it- well.

(Still quite proud of my little construction project, esp. the camo job I did on it. Though I have to admit we hadn't been living there long enough for A to notice the basement had shrunk by about five feet.)

Anyway, decided to forget it and go straight out. Not that there was any danger of them waking up and seeing me, but figured I should keep the two sides of my life completely separate.





*Let the day be the day and
the night be the night.*

*Drove to the waterfront as planned, left
the SUV at the spot I found last week.
That was one bit of recon I did get right.*



*Taking the coat off
and picking up the
MP5, I was struck by
a strange urge- I had
this idea I should stand
still for a couple of
seconds, to sort of
contemplate what I was
doing and make sure
I was ready for it.
Which was just stupid,
because I haven't
had a single doubt
about any of this since
I made my decision.*

But before I knew it, I'd struck a pose.



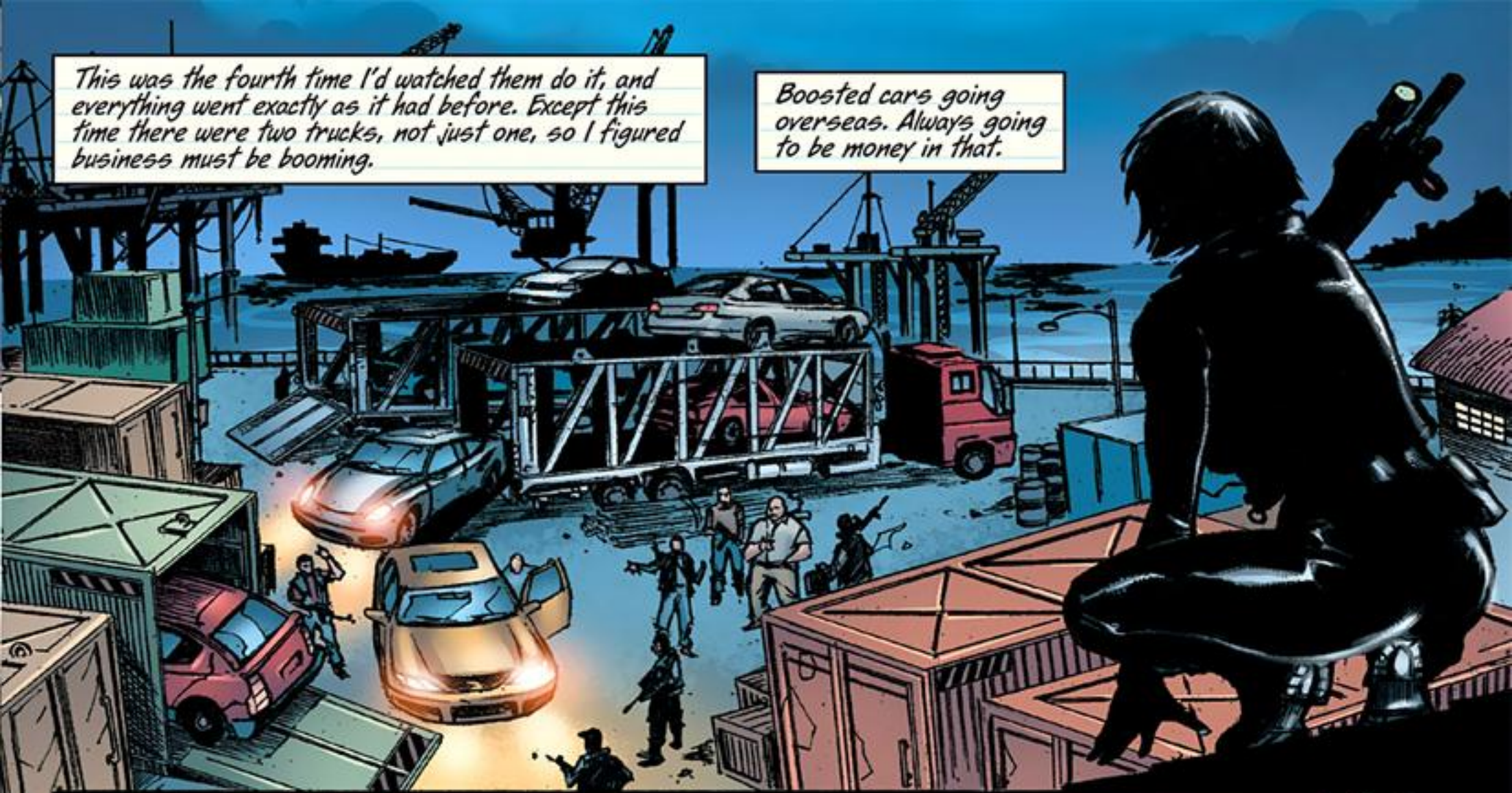
*I stopped that
straightaway,
I can tell you.
Anyone watching
would have thought
I was a raving
lunatic.*



Honestly.

