

WRATH



JOE HILL
CHARLES PAUL WILSON III



LETTERS BY

Robbie Robbins

SERIES EDITS BY

Chris Ryall

COVER ART BY

Gabriel Rodriguez

COVER COLORS BY

Nelson Daniel

COLLECTION EDITS BY

Justin Eisinger & Alonzo Simon

COLLECTION DESIGN BY

Robbie Robbins

PUBLISHER

Greg Goldstein

WRATH

CREATED & WRITTEN BY

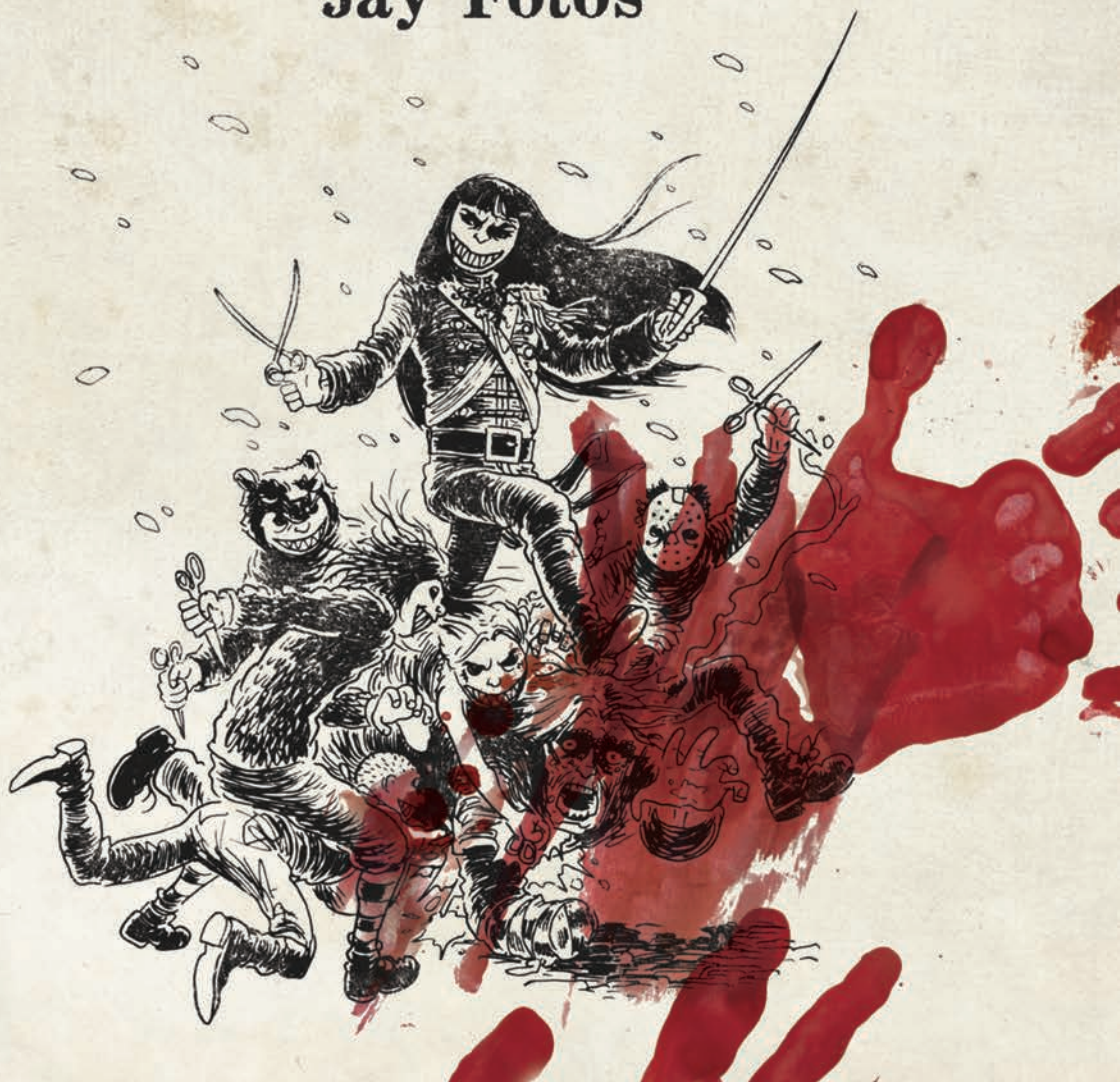
Joe Hill

ART BY

Charles Paul Wilson III

COLORS BY

Jay Fotos



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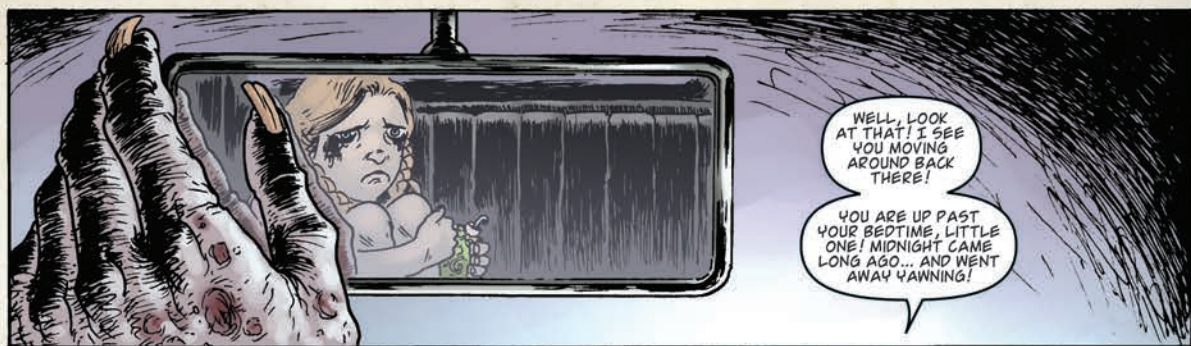
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WELL, LOOK AT THAT! I SEE YOU MOVING AROUND BACK THERE!

YOU ARE UP PAST YOUR BEDTIME, LITTLE ONE! MIDNIGHT CAME LONG AGO... AND WENT AWAY YAWNING!



MHM? WHAT? OH! OH, MY GOODNESS! OF COURSE I WILL LET YOU GO! I AM NOT THE SORT OF FIEND WHO WOULD HOLD A CHILD AGAINST HER WILL... ANY LONGER THAN NECESSARY.

WHEN WE GET WHERE WE ARE GOING, YOU WILL FLY FROM THIS CAR, MORE FREE THAN YOU HAVE EVER BEEN BEFORE. THAT IS THE CHARLIE MANX GUARANTEE!



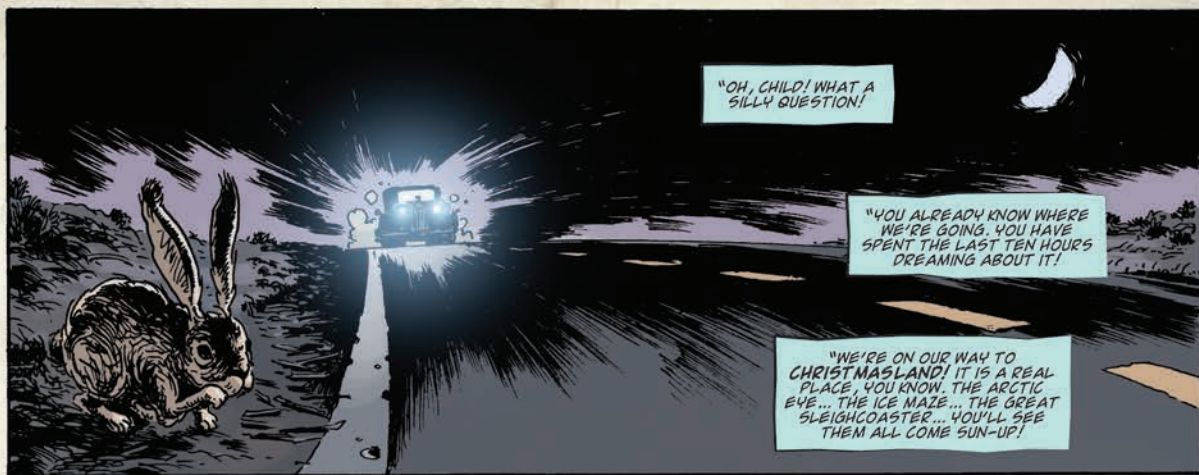
I WISH YOU WOULDN'T CRY! IT MAKES ME SICK TO MY HEART. I HAVE LITTLE GIRLS OF MY OWN, YOU KNOW! YOU WILL MEET THEM SOON ENOUGH!

I HAVE NEVER HURT THEM... AND I WILL NEVER HURT YOU, EITHER. THAT IS ANOTHER CHARLIE MANX PROMISE!



I WILL TELL YOU ANOTHER THING! IF THERE IS NOT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE WHEN WE ARRIVE AT OUR DESTINATION—IF YOU ARE NOT AS HAPPY AS YOU HAVE EVER BEEN—WHY, I WILL TURN THIS CAR AROUND AND DRIVE YOU STRAIGHT BACK HOME!

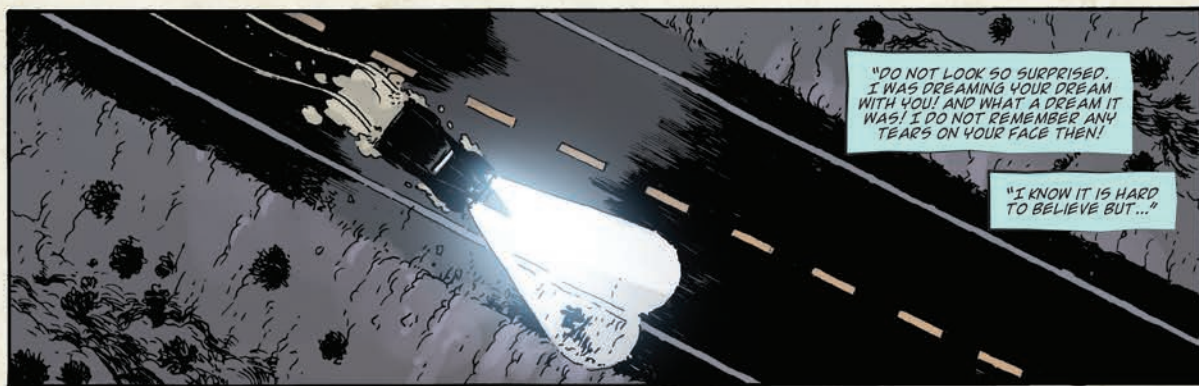
BUT I BET YOU WILL BE GRINNING SO BIG BY THEN, I WILL BE ABLE TO COUNT EVERY TOOTH IN YOUR HEAD!



"OH, CHILD! WHAT A SILLY QUESTION!"

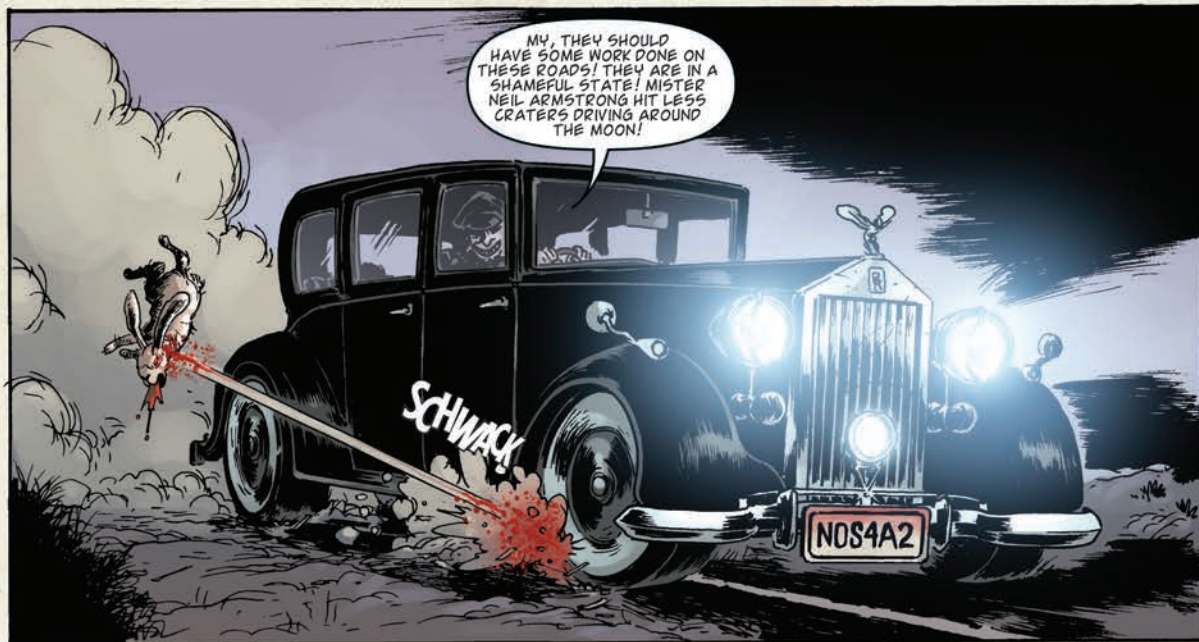
"YOU ALREADY KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING. YOU HAVE SPENT THE LAST TEN HOURS DREAMING ABOUT IT!"

"WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO CHRISTMASLAND! IT IS A REAL PLACE, YOU KNOW. THE ARCTIC EYE... THE ICE MAZE... THE GREAT SLEIGHCOASTER... YOU'LL SEE THEM ALL COME SUN-UP!"



"DO NOT LOOK SO SURPRISED. I WAS DREAMING YOUR DREAM WITH YOU! AND WHAT A DREAM IT WAS! I DO NOT REMEMBER ANY TEARS ON YOUR FACE THEN!"

"I KNOW IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE BUT..."

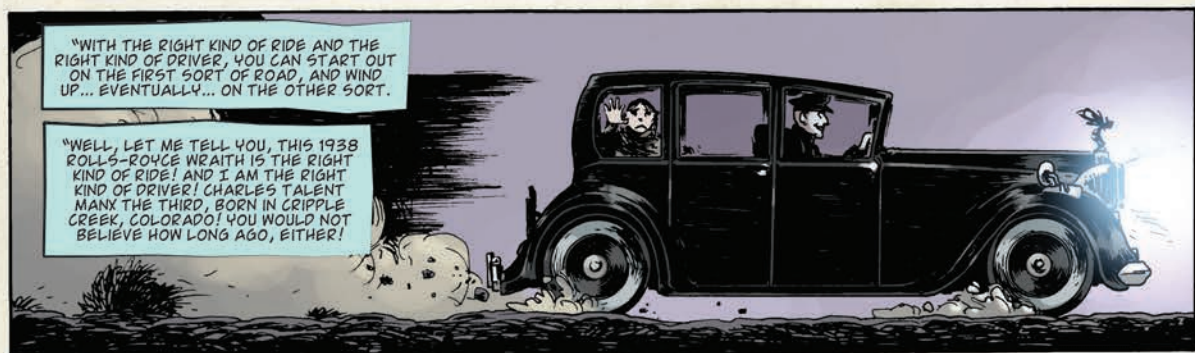
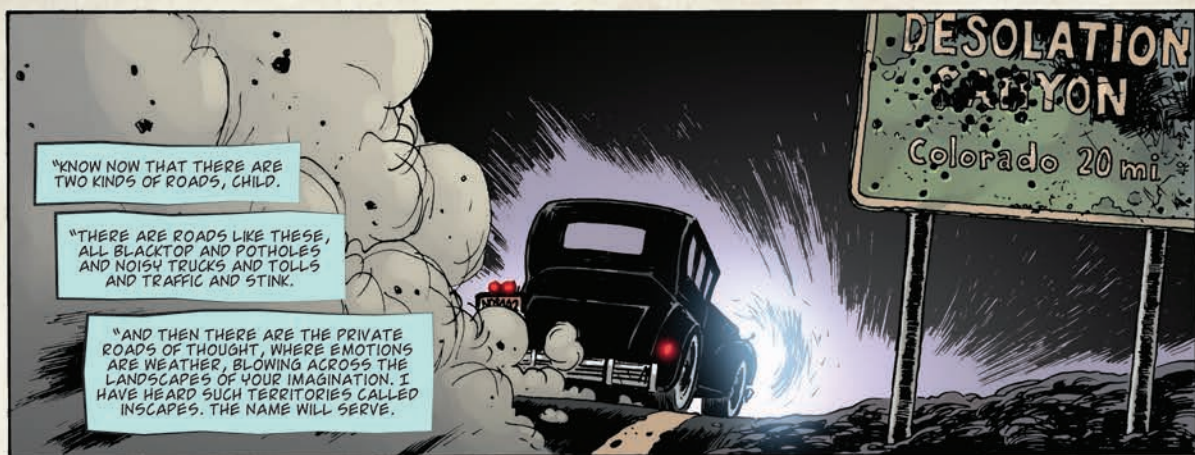


MY, THEY SHOULD HAVE SOME WORK DONE ON THESE ROADS! THEY ARE IN A SHAMEFUL STATE! MISTER NEIL ARMSTRONG HIT LESS CRATERS DRIVING AROUND THE MOON!



IF YOU PROMISE TO STOP CRYING, I WILL TRY TO EXPLAIN... ALL OF IT. ABOUT THIS CAR AND YOUR DREAMS AND CHRISTMASLAND AND WHO I AM. BUT YOU HAVE TO PROMISE NOT TO CRY! DO WE HAVE A DEAL?

GOOD GIRL.



"MY FATHER WAS A LOW RASCAL WHO LEFT ME NOTHING BUT MY NAME AND WAS SHOT OVER A WOMAN WHO I REGRET TO SAY WAS NOT MY MOTHER."

"HE DIED IN THE ARMS OF A FAT LADY NAMED SALLY GRAPEFRUITS AND SHE WAS CALLING HIM A FOOL AS HIS LIFE TRICKLED AWAY BETWEEN HIS FINGERS!"

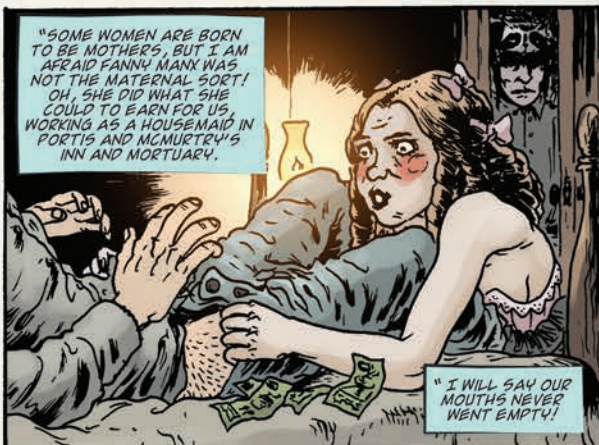
"SUCH IS THE FATE OF THE FAITHLESS MAN! TO DIE IN THE GRIP OF AN ABUSIVE FAT WOMAN AND WAKE IN THE EMBRACE OF SATAN!"



SCRIBBLED BY
JOE HILL
DRAWN BY
**CHARLES
"TALENT"
WILSON**
THE III

SPELT JUST RIGHT BY
**SHAWN
LEE &
ROBBIE
ROBBINS**
PAINTED PRETTY BY
**JAY
FOTOS**
THREATS AND
DEMANDS ISSUED BY
**CHRIS
RYALL**
WRAITH NUMERO UNO
**PROLOG:
FANTOMS**

"SOME WOMEN ARE BORN TO BE MOTHERS, BUT I AM AFRAID FANNY WANK WAS NOT THE MATERNAL SORT! OH, SHE DID WHAT SHE COULD TO EARN FOR US, WORKING AS A HOUSEMAID IN PORTIS AND MCMURTRY'S INN AND MORTUARY."



"I WILL SAY OUR MOUTHS NEVER WENT EMPTY!"

"IT WAS NO EASY LIFE IN A ONE-WHORE TOWN—AHEM, ONE-HORSE, I MEAN TO SAY—LIKE CRIPPLE CREEK, AND MY MOTHER WAS BITTER ABOUT OUR LOT. WHEN FANNY WAS IN HER CUPS, SHE WOULD BLAME ME FOR ALL MISFORTUNES AND COULD BE QUITE CRUEL."

"SHE WOULD CALL ME THE BAT-FACED BOY AND TELL ME BABIES ARE VAMPIRES, AND WHEN THEY SUCK AT THE BREAST, THEY ARE REALLY DRAINING A WOMAN'S YOUTH. SHE SAID IT SERVED ME RIGHT I SLEPT IN A COFFIN—IT WAS WHERE I BELONGED!"

"MR. PORTIS AND MR. MCMURTRY HAD AN INGENIOUS BUSINESS MODEL, YOU SEE. IN THE FRONT ROOM, THE MINERS AND ROUSTABOUTS COULD DRINK THEMSELVES TO DEATH."

"IN THE BACK ROOM, THEIR NEXT OF KIN COULD SELECT A COFFIN AND ONE OF SEVERAL AFFORDABLE FUNERAL SERVICES!"

"SO IT'S TRUE, I HAD A COFFIN OF MY OWN AND SLEPT IN IT EVERY NIGHT. IT SOUNDS MACABRE, BUT BELIEVE ME, I HAD THE QUIETEST ROOM IN THE WHOLE INN AND THE ONLY BED THAT WAS NOT FULL OF LICE!"



"I MADE A LITTLE COIN BY DRIVING MR. MCMURTRY'S HORSE-DRAWN HEARSE IN THE PROCESSIONS TO THE CEMETERY. IT WAS MY FIRST JOB. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A DRIVER."



"MY MOTHER KEPT THE MONEY I EARNED FOR HERSELF, BUT ON CHRISTMAS, AT LEAST, SHE WOULD LET ME SPEND A LITTLE ON SOMETHING I WANTED."