



Sex Criminals, Vol. 3: Three the Hard Way

Matt Fraction (Writer) , Chip Zdarsky (Illustrator)

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As seen on *Late Night With Seth Meyers!*

The Eisner- and Harvey Award winning raucous sex comedy that *Time* magazine called the Comic of the Year and **Apple** called "inappropriate for sale on iOS devices" returns in *Sex Criminals*, Volume Three: *Three the Hard Way*.

So it turns out Jon and Suzie aren't alone ? other people around the world, like them, freeze time when they climax. A self-appointed group wants to regulate and control them through fear and intimidation. Jon and Suzie are falling in love and want their freak flags to fly, but if they're going to fight back they can't do it alone.

And really, isn't that a metaphor for the whole series? That we might all be alone but we're all alone together? I think so.

If you read only one comic with a semen-demon in it this year, please make it *Sex Criminals*, Volume Three: *Three the Hard Way*.

"I wouldn't trust most comic creators to turn a sexual awakening into compelling pulp fiction, but Fraction and Zdarsky pull it off masterfully." –*Paste Magazine*

Collecting: *Sex Criminals* 11-15

Sex Criminals, Vol. 3: Three the Hard Way Details

Date : Published June 15th 2016 by Image Comics

ISBN :

Author : Matt Fraction (Writer) , Chip Zdarsky (Illustrator)

Format : Kindle Edition 160 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Comics, Fantasy, Fiction, Graphic Novels Comics

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From Reader Review Sex Criminals, Vol. 3: Three the Hard Way for online ebook

James DeSantis says

Man I love this one as much as the others, though I can see why some won't.

This has a lot of forth wall breaking, a weird issue inbetween about A-Sexuality which may not appeal to everyone, and also a lot of fluff without things moving forward in the main story.

However all the relationship stuff worked really well for me in this one. I loved the forth wall breaking scene as well because the writer/artist are funny as hell. I also LOVED some moments like magical anime vagina monster or the dick pic moment. I also enjoyed the Asexual story even if it felt like a odd placement for it.

On the flipside the stuff with the therapist is kind of lame I'm just not feeling much of that. Even if it has funny moments.

So yeah this remains one of the funniest series out and I will continue reading till it's over!

Chris says

[Her attempted blowjob had me in stitches, Chip Zdarsky deserves another Harvey award for the facial expressions during that scene alone. (hide spoiler)]

Dannii Elle says

This series has continued to go from strength to strength in both plot and the density of topics covered. I stated in my review of the last installment that I liked the depth of the subjects covered, and this third volume has completely upped the ante in that department! This still has scenes that vary from the hilarious to the sexually promiscuous, but these are offset with more atmospheric and text-dense scenes, that focus on more hard-hitting topics. I loved everything about this, from the meta narrative and the complex character construction to the ingenuity of plot and the positivity it dedicated to sex and sexuality. My only grievance is that this created more questions than it answered. I have so many things I need to know! *eagerly awaits volume four*

HFK says

My journey of catching up with the graphic series I have devoted myself to is going strong, even when I have still miles to go. I do like these busy seasons when I can only dedicate myself to little reading that doesn't require hours of sitting and concentration from me, something I am absolutely unable to give and deliver, because these are the times I can fully savor books with pictures. As they say.

Third volume of *Sex Criminals* did not live up to its previous installments, all of them worth a solid 5 stars.

As you can see, I have knocked down 2 shiny stars, which would usually mean a rabid downhill from now on, but I am hesitant to agree with because this volume had lots of good, lots of excellent, and lots of funny.

I understand that Mr. Fraction had a personal mourning during the time he was creating successor to the second volume, and I also understand all the delays and problems that *Three the Hard Way* had before it finally got published. Considering all that, I think what Fraction accomplished here is astonishing, but also explains why this volume is such a high experience of meta (which is not a bad thing at all), and why it loses its grip and makes it read disjointed and often very difficult to comprehend.

