

EDGE

interview

Ever Carradine



Photo by Manfred Baumann

If you are someone who believes the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, then **Ever Carradine** is your kind of actor.

The third generation of accomplished performers in the Carradine line (you know her grandfather, John, her uncles Keith and David, and her father, Robert), Ever is the latest success story in the family business. She is currently a cast member in two hit series on HULU—*Marvel's Runaways* and *The Handmaid's Tale*—and has turned in memorable performances in numerous films and TV shows. Along the way, Ever has won critical acclaim, as well as the admiration of her peers for the authenticity and creativity she brings to her characters. She's a true professional, in every sense of the word. **Mark Stewart** caught up with Ever prior to the Season Three premiere of *The Handmaid's Tale*.

EDGE: The theme of this issue is "fish out of water." It strikes me that, given your family's history in the business, you might never have felt that way as an actor.



EC: I haven't. Where I find myself *most* comfortable, having grown up on film sets, is being *in* that environment. The transition to making that place my working environment—and not just my family's—was very easy. That's kind of half the battle: showing up at the set knowing what everybody's job is, understanding

the workings of a crew...it's very helpful in doing good work, because then you're not distracted by trying to catch up with what the heck is going on [laughs]. As far as performing in front of an audience, I don't know that any actor will ever tell you that they're totally comfortable with that. I still struggle with public speaking, but I'm very comfortable on a film set. I love it so much. It's one of my favorite places to be.

EDGE: Have you done much stage work?

EC: My last play was in college. I graduated and then hit the ground running in Los Angeles. I started working in film and television. There have been a couple of opportunities where I'd almost done a play, but the timing wasn't right or I couldn't move myself from Los Angeles to New York in a way that financially made

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sense for me. But it was in college I had a little bit of a lightbulb moment. I was doing a play and thought, “Hey, if I could do this and make a living at it, I would be one of those lucky people who loves going to work every day.”

EDGE: And are you?

EC: As far as kicking my feet up and thinking, “Wow, I really am successful and making a living at this”...I’m an actor, and actors are always concerned about what the next job is going to be, what’s going to happen when one thing ends and who will hire me...that never really goes away. The past couple of years, I find myself on two shows that not only do I love, but I’m proud of the work we’re doing and proud of the stories we’re telling. And they happen to be on opposite schedules, so I shoot *Marvel’s Runaways* (right) half the year and *The*



Marvel Television/HULU

Handmaid’s Tale the other half of the year. So I just feel gratitude and am pinching myself because I can’t believe I get to be on these two shows at the same time.

EDGE: I couldn’t help noticing that, in school, you majored in Anthropology. My daughter did, too, and



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found it to be very helpful in her professional life, which has absolutely nothing to do with anthropology.

EC: Initially, my major was Sociology/Anthropology. And, as your daughter knows, you're digging deeper into other people's culture. That is a great starting-off point for fleshing out any character as an actor, to take yourself out of your own shoes and delve into somebody's else's reality.

EDGE: Getting into the business with the Carradine family name, was it easier for you or did that set the bar higher?

EC: When I started my career I just wanted to work. I wanted my own experiences on film sets. Coming out of college we all take ourselves pretty seriously, so when I started I saw myself doing dramatic work. But right away I started booking comedies, and it was really confusing me. But I sort of just took the ride. I did a lot of comedies for a lot of years, and then I booked a big drama and that turned things back for me toward the dramatic. Now I feel very comfortable in both worlds.

EDGE: What advice did your family offer?

EC: The advice my family—and all of their friends—have always given me is *Save your money*. When I was

young I was, like, *Yeah, whatever*. Then as I got older I realized that the reason you save your money is that, in leaner times, you are still able to be in control of your choices. You don't have to take a job you don't necessarily want because you need the paycheck. Everyone in my parents' generation has told me that. *Save your money. Save your money. Save your money.* Also, my uncle, David Carradine, used to tell me that the only ones who didn't make it were the ones who quit. So after some dark auditions, some sad auditions, I would always remind myself of that.

EDGE: How did you land the role of Naomi on *The Handmaid's Tale*?


EC: I had done a pilot with Bruce Miller, the series creator, and Jenji Kohan and Gus Van Sant, in 2015. It was one of these special pilots that I was certain would be a go, and that we would be on the air forever and ever. And then the pilot didn't get picked up. But I had an incredible working relationship with Bruce and his wife, Tracy. About a year later, I got the script for *The Handmaid's Tale*. I read it and I was floored...and was *desperate* to be in it. Initially, I read for the role of Rita, the Martha to the Waterfords—and thought I did a great job. Then I didn't get it. I was heartbroken. I sort of put it out of my head. Months later, I got a call: There's another role in *The Handmaid's Tale* and would I go in and read? It was Naomi. I went in and read. After a long wait—for actors, a long wait is more than ten days—I was told I got it and I was on a plane to Toronto the next day. One of the things I love about that show is that everyone reads for every role, the old-fashioned way. Generally, they don't offer things—they like to hear the people and look at them say the lines.

EDGE: Is Naomi a bad person?

EC: I don't think so. Something that is coming up for me more and more, in Season Two and definitely in Season Three, is that these people are all in a misery of their own making. Nobody is really happy in Gilead, but they all created this and now they're stuck there and have to work with what they have. I am so desperate for the Naomi flashback episode, which sadly does not happen in Season Three but fingers-crossed will happen in Season Four. I would love to get a little glimpse of who she was, pre-Gilead. She is a bit of a busybody and has to get into everything. The core of Naomi is her bravado mixed with her raging insecurity. And rage.

EDGE: You've played a number of tricky characters over the years. I'm thinking of the one you played on *Shameless* over the course of four episodes or so. I thought you were really good in that.

EC: You know the pilot I had done with Jenji Kohan and Bruce Miller? I found out that it hadn't been picked up right before the *Shameless* audition came up and, also, I had had a child four weeks earlier. I was such a fan of *Shameless* and the cast and the directors—and it shoots in Los Angeles, which when you have a newborn makes it all the more appealing—that I really wanted to go in and audition. Well, the character I read for was an overwhelmed, exhausted mother who didn't feel well, which is sort of how I felt [laughs]. The whole thing was a blur, honesty. I was white-knuckling my way through it because I was exhausted and terrified. I think that translated on screen and made it all the more interesting. You just make sure you show up on set and know your lines backwards and forwards and just hang



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on, because they are all so good in that cast.

EDGE: The first time people saw you regularly was about 15 years ago on the FX series *Lucky*, which was nominated for an Emmy. I know the series only lasted a year, but that must have been a fun cast to work with.

EC: Oh, I loved that show. It was so fun to be the girl with all those guys. We had a really, really good time. I think you could tell. Craig Robinson and Billy Gardell together were genius. We would go to Vegas sometimes to shoot exteriors and I would just make sure I got to bed at a reasonable hour. The guys went out all night.

EDGE: After that you played the lead in the cult horror movie *Dead & Breakfast*. That looked like fun in a different way.

EC: The thing about *Dead & Breakfast* was that the writer and director, Matt Leutwyler—and Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Erik Paladino and the rest of the cast—we were all on a softball team together. Matt was like, *Do*

you guys want to make a horror movie? So he and Billy Burke wrote this hilarious script and we all went up to Livermore, California for three weeks. I think we shot the entire thing at night and it was just the best time.

EDGE: And you got to kill someone with a chainsaw...

EC: I did. I remember swinging the chainsaw around and thinking, *I really hope I don't decapitate the cameraman* [laughs].

EDGE: What roles do you look back on as being among your best?

EC: I feel that way about *Lucky*, for sure. I really thought it would stay on longer, but it was a little ahead of its time, with the gambling/Vegas theme. I did the first season of *Goliath* with Billy Bob Thornton. That was a great job. I'd admired him for years so it was a real pinch-me moment to work beside him. They always say don't meet your heroes, but I admire him now even more.

EDGE: On *Marvel's Runaways* you play an evil parent. Explain that for the uninitiated.

EC: You know how they say that every teenager thinks their parents are evil? The premise of *Runaways* is: What if you found out they actually *are*? I just found that to be so smart and so fun.

EDGE: Have your children watched it? Your oldest is almost nine now.

EC: They don't get to watch it. I don't think I've done *anything* they can watch yet. It's so sad [laughs]. When my daughter is 10 or 11 she can watch *Runaways*. She's getting close.

EDGE: What do you like about *Runaways*?

EC: I love Josh Schwartz and Stephanie Savage, the show-runners. They are such wonderful leaders. And I love the cast. There are 16 series regulars on that show. Usually when you have that many people you get one or two bad apples. But I have to say, it's a wonderful working relationship we all have, and we've formed friendships that are just getting deeper with every year. I think that translates on screen. You can see that.

EDGE: What's different now that you're part of the Marvel Universe?

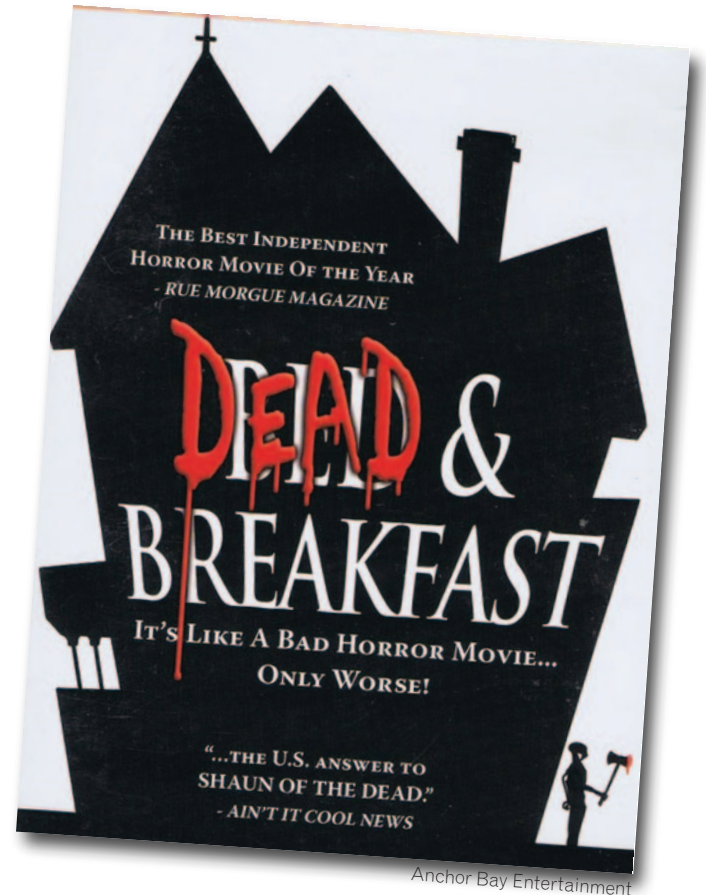
EC: You know, I didn't get it until I got the job. Then I was like, *Oh my God...I'm in the Marvel Universe!* You get a Marvel email! And the way they welcome you to it, it feels very big and exciting. I love it. I framed my pick-up letter on that show.

EDGE: Playing two different parts on two concurrent series, do you think of yourself as a character actor?

EC: I guess that I do. I remember when I was a kid my dad telling me that he was a character actor and I was like, "What's that mean?" As I've grown older, I've found that character actors sometimes get the best scenes—the scenes you really remember when the whole thing's over. It's a gift and an art unto itself.

EDGE: When you think of your family, what are some of the favorite roles they have played?

EC: I remember as a kid, my dad making me sit down and watch *Captains Courageous*, and kicking and screaming because I didn't want to. Twenty minutes in, I was completely riveted. I just loved *Captains Courageous*. And c'mon, *Revenge of the Nerds*, are you kidding? [laughs] And my uncle Keith, I was lucky to see him on Broadway as Will Rodgers. He's good in everything, but he was just so good in that show.



EDGE: We have a Q&A with Timothy Olyphant in this issue. Your uncle co-starred with him as Wild Bill Cody on *Deadwood*.

EC: He did. And they killed him off almost right away. I think they had some regrets about that down the line.

EDGE: Your father was in a movie with John Wayne.

EC: He was. He was in a movie called *The Cowboys*. I feel my daughter is just about the right age to see that. She loves horses and I think she'd love it. That's maybe on our movie-viewing list. I loved that movie as a kid, too.

EDGE: And was there anyone better than your grandfather, John Carradine, in *The Grapes of Wrath*?

EC: I know, right? I haven't seen that in forever. We definitely need to up our Friday family movie night game! **EDGE**