This was the fourth time I'd watched them do it, and everything went exactly as it had before. Except this time there were two trucks, not just one, so I figured business must be booming.

Boosted cars going overseas. Always going to be money in that.



I waited 'til everything was loaded and they came together to get their money. Same as last time: two guards watch while four drivers and the other two guards go to see the big man.

What I figured- what I'd rehearsed- was toss a grenade into the group, drop the guards with a burst each, then give the injured the rest of the mag. Reload fast and give them another.

What could be simpler than that, right?



NAAAAH!!





FUCK!



WHO
THE HELL IS
HUHHH!!



AAWWH--!

UNNHH

So far, so good.

(I knew 10mm was the way to go.)

What I hadn't considered was that twice
the cars meant twice the money. Which
might mean more security than usual.

I had better luck
than I deserved,
but I'm still mad
at myself for
missing that.



DON'T
YOU FUCKIN'
MOVE!!



DON'T YOU...
DUDE,
HAVE YOU SEEN
THIS?

JESUS--!

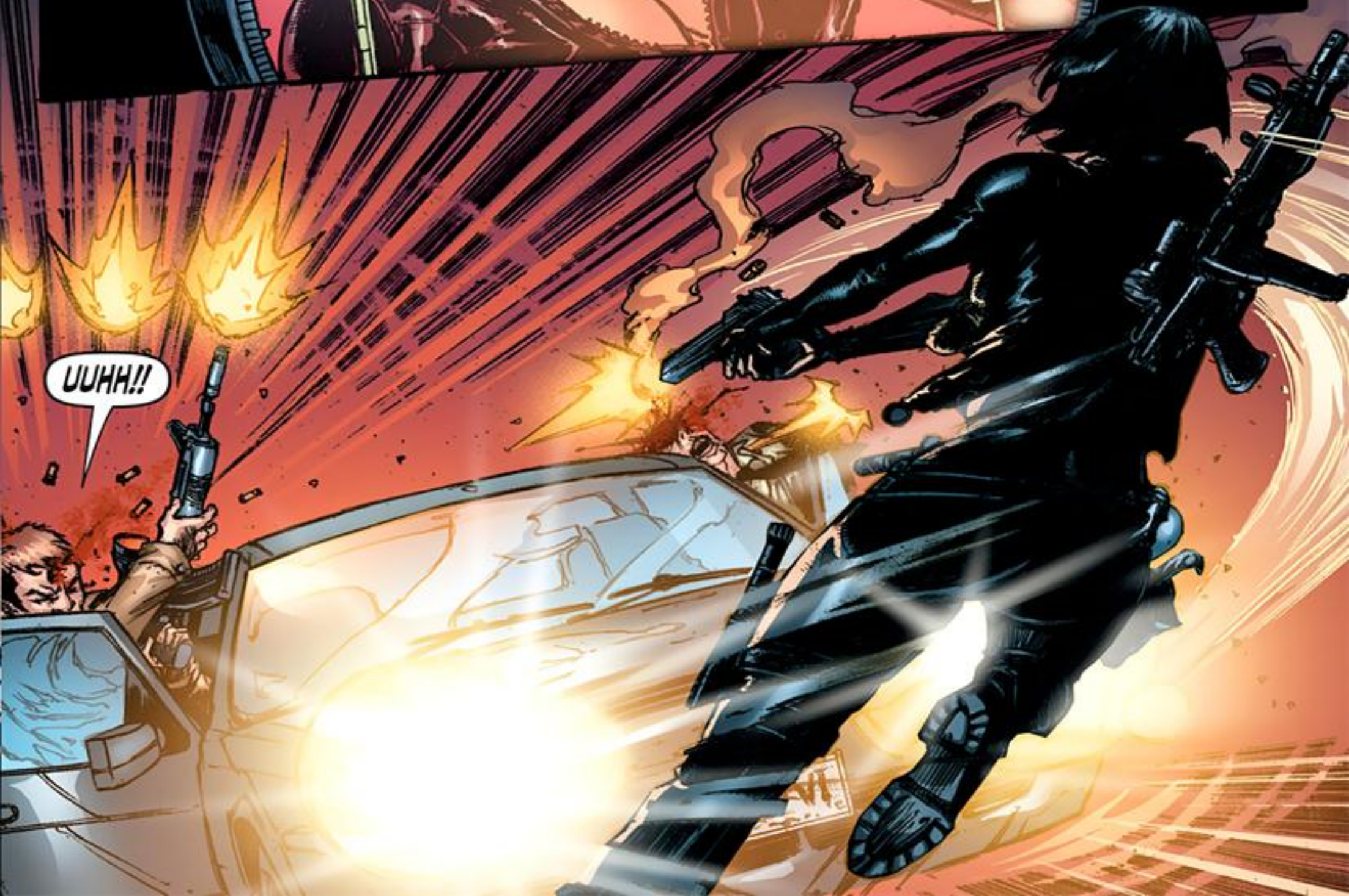
That's right, boys, I thought.