This is very much character driven episode, there is not much development within the story, but there is a lot of new characters and tricks to introduce. I was not personally a fan of all the new tricks but I am not completely turned off by them either. There is a lot of sexual criticism from a point of view of the society, and it does hit on the nail with many of them. It gives food for a thought when comes to sexuality and our ways of dealing with something we find to be out of the box even when it is not, on the contrary.

That still keeps being the strongest part of these comics, the ability to explore and explain sexuality in a higher levels, which is something this world seems to lack despite of all the fancy education that is available for us, the ordinary folks.

I do enjoy Fraction's way of including himself to the process in the pages of this volume even when it makes it feel like an easy way out, but it brings him closer to us readers, makes readers to be a part of his creative working methods.

The art keeps being wonderful, and so suitable to the subject matter, and it is one of the elements that strongly keeps this volume together even in those times when it is falling apart with words. I am still eagerly awaiting the next volume, and am hoping for the team to get back on track, back in the mood.

Kayla (BOOKadoodles) says

I've been looking forward to reading this volume for over a year, but honestly nothing really happened in this installment. The series has always been a bit self-aware, but this volume was meta to the point of crappy writing. I did appreciate the concepts of sexual judgment presented in this arc, but not much else. It's unfortunate, I was really loving this series. I will still be continuing with volume four for sure, I need to know what happens to the characters at this point.

Sam Quixote says

The third volume of Sex Crimz sees Matt Fraction have some kind of breakdown in the middle of the book – literally, as he writes himself into it having a convo with Chip Zdarsky - as he basically gets bored writing the series. What else happens? Jon and Suzie are being pursued by Kegelface and her cronies - still - with zero progression, and a lot of tiny, totally boring developments occur: Ana and Suzie don't get along! Robert Rainbow's intimidated by Rachele's sexual experiences! Kegelface is banging Jon's shrink to get info on Jon! Yikes, that's the best Fraction can muster?

Looks like Sex Crimz is going the route of Chew. Chew once had an actual storyline and then as it went on

each book became about new weird foodie powers only; in Sex Crimz, it's now all about the new sex powers. Meet an orderly whose sperm takes the form of a sentient anime character and an asexual businesswoman who can jump off tall buildings and produces some kind of force field that keeps her from going splat...? I suppose they're kinda interesting, the guys introducing more colours of the sexual rainbow but their intros do slow down an already glacial-paced narrative even further.

There's an overly long dreary lecture from Ana Kincaid on what's "normal" that'll put you to sleep; Suzie's set up small stands - "mini libraries" - around the city filled with the books from her former library, a twee concept that feels like it would only work in a city like Portland, where Fraction happens to live; and Jon says "I love you" to Suzie - cue dramatic nonsense! Really? Since when did Sex Crimz get Friends-level sitcom bad? Oh, since now. Dear me.

The meta stuff was novel at first but now it feels like Fraction irritably getting out of boring corners he keeps writing himself into. A scene where a character goes to a grocery store is just white text on black background explaining how tedious and unnecessary the scene is and let's just move on - so why even have that scene in the first place? He uses this device again to get out of all the exposition needed to get Jon's shrink up to speed on what's happening in a scene. I get the convenience of it but it still makes the book feel lazy and tossed off.

What annoyed me was the scene where Ana and Suzie confronted each other on their mutual dislike. I understand going all meta to get out of writing redundant dialogue, especially when this contrived antagonism is such a snoozefest, but why even have Ana dislike Suzie at all if you can't be bothered to write the conflict in the first place? The theme of the book is supposedly about morality and who's in the wrong but this key scene exploring this theme is blanked out with Fraction appearing in the comic going full-neurotic to Zdarsky on the phone instead. It comes across as pointless and self-sabotaging. Breaking the fourth wall was fun for the Queen sequence in the first book but this time around it feels like Fraction's becoming more frustrated with the series rather than having fun with it. The frustration shows when Suzie decides she doesn't want to be a sex criminal anymore... which is kinda the whole point of the series!

Three the Hard Way sees Sex Criminals take an unfortunate turn for the dull. I still like the characters, the concept and the art, I just wish there'd been a story in this one rather than a load of directionless nothing. Kurtis Wiebe announced the weekend before last that Rat Queens was going on hiatus for the foreseeable future - maybe Sex Crimz should do the same until Fraction's figured out what he wants from the series?

Maria (Big City Bookworm) says

***Warning:** May contain spoilers if you have not read Sex Criminals Volume 1 & 2.*

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Okay. This was fucking hilarious...excuse my french. I don't think I've giggled that hard while reading anything in recent memory.

The story basically picks up where we left off at the end of the second volume. Suzie and Jon have discovered that they are not the only two people who can freeze time when they climax. Yeah, you read that right, Sex Criminals is a comic about people that can literally stop time when they orgasm. The premise alone was quirky enough to get me to pick up the first volume almost 3 years ago now, but I can assure you that there is

so much more to this story than a great premise.

It's hilarious and honestly one of the funniest comics I have ever read. On top of that, there are also a few more serious moments in which Jon and Suzie deal with relationship issues and moral dilemmas.

In typical Matt Fraction & Chip Zdarsky fashion, we get a little bit of fourth wall breaking hilarity. In one amazing scene Chip Zdarsky actually illustrates a conversation between himself and Matt Fraction in which they are discussing how a scene is going to play out and it is literally comedic gold. I've never seen that done within a comic before.

While this volume felt a bit like a filler, to connect a few story lines and introduce new characters, it made up for it in honest to goodness comical genius. This volume introduces a new mysterious character. The only thing that we know about her is that she's asexual and that she has a bit of a chip on her shoulder. I don't think I've ever read anything with asexual representation before, so that should be exciting in upcoming issues/volumes.

Also, am I the only one that felt as though this volume was a lot more rated R than previous issues? I mean...maybe it was just me but, there was a lot more full frontal this time around right?!

This comic series is definitely one to read if you're looking for a few laughs mixed in with some serious drama. Sex Criminals, Volume 1 was the first ever comic bind-up I had ever purchased and read and it definitely paved the way for my current comic and graphic novel obsession. I can't wait to continue with this series!

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Initial post reading thoughts:

This was hilarious. There were so many moments that actually had me giggling out loud. I love the fourth wall breaking hilarity within this volume! The only minor issue I had was the introduction of new characters without any real explanation as to who they were leaving us with a cliffhanger. I felt like this volume was more of a filler, but it made up for it in comedic hilarity.

Raeleen Lemay says

This was definitely the most meta of all the volumes so far! Not a whole lot happened, but it was still enjoyable enough.

Artemy says

Sex Criminals has been through a rough patch in the past year and a half. Most importantly, Matt Fraction's father passed away during that time, which obviously affected his work. The guy was smitten.

Also, the comic itself had some problems — all of the issues in this arc came out with alternative, very NSFW covers by superstar guest artists, like Brian Lee O'Malley, Kate Leth, Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez. Each NSFW issue had to be polybagged, and their polybagging machine broke like fifty thousand times, which also resulted in huge delays.

A lot of other stuff happened, but what I am trying to say is, the book has been on a long hiatus after a long hiatus with huge pauses in between, and all of these things inevitably affect the story. There is even a scene in this book where the fourth wall completely breaks, and we see a dialogue between Fraction and Zdarsky, where Matt is being miserable about himself and about the book, and Chip is being a dick that he is, haha (sorry, chum). The whole scene is pretty funny, but it's also kind of worrying and depressing.

No, don't get me wrong, the comic is still brilliant, clever and funny as hell. The plot doesn't move a ton in this volume, focusing more on characters. And those are some great characters, they always feel like real people. And real people go through shitty stuff, sometimes. This is kind of the main theme of the arc.

Anyway, I still love this series to bits. It's one of the books that got me properly into comics a couple of years ago, and I am eternally grateful. It still has some of my favourite characters ever. And there is still nothing like it. I thought I would criticise this volume a bit in this review, but damn, I love Sex Criminals too much. Yes, this volume is nowhere near as good as the first two. But I will stick with it to the end. And I really hope Fraction's life gets better. The dude deserves it.

Michelle Morrell says

Now that they know they're not unique in the world, they're off to find others of their kind. Man, you really don't want to know some of the manifestations of others's secret sex world. Nope, no you don't. Still funny and irreverent and clever. I will have to own these eventually.

Ashley Brooks says

Definitely not my favorite of the series. There seemed to be a lot of filler in this one and the story didn't really progress all that much. However, this is easily still one of the most entertaining and bizarre comics I've read.

Ivan says

2.5 stars.

Sex criminals started as cool ultra liberal graphic novel with strange premise but it's slowly losing its charm. This volume had some seriously weird moments and not in a good way and story makes practically no progression. It's still ok-ish but overall volume 3 felt like filler between two more interesting volumes.

Trina (Between Chapters) says

3.5 stars

What I loved:

-Meta narration.

- Amazing characters.
- Diversity. An asexual character was introduced in this volume and her introduction was perfect. I love how even though this story is about a 'sex power,' there is still a role for an ace character that isn't tied to sex.
- Expanding world.
- Continued sex positivity, body positivity, feminism, discussions on mental health.
- Particularly great discussion on the recent history of female sexuality.

What I didn't like:

-What's so frustrating to me about this series is that it has some GREAT moments. Truly great messages. But then you turn the page to find the most childish adult humor. I feel like it undermines itself, and at 3 volumes in I'm getting kind of bored of that. I think this is too serious for people who just want an adult sex comedy, but too graphic for people who want the more serious side. It's a hard mix. I think I'm too much of a prude for it to be honest. I find myself living for the social commentary of this series, but cringing at how many penis drawings I have to wade through to get it.

Julie Ehlers says

That was weird. I wonder where all this is going?

Ashley says

Vol. 3, or the one where *Sex Criminals* goes even more meta than usual.

This series is probably the weirdest ongoing thing I read by quite a large margin, but it's so kindhearted and earnest and willing to take chances, I just very much want everyone to give it a go. I'm trying right now to get my book club to read the first volume, so we'll see about that (I think some of them might read it with their hands over their mouths in a state of perma-shock, and the thought makes me giggle).

(I'm sorry, now I'm just picturing my one very proper friend getting to the panel with the Dildo Throne.)

This trade is basically the living embodiment of identity crisis.* I mean, it's just an extended meditation on how finding out who you are isn't enough, if enough people are constantly trying to tell you that who you are is wrong or monstrous, or abnormal. The first two volumes of this series were a celebration of sex as something that shouldn't be hidden behind closed doors, as something natural and magical. This one goes further, and if doesn't quite get to celebratory, it's only because it's not possible to do so and remain true to its subject. This comic's thing (and it's a thing I agree with) is that there is no "normal." Normality is a myth, and a prevalent one, and when someone deviates at all from the perceived norm, a lot of harm can come from trying to squash the monstrous deviation and fit in.

**After writing this review, I read that Matt Fraction's father died while he was writing this, and that's partially the reason this one turned out the way it did. YMMV.*

And that's just the plot. Fraction and Zdarsky go all meta, as noted before, questioning their own premise. What to do about a series called "Sex Criminals" when your two main characters no longer wish to commit crimes?

This one has gotten mixed reviews, but I really enjoyed it. I liked the way they used their art to work through

some stuff, instead of attempting to do the norm and possibly fail miserably, they did something new that felt right, and I think it worked.

And now once again, I wait.
