

Highway to Hell

Highway to Hell

By Alex Laybourne

Published by Alex Laybourne

Highway to Hell by Alex Laybourne is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. Based on a work at www.alexlaybourne.com
All Rights Reserved

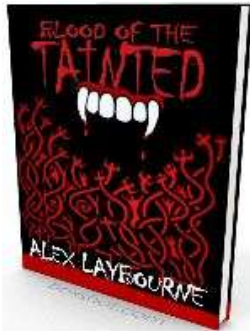
License Notes

This eBook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This eBook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return to Smashwords.com and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living, dead, or otherwise, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Keep up to Date

If you want to keep up to date with what I have going on, and grab yourself a free book in the process, then click the link below and sign up for my mailing list and newsletter. Be among the first to know about all my good news and goings on.



YOUR FREE BOOK IS WAITING!

Six gruesome murders in two days,
a farm house burned to the floor,
and panic on the streets.

For Sheriff Ian Raskin, this is just the
start of a nightmare ride that will
take him to the edge of his own
abilities where a monster lies in wait.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first wrote Highway to Hell close to seven years ago. Since then it has gone through several editions, through publishers and self-published endeavours. Much like the characters that you will meet in the coming pages, this book will not quit. It will not lie down and roll over. So here it is again, ready for the world. This was the first book I ever wrote, it holds a special place in my heart, and I hope you all enjoy reading it.

DEDICATION

This is for my wife Patty, and our wonderful children; James, Logan, Ashleigh, Damon, and Riley

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	8
Chapter 2	28
Chapter 3	46
Chapter 4	54
Chapter 5	64
Chapter 6	82
Chapter 7	100
Chapter 8	114
Chapter 9	128
Chapter 10	142
Chapter 11	164
Chapter 12	174
Chapter 13	190
Chapter 14	199
Chapter 15	203
Chapter 16	207
Chapter 17	211
Chapter 18	224
Chapter 19	241

Highway to Hell

Chapter 20	246
Chapter 21	252
Chapter 22	266
Chapter 23	279



PART I

DEATH

To sad humanity alone, (Creation's triumph ultimate). The grimness of the grave is known. The dusty destiny await...Oh bird and beast, with joy, elance effulgently your ingorance! Oh man, previsioning the hearse, with fortitude accept your curse!

Dark Truth by Robert Service

Chapter 1

Marcus (Plus One)

Marcus Fielding looked at his watch; he was halfway through his shift, the last one of his current rotation, not to mention the last shift before his three-week vacation. It was a sort of second honeymoon. He and his wife had been together twenty years the previous April, yet had never been away just the two of them. They had always had at least one kid tagging along; first it was the twins, Erica and Bryony, then Roger, and finally little Marcus Jr. Not that Marcus cared. His kids were his life, and he would do anything for them.

He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand before replacing his cap. It was the middle of July and the temperature had been stuck in the low thirties for over two weeks already. While the heat was welcome, the new bulletproof vests the force had just issued made the officers who wore them lose fluid quicker than they could consume it. All in the name of safety, the duty sergeant had said. “Easy for him to say”, Marcus had grumbled along with all the others in his section at the end of their first shift wearing the new vests. He remembered that there had been a queue of people by the toilets waiting to wring their shirts out before putting them in their bags.

“I’ll make one more round and then head back to the car. I’ll meet you there,” he spoke into his radio using another recent addition – the covert earpiece and microphone.

“Okay, I’m done up here anyway. There’s nobody...it’s too hot. Everybody’s down at the beach,” a young voice answered him; optimistic as ever, his love for the job still passionate and unbridled.

Simon Dillings had been on the force for three months and was the lucky protégé of Marcus. The only problem Marcus and every other officer he knew had with tutoring a rookie was the foot patrol. Although it did

bump him up over quota, not to mention it was a tried and tested method of breaking in the new guys, showing them it's not always gunfights and car chases like you see in the movies.

"Lucky them. Well we'll head in for some grub and then you can impress me with your paperwork skills again. How's that sound?" Marcus asked, grinning as he pictured Simon's face drop, his glasses slip down his nose, and his mouth screw up, pursing his lips together in a way that made him look constipated. Marcus liked the kid. He was a good, honest guy, and he would go a long way.

"Boy, sounds like a party. You sure do know how to spoil a man," the voice answered back, a little bit of attitude finally beginning to crack the 'good-boy' rookie shell.

The town center was quiet, with the age demographic definitely favoring the slow moving older citizens whose idea of causing trouble ended with whispering about someone at the local bingo hall or bridge club meeting. Deciding to cut his route short, Marcus turned left at the midway point of the high street and entered the covered shopping arcade. It had just been renovated a couple of weeks before, but the local youths had already managed to tag two walls with vibrant paint and even more colorful language. Truth be told, Marcus was surprised it had taken them that long. The town wasn't known for being the most picturesque place in the country, and with an unemployment rate that never seemed get any lower, benefit claimants flocked to the town in droves; which in turn had led to council estates springing up wherever there had once been a bit of green ground where the kids could play.

Unlike Simon, Marcus had lived in the town his whole life and had watched as it made the transition from a small coastal English town to a place the size of a small city. Now it was on the cusp of linking up with the three surrounding towns, all of which were suffering the same

fate. Marcus knew it would only be a matter of time before someone would raise the idea of combining them all.

Easterton had once been nothing more than a proud and well-respected fishing village which grew as the industry it housed did. Then, overnight, the fishing moved away...taking the majority of the jobs with it. Yet the people had stayed; they were settled, had families, and so the next generation of employment arrived. Factories rolled into town offering short-lived salvation to the locals. But the eternal quest for cheaper labor played its part and they all watched as, once again, their industry was taken away, this time to make room for the immigrants who were not only willing to work, but more than happy to do so for a much lower remuneration.

Marcus knew firsthand what a crappy place the world was, and that was in part why he decided to join the police. He wanted to be able to say the neighborhood that his kids would grow up in was safe. It was a losing battle, he knew that, but he had never been one to just cover up and take the abuse.

Marcus noticed that three shops had decided not to open at all today. Each had signs in their windows advising potential customers that the temporary closure was a result of the near unbearable hot weather. They were small, family run establishments. One dealt in leather bags, and another sold handmade cards for all occasions – or so the sign in the window claimed. The last was a craft shop, its window filled with knitting patterns; wool of every color imaginable lined the back wall as if it were where God had made his Technicolor Dreamcoat.

None of them would see the end of the year. It was a sad fact of small town life that no small business could compete with the bigger corporations, many of which were part of international consortiums and so not dependent on the locals to survive.

Stopping, Marcus bent down and grabbed an empty cola can and threw it in the bin that was about half a meter away. ‘Preservation of Public Image’ had been the session that asked every officer to stop and pick up litter while on duty. Marcus and his colleagues had another name for it, but complied nonetheless. He whistled to himself as he moved further along; not a song, but just a jaunty tune that seemed to grow in his head.

Marcus’s stomach growled. He had skipped breakfast that morning, and now he would be made to be made to regret it. He patted his trousers and the pockets of his vest and then the pockets of his sweat-soaked shirt. Nothing. Then he saw it: his wallet, on the table beside the front door. Sitting, waiting for him to grab it – only he had gone out the back that morning.

“Damn it,” he muttered under his breath.

He looked at his watch, annoyed with himself. In truth it wasn’t the fact that he forgot his wallet, or even his grumbling stomach that made Marcus frustrated. He had just learned over the years that something always went wrong when he was unprepared.

