

The Road Back to Hell

Rick Wood

This short story takes place after Book 2 'Descendant of Hell', and around two months before Book 3 'An Exorcist Possessed.'

3 April 2002

2 year 4 months since millennium night

My mind stumbles over thoughts I can't comprehend.

Why am I awake?

Where am I?

My surroundings mould into focus. My consciousness shifts the pieces of my mind into a jigsaw that's never complete, but close enough to show a coherent image.

My panting subsides and my breathing relaxes. I'm safe.

It's okay. I am not in hell any more.

I am home. Our new home.

In bed.

With Kelly.

Asleep in bed with the love of my life. Well, I was moments ago.

The prophecy – it didn't come true. At least, it hasn't yet. I won the battle. I escaped. I conjured a ball of fire, I acquired Derek's soul, and I removed him from hell. It's over, and I don't have to worry about anyone, or anything, anymore.

Not even The Devil.

I am Edward King. World renowned exorcist. I have faced Balam, and The Devil, and won.

I never need to be afraid again.

And I am in love. For the first time in my life, I

feel complete devotion toward someone, and I have let that devotion grow and grow into what we have now. And what we have is incredible. Security I never found from anyone. Except, Jenny, maybe. But this is different.

There was a question about whether we were moving in together too soon. But, to me, it was never a question. Not really. I'm certain what I want.

What I want is her.

I stroke Kelly's hair back and her eyes flutter. She moans, growling another inaudible whimper full of agitation. Another angry moan answering her subconscious. Her memories of what happened to her plague her thoughts, whether she is awake or asleep.

It seems there is no escape for her.

Her subconscious must be the worst place in the world to be.

I don't even know how someone recovers from what she went through. She hasn't had a restful, peaceful night's sleep since I met her. Every few nights, she bolts upright in a sudden, agonising jolt. An unwilling plank, screaming bloody murder and bursting into tears.

All those memories, all those thoughts and feelings she had when she was possessed; they haunt her.

They *haunt* her. Hah! Haunt is not a strong enough word for the devastating impact the possession of her body has had on her mind.

The memories come around in flashes. Pestilent, like a disease. Ravaging her thoughts, destroying her senses, slashing across her integrity until she questions everything.

The Devil made her kill people. He made her slaughter animals, and... Do things to them.

She won't admit what she did to those animals.

She won't say it aloud.

But I know what I did.

It makes me feel sick, but that's not what she needs from me. She doesn't need me being repulsed. She needs me being supportive. Loyal. Caring.

I won't ever ask her to tell me. And she won't ever want to tell.

I'm sweating.

I didn't realise it until now, but I'm drenched. It's trickling down my forehead, into my eyes and even blocking my vision.

I place my hand on Kelly's forehead; she's mildly warm. The room is mild. I don't know why I'm perspiring.

I stand. Walk to the door. Halt.

Someone is calling me.

The voice feels detached, somewhere far off yet right beside me. I can feel this voice against my ear, but its echo is trapped inside a distant box.

It's telling me to go outside.

I obey.

My feet descend the stairs, striding mechanically; each foot a precise, robotic step.

I'm in here somewhere, I'm just not driving. I'm trapped in the boot, asleep and unaware.

My hand reaches out and opens the front door. My bare feet are sore on the crinkled cement beneath me. Yet, they persist.

I don't care about the pain.

At least, whatever is driving doesn't care.

Pain will not stop it.

A crow lands beside my feet.

It doesn't move. It doesn't speak. It just perches on the floor, looking up. Peering into me. Piercing my eyes.

I pick it up, raising it by the neck. I squeeze my thumb and my forefinger together, suppressing its oesophagus. My hand crushes its life right out of it.

The crow does nothing.

It doesn't flinch.

Eventually, its head drops. Its body turns limp

I loosen my grasp.

Its rigidity is gone. Its life has gone. It flops, dropping like a weight in my hand.

When it hits the floor, it makes no sound; but the thud reverberates around my mind.

I awake.

I don't know how I got here.

I don't know where I've been. What is happening. None of it is in my memory.

A dead bird lays at my feet.

I wonder how it died.

A moment ago, I was asleep next to Kelly. What is going on? Am I sleeping walking again?

I don't remember anything.

Then I have this sudden, intense, foreboding feeling in the pit of my stomach. It drowns me like a waterfall. I feel it, though I don't know why. Feel it stronger than I have ever felt anything else.

He let me escape.

The Devil let me escape from hell. He must have done. It is the only way.

But it will be a long time until I admit this to myself.

And it will be even longer until I understand why.

An Exorcist Possessed will be available for pre-order on Amazon from Friday 10th March.

RICK WOOD

AN EXORCIST POSSESSED

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EDWARD KING BOOK 3