Boobies.

*Take a good look.
You know you want to.*

*Give me that nice long
second I need.*



UUHH!!



*Thank God he hit the
pistol, not my hand.*



*Imagine explaining getting
all my fingers crushed to A.*

*No way was I risking going
for the other one. I wouldn't
have the space or time to
get it onto target.*



*So here I was in the situation I'd
dreaded all along- hand to hand,
close in, no way out but the hardest.
Learning unarmed combat I watched
the instructors set up problem after
problem, then explain and demonstrate
solutions, and I just knew it'd never
be so simple when the moment came
for real.*

*Not with three hundred pounds
of muscle out to get me.*

*Not with his
stinking breath
and spittle hitting
me right in the
face.*



Two schools of thought on this.
One is to let him see the knife, so
he gets scared and leaves you be.

Didn't see that
working out too well.

YOU ARE
FUCKIN' DEAD,
YOU—

YEAH, YEAH.

The other is to hide it,
so he thinks he's in a
fistfight.

Looks like all
you've done is
blocked him.
Feels the same.

Then he sees
what you've done.
He wonders how.

You use the
distraction to
come in again.
His mind's still
saying punch.

HNNHH!

So he figures he
should block it.

YAAAAH!!

Pain.

Anger.

Disorientation.

AAH, YOU
FUCKIN'--

Lots of things you can do with that.



HHAAAANNHHH...!



HHYYUUUUHHH!

HHHCCCCCHHH!

NNNNNNNOOO--!

Oh, the drama.

He really did make a performance out of it. Not so I got as far as drumming my fingers and sighing, or anything- but how much blood can one man have in him?



Honestly.

The first siren sounded in the distance, and I realized I was a full four minutes behind schedule. It was time for the finishing touch.

That was when I got a little surprise...



UUUNNNHHHH...



WHAT...
UUHH--
WHAT THE FUCK IS...



NO.



NO.
CAN'T BE.









On the way home I found myself making a small detour. And-

I just re-read that line. I'm making it sound as if I did it by accident, or as some sort of idle afterthought. But really I knew I'd be stopping off there the instant he said "good girl".



Insult to injury was what swung it, I suppose.

Turned out he'd made it easy for me.



I counted just under two dozen cans, so I didn't think he'd be waking up.





Nope.

Snored right
through the
whole thing.



And that, I thought,
was the end of my
first night out.

I was very, very careful to check myself for cuts or bruises. A finding some mark or other on me doesn't bear thinking about. But tonight I was lucky.

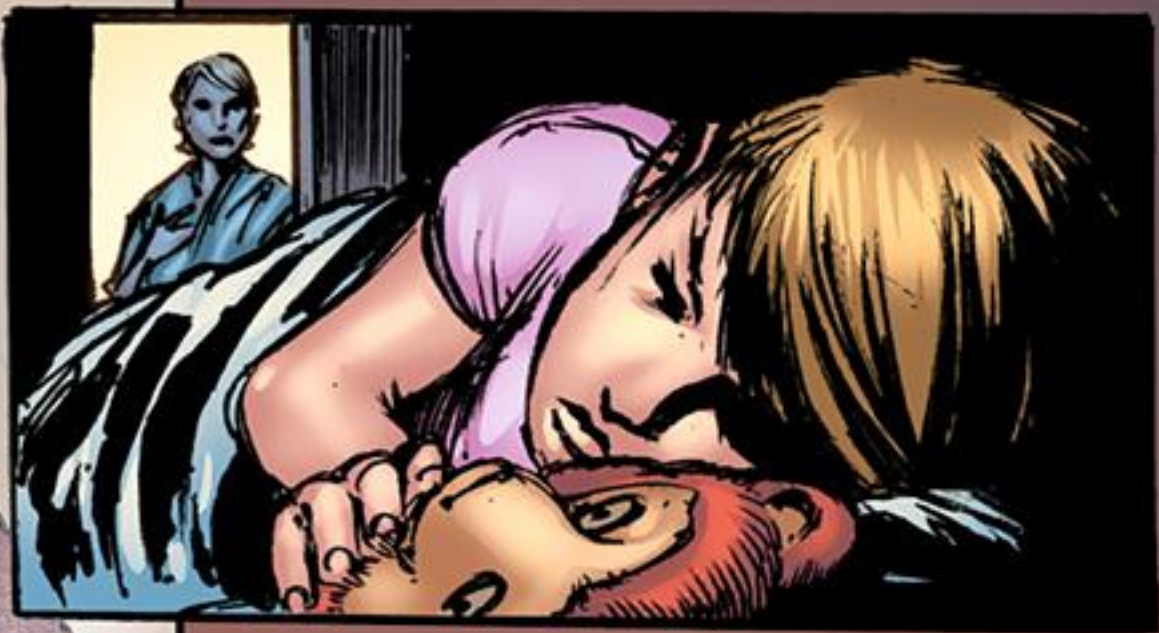
Of course, it's going to happen sooner or later, but at least forewarned is forearmed. So much easier to come up with a clumsy-little-wife excuse when I know what it is he's looking at.

Another twinge while I was drying my hair- what it means to shower off bad men's blood and the stink of cordite before getting into bed with my husband. The very idea of committing that carnage, then coming home to him and my kids.

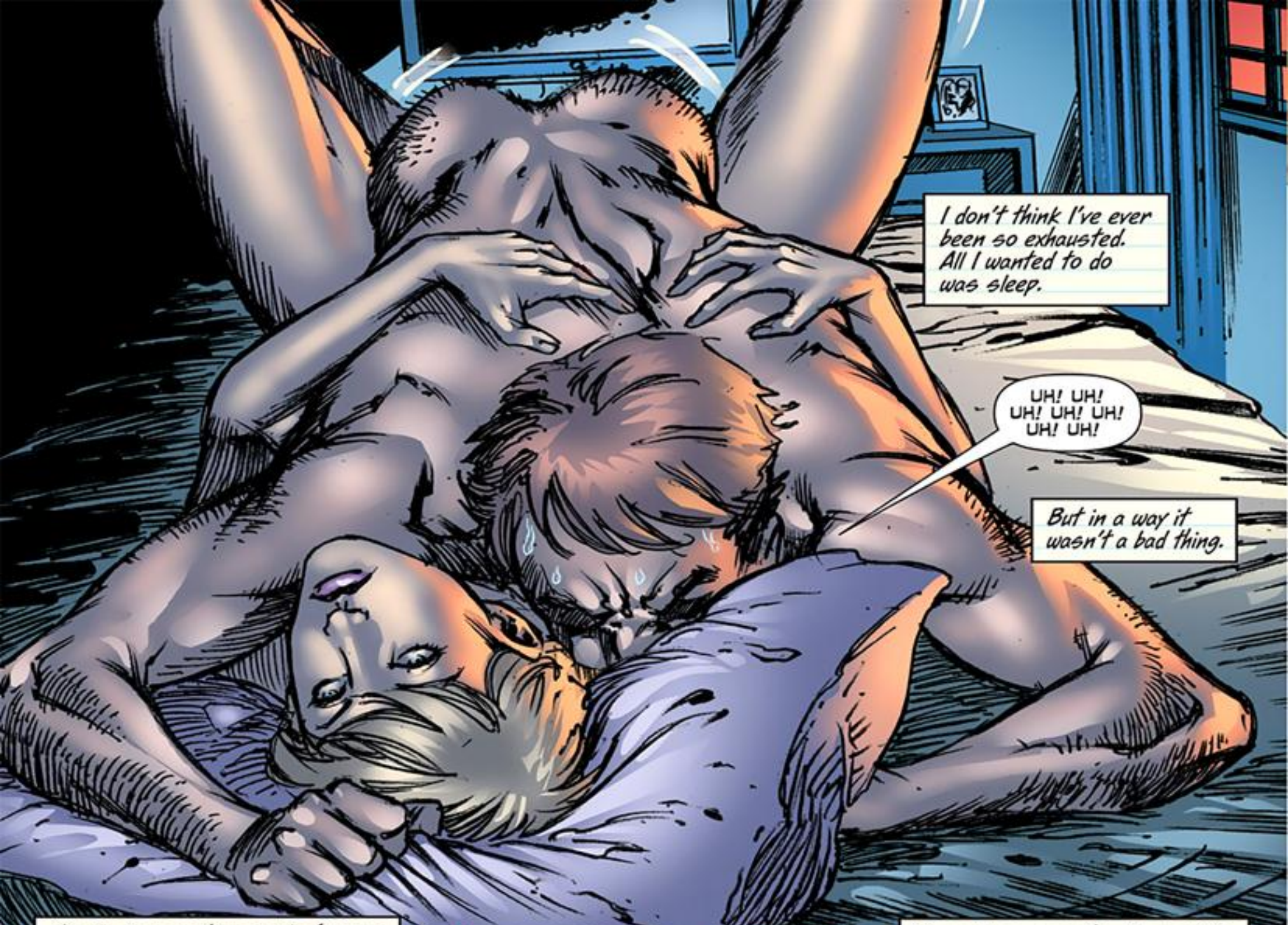
But I can't let it get to me. Can't start to doubt. I have to keep things neat and tidy and completely separate, for as long as it takes to get this done.

Besides, I've started. So now I have to finish.

Four more uncles to go, after all.







I don't think I've ever been so exhausted. All I wanted to do was sleep.

UH! UH!
UH! UH! UH!
UH! UH!

But in a way it wasn't a bad thing.

Nice to do something sort of boring, just to bring you down off that massive adrenaline high.

UH! UH!
UH-UH-UH!

URRRNNGGHHH--!

It was at the end, when he got all excited, that I saw something worrying up on the ceiling. Somehow I'd never noticed before.

It upset me more than I expected. But it's a new house, after all, and we've only been here a couple of years.

That's far too soon for mold to start, right?

UHHH...
UHHH...
UHHH...

Or maybe it isn't. We might have a leak, and then there'll be all sorts of work to be done. Maybe they'll have to rip up the roof!

Oh, God, what a nightmare that would be. Just what I needed.

UH.

Honestly.

TO BE CONTINUED



Garth Ennis Lightens up for Jennifer Blood – By Robert Greenberger

After crisscrossing the fields of battle and examining the underbelly of heroism, Garth Ennis has decided he was due for some fun. Of course, Garth's idea of fun involves guns, violence, and beautiful women. Coming in February is Jennifer Blood, a new miniseries that takes a fresh look at vigilantism.

"I wanted to have a bit of a laugh again. It's been a while," Ennis admits during a conversation. "Everything I've been doing recently has been getting darker and darker. *Crossed* and *Battlefields* speak for themselves; *The Boys* slides further into the shadows all the time - most notably with next summer's *Butcher* mini; even *Wormwood* gets bleaker and bleaker, and that was meant to be a comedy. So stepping back and having a laugh, maybe in the vein of *Hitman* and so on, suddenly seemed quite attractive."

Jenny is a Brooklyn housewife with a husband and children, but she finds herself putting the kids to bed, donning a costume of sorts and walks the streets to hand out the kind of justice cops cannot. But what could cause a woman to enter a dangerous, deadly lifestyle antithetical to her normal life?

"What would prompt anyone? The desire for revenge," Ennis explains. "Sheer anger that evil men arrogantly expect to escape retribution for their crimes. The overwhelming conviction that the target cannot be allowed to continue breathing."

In a fresh twist, the series will be told in the form of diary entries. Finding the voice of a suburban woman with a family is very different from the characters Ennis has made his reputation on. He agrees this was a bit of a stretch. "And not so much, because I know a few [housewives]. Watching your friends become parents is always interesting; you see them solve problems and reward good behavior in ways that can quite surprise you, given that you've known them since your early twenties. That gives me all sorts of material to draw on."

Ennis was born in the United Kingdom but relocated to the United States years ago and has given him a bit of an outsiders' view on the American Way. "My wife and I occasionally visit some friends of ours upstate, in a pleasantly affluent part of Westchester. When we meet their friends from the neighborhood, I'm always struck at how oddly and yet naturally people seem to segregate themselves- the men stand here and talk about this, the women stand there and talk about that. Occasionally someone snarls at a kid. There are clearer divisions and groups than I was used to in the UK. Our own friends, the couple we're visiting, are actually Brits as well, so I get to see the slight contrast between them and the locals," Ennis said. "All of which made for quite a good scene in *Jennifer Blood*, although as usual I had to ruin everything with the carnage and the nudity."

One insight is that women in a family tend to be stressed because there's never enough time between household chores and the kids' own obligations, not to mention trying to maintain a relationship with a spouse. Now imagine finding the time to go out and deliver street justice to vermin. "Well, a woman's work is never done," Ennis admits. "Jen reckons she only has to last one week- one massive effort and then she can go back to her family, job done. We'll see how that works out for her as the story progresses."

It's bound to be a bloody week so one wonders how a housewife washes it out of her work clothes. "I imagine you have to get to it before it dries and hardens. But feel free to perform an experiment or two," Ennis, who clearly has not had this problem, suggested.

"I haven't discovered too many lines she won't cross yet. She's decided that these guys have to go, and when you see what they've been up to I imagine you'll agree. As far as she's concerned they're the ones who crossed the line, and now anything goes."

Sure, many people can find the time for a special project and then get back to normal, but given that her exploits will be public events, there comes the danger that both private and public lives might clash. When asked, Ennis chuckles and replies, "Read on. You've got to wonder how long she can keep going, although she is rather good at compartmentalizing."

Since he wanted to have some fun, he confirms that the heavy moral and ethical issues that imbue his work with dramatic depth will also be taking a holiday. Instead, Jenny will be patrolling the streets on her own. Her secret will remain hers to keep. Well, not necessarily for the entire series. He teases, "A couple may find out, far too late to do them any good."

Of course, someone committing vigilante acts can't do it in a vacuum. Sooner or later, the police and/or the media will figure out there's someone at work. But Jenny has a head start, according to Ennis. "They're a long, long way in her rear-view. As far as the cops are concerned, the unofficial Punisher rules apply: someone's killing bad guys? Oh dear. How sad."

Coming along for the ride is artist Adriano Batista, a Dynamite veteran who has previously drawn women to reckon with including *Jungle Girl* and *Red Sonja*. The covers are from painter Tim Bradstreet, who has previously worked with Ennis and provided designs for Jenny. "And he did a sterling job indeed, really nailed what I was going for."

Jennifer Blood is something like a palette cleanser for Ennis. After a lengthy career exploring various genres in graphic storytelling, he admits that there's more to write about. "I'd certainly like to do more war stories," he adds. "And a bit more kitchen sink drama, like *Hellblazer* without the hocus-pocus or *Punisher* without the guns."

Since his break-in during the late 1980s, Ennis has watched the comics field change dramatically. When he arrived, imprints like DC Entertainment's Vertigo were just coming into their own. Now with Disney owning Marvel Comics and new management at DC, Ennis sees the pendulum swinging once more. "From what I can tell, we're moving away from notions like creators' rights and diversity - which people have been taking for granted for the best part of twenty years - and back towards work for hire and superheroes. The decline of Vertigo and demise of WildStorm at DC is a case in point; you can easily imagine execs at Warner going, 'Did you say creator-owned? Is that why we can't just automatically get these things into production? And who authorized this, exactly...?'"

"Most new talent now seems to get automatically stuck on superhero books. And said talent seems happy enough to be there."

Another dramatic change was 2010's arrival of the iPad which seemed to be the game changer people awaited for digital comics to come into their own. Ennis happily calls himself a luddite when it comes to the technological end of comics and isn't sure how that will change matters. Instead, he happily sits at home writing his stories. Once Jennifer Blood concludes, he will be returning his attention to his other Dynamite series.

"*The Boys* still has a way to go - the monthly finishes at #72, which is nearly two years away, and there's the *Butcher* mini too. But coming up there's a new *Crossed* monthly that I've written the first three-parter for; hopefully there'll be more *Battlefields*; and there's a war series in similar format to *Battlefields* coming from Avatar. And there's one more *Wormwood* series to go, too."

But first, there's *Jennifer Blood*, a series the likes of which he has not written in far too long.