Before joining the force, Marcus had been a boxer; a light heavyweight, and one with a lot of potential if the people back then were to be believed. He had a record of 21-0 with 18 knockouts when his manager Walter Whitney had first promised him a title fight. Walter had been a small, reptilian-looking man with the cold beady eyes of a shark and a temper to match. He had been Marcus’s manager from the beginning, ever since he had first spotted him sparring at the local fitness center. He had been big and fast, and even as a youngster had had the power to stop most of the other fighters in his gym. He had been described as the perfect mix of George Foreman and Joe Frazier with his raw power yet graceful style.

But it had all begun to crumble around his ankles one afternoon, a matter of days after he had knocked out the

number one contender for the WBO title at the start of the fifth.

He remembered it like it was yesterday, a fact helped by his regular repetition of the tale at the many gatherings he attended. It had become his trademark party tale, one that could be rehashed as often as required without getting stale. Of course his children had also loved it, still did – or at least so they told him.

He had only come into the gym to pick up his running shoes, but he had gotten to chatting with some of the other fighters who had been milling around waiting to start training. Big Joe – one of the trainers – had spotted him, and came across, telling him that Walter wanted to see him up in the office. He looked up and saw Walter's shadow looking down on them from behind the dirty glass. He wasn't alone; someone else was up there. Marcus had no idea who it was; his mind wasn't thinking about his next fight, let alone a shot at the champ, Virgil Hill.

Despite the strange feeling that rumbled in his gut, Marcus ran up the stairs, taking them two or three at a time. He buzzed past the dusty photos that lined every wall in the gym. They were nothing more than a random collection of old pictures and newspaper clippings of boxing events and fellow pugilists, going back to the days of bare knuckle fights held on the fishing docks. He had spent years staring at them, reading them all while he waited for his time in the ring or a spare heavy bag .

Marcus stopped himself just outside Walter's office, running his fingers through his then thick and bushy hair. He hadn't shaved for a week, and the coarse stubble threatened to become a beard. Bracing himself, Marcus rapped on the office door three times and then walked in without waiting for an invite.

Inside, Walter's office was as run down as the rest of the gym. The walls hadn't seen a lick of paint in years; not since before Walter had bought the place. The lone light, nothing more than a bare bulb, hung from the

ceiling, its fixture long since vanished. A thick, gray-green cloud hung in the air from the constant stream of cheap cigars that Walter insisted on smoking. Lighting one was the first thing he did each morning, and the glowing ember never left his mouth until he went to sleep at night.

He had died of lung cancer at the age of sixty-three, an age that everybody who knew him was amazed he ever reached at all.

The eyes in the room turned to face Marcus, and the bad feeling (which, until his last days on earth, continued to creep over him every time a bad call came over the radio) rumbled his stomach again, louder this time. There were three men in the room, and none of them were on Hill's payroll. Walter ushered him inside and offered him a seat. The three strangers all wore expensive suits which hugged their giant, steroid-enhanced muscular frames as if made of Spandex.

"Listen, kid, you fight well, but to get the champ, you gotta let him think he can win. D'ya understand?" Walter croaked. His voice was deep and scratchy from a lifetime of tobacco.

Marcus was young then, a real talent in the boxing world, but naïve to the workings of the real one. He had nodded; what he heard made sense. He just hadn't heard what they were asking of him. There and then plans were drawn up for him to fight Aleksander Papp, a young German fighter, who had a good reputation but who was not regarded as a title fighter because of his nationality and the fact his trainer was a Russian defector. Everything moved at lightning speed, and before Marcus knew it, his hand was clutched in the sweaty, powerful grip of all three strangers in turn. The fight had been arranged and dates confirmed. Many years later Marcus would realize that it had all been done before he had even arrived, and his presence was a matter of unimportant coincidence.

Tensions had begun to rise in Marcus's camp eight weeks out from the fight. He felt as though he wasn't being put through his paces enough. This had led to several heated arguments, and he started to work out himself in the garage of his flat. Walter kept telling him that the fight was more of an exhibition, just to get the champ's teeth chomping. Marcus, who was foolish and young, had believed him.

It wasn't until three days before the fight that Marcus began to get a feeling that something wasn't quite right. He cornered Big Joe one day after training. It was at the end of the day, and everybody had already gone home. Joe was about forty kilos overweight and would break into a sweat just climbing into the ring. Yet, despite his name and appearance, he was one of the kindest men Marcus had even known. He bred racing pigeons and enjoyed tending to his own allotment whenever he had the chance.

Joe had crumbled like a baby before Marcus had even started to ask him any real questions. He told him that he was being undertrained in order to make the fight harder for him; to make him have to work hard for the win. Joe had started to sob when he confessed to knowing what was happening, and between repeated apologies he said that they were trapped in something much bigger than they could understand. Some big time mobsters from London had already bribed the referee to make sure that the German won no matter what he had to do.

Marcus stopped in his tracks. His heart pounded as he looked around the shopping arcade. He could have sworn he heard something, but he still got worked up when he remembered that incident. It had robbed him of his future, and he would never forgive Walter, not even if that simple act was all that stood between him and the fires of Hell. It wasn't about being the champ, but that they were taking away from him the thing that he loved. Boxing made the world a simple place: you were given an

opponent, you trained hard, looked after yourself and then you either won or lost. Or so Marcus had always thought.

Once Big Joe had finished apologizing and offering promises of redemption that included all the fresh vegetables he could eat, Marcus stormed straight into the local bar where he found Walter in the lap of some local woman for hire. Marcus ripped the fresh cigar from his manager's mouth and, after pulling him to his feet, struck him with a lightning fast jab/right cross combination that sent Walter flying into the table behind him, snapping it in two and upsetting the two large tattooed men who had been the occupants.

Marcus had walked away and never spoken to Walter again. He had turned up to the fight, determined to do it on his own.

"Fuck the consequences," he had told Big Joe in the dressing room.

Walter hadn't been foolish enough to show his face. His nose had been broken and a further slapping from the bikers he had upset put him under self-imposed house arrest for several weeks.

The fight began and Marcus knew from the first jab that his German opponent was clearly up to speed with what was planned, so Marcus just came out swinging.

Marcus survived the first few rounds with little damage. It was obvious to him that while his opponent was a good fighter, he wasn't a killer. He lacked the look in his eye and the ruthlessness in his gut to move in and pile on the hurt if his man refused to fall from the heavy blows.

Marcus's long-term girlfriend was ringside; he looked over to her for inspiration at the end of every round. It was the beginning of the seventh when the realization of where he had seen the two large, shaven-headed gentlemen (who now flanked his girlfriend) before. They had been present at the pre-fight weigh in, whispering with Papp's trainer and management team.

By the end of the eight round, Marcus saw the two men stand and walk away. His future wife was in tears, her caramel colored face had paled, and she looked like she was about to faint. Her lips had blended in shade and disappeared from her face, while her eyes were expressionless. He looked at her with his left eye beginning to swell shut from a well-placed series of blows, but she wouldn't look at him. She simply sat staring straight ahead; her expression one similar to the abused women Marcus would later take statements from on a regular basis. She cried; he had never seen her cry before, but she had tears welling up that just couldn't be held back any longer.

As he rose for the eighth round, Marcus knew what was happening, but he didn't know what to do. Marcus didn't know what to think as he walked out for what he knew would be the last few rounds of his career. He would go down swinging; win, lose or draw, the kraut would have to beat him. He told himself this and believed it at that moment. He believed it in the aftermath of it all, and deep down he believed it to his dying day.

His wife never told him what they had whispered to her. She simply said that he didn't need to know, he had retired and it was all in the past. They had planned on moving away, to start a new life together away from the corrupt nature of the sport that no matter what length of retirement was put in the middle, Marcus would continue to love and miss. None of them ever spoke about it, but both knew that had he been single, Marcus would have carried on fighting, not because it was manly or because he wanted the fame and fortune it offered, but simply because he loