



# TALES FROM THE BLACK HIWAY

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY RICK FORGUS



*A 50s hitchhiker is caught between the angel of death and a circus of demons who force him to fight a centuries old armored warrior in hand to hand combat for his very soul.*

## SOMETHING WICKED

**T**ALES FROM THE BLACK HIWAY is a completed, 48 page graphic novel. The life of Ray Lantry, youthful traveler detoured to the highway of the supernatural. A chance meeting in an October cemetery brings Ray face to face with a beautiful woman dancing naked in the glow of headlights to the 50s musical stylings of Bill Haley and the Comets. It doesn't take long for the ivory-skinned woman to convince him that she is his personal Angel of Death. A wild, moonlight ride in her red convertible sets Ray on a twisted path that will test the limits of his resolve and sanity.

At the first crossroads of his journey, Ray encounters a timeless traveling circus of mysterious performers who delve in the arcane arts of evil magic and hand to hand combat. A fight to the death with an archaic armored Chinese warrior could cost Ray his soul.

# THE STORY



On a moonlit October night, Ray Lantry, drifter and adventurer, encounters a woman named Cassandra dancing naked in a deserted cemetery during his cross country, beat-inspired trek across the back roads of America. A wild ride in this alluring woman's car quickly convinces Ray that he's flirting with death... an Angel of Death.

Cassandra wants Ray's soul to be more seasoned before she takes it, so she forces him to make a perilous leap from her speeding convertible onto a moving train to set him on the path to a fast life. He is saved from falling to his doom by Li Jho, an ancient Chinese warrior. Li Jho is cursed to live until he is defeated in battle as part of a mysterious circus of dark magic.

Ray travels with Li Jho to the circus where he can see the arcane performers for what they are... devils, demons, and monsters who feed on human souls. Ray is confronted by Mr. Pitch, the demonic circus impresario, who informs Ray he will be on the menu as there is no escaping the circus.

Cassandra reenters Ray's life, anxious to harvest his soul. Ray proposes a trade instead: if he can deliver the soul of the ancient warrior, she lets Ray live. Cassandra eagerly agrees to his terms. Either way, she wins.

Ray makes a different offer to Mr. Pitch: he'll fight Li Jho in a three round boxing match to the death, and if he wins, he gets to walk away with his soul intact. The fight is brutal, taking its toll on both fighters. At the end of the third round, both fighters are still standing. A battered Ray drops to his knees and appears to have lost...until Ray exposes the loophole he was counting on.

To win, all Ray had to do was survive the three round match. He claims victory and frees the ancient warrior from his curse. Cassandra claims a grateful Li Jho's soul as he disappears in a swirling flurry of dust.

Ray returns to the road with the knowledge that both angels and demons are out there... and neither are to be denied.

by Rick Forgus | 48 page graphic novel

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OCTOBER 1955

# SAVED BY DEATH

THE TEXAS NIGHT FALLS IN ASHEN OCTOBER GREY STREAKED WITH JACK O' LANTERN SMILE LIGHT ACROSS STONES AND EARTH HOLDING THE LONG DEAD, FORGOTTEN BY NAME AND DRIED TEARS.

LOS ANGELES STILL FAR AWAY. LONG DAYS OF HITCHING AND JUMPING FREIGHTS AHEAD.

TALES FROM THE  
**BLACK HIGHWAY**

STRETCHES OF ROADS PAVED WITH SHOELACE WHITE LINES CONNECT THE SMALL TOWNS THAT OFFER PLACES AND THINGS TO RUN FROM OR RUN TO. A WRITER'S JOURNEY . . . MY JOURNEY.

SORRY FOR THE INTRUSION, FOLKS. JUST NEED A QUIET PLACE TO SACK OUT FOR THE NIGHT.

WILLIAM LANTRY

ABOVE ME BLACK CROW WINGS DROP FROM THE NEARLY NIGHT SKY IN A MURDEROUS CLIPPED RIBBON FRENZY TO FEAST ON GRAVE FRESH FLOWERS. LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE OFFERED BY THE DEAD.

A RUSH OF SOULS FILL THE TREES IN A MAD DASH OF LIVES PAST, FINGERS IN MY HAIR AND WHISPERS OF, "REMEMBER ME."



POP ALWAYS SAID THE DEAD MAKE FOR GOOD HOSTS WHEN YOU'VE NO MONEY.



AND THEY'RE QUIET NEIGHBORS.

SONNA ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK...

USUALLY.



WHAT THE...?

WE'RE GONNA' ROCK, ROCK, ROCK 'TIL BROAD DAYLIGHT...

DON'T YOU JUST DIG BILL HALEY?

WELL?

WHAT? UH, YEAH...  
HALEY'S GREAT.  
YOU'RE DANCING NAKED  
IN A CEMETERY.

I HAD BUSINESS  
HERE AND THAT WAS  
DONE... SO I  
DECIDED TO ENJOY  
MYSELF.

THOUGH, I DIDN'T  
EXPECT ANYONE  
ELSE TO BE HERE  
AT THIS TIME  
OF NIGHT.

I DIDN'T EXPECT  
TO FIND ANYONE  
HERE EITHER.  
CERTAINLY NOT NAKED.

IT'S OCTOBER  
FIRST. THAT'S  
HOW YOU  
SAW ME.

WHAT?

I'M REVEALED TO THE  
EYES OF MEN ON  
THIS DAY.

I'M THE ANGEL  
OF DEATH.

WANT A RIDE?



DEATH? WELL, HOW COULD I REFUSE?



YOU REALIZE, FLIRTING WITH DEATH CAN HAVE IT'S ... CONSEQUENCES.

LET'S GO.



SO, I SHOULD CALL YOU ...

CASSANDRA ... FOR NOW.

THE BLACK HIWAY HUMS IN SUBTLE INSECT DRONES UNDERNEATH THE BIG CONVERTIBLE'S TIRES AS HER SOFT, WHITE VOICE LILTS IN HER STORIES AS THE BRINGER OF DEATH. SHE CLINGS TO HER BELIEF IN EARNEST HALF CLOSED EYES TOLD TALES AND MY HEART PUSHES AGAINTS MY CHEST AND I BEGIN TO BELIEVE.



THE NIGHT FLYS AS SHE PATS MY HAND, LAUGHING AT HER OWN JOKES HER BREATH FALLING ON ME IN DYING FIRE EMBERS. HER TOUCH IS ICE.

IT'S ALMOST DAWN RAY. TIME FOR YOU TO CATCH A TRAIN.

A TRAIN?



WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN CATCH A TRAIN?

THAT OPEN BOXCAR. I'LL GET CLOSE AND YOU JUMP.

SCREEEECH

YOU'RE SERIOUS.

SERIOUS AS THE GRAVE. CLIMB UP ON THE DOOR.

NUTS. THIS JOKE HAS GONE TOO FAR. LOOK . . . .

JUMP!



MADE IT!

CANT'...HOLD...

NO NO NO NO !!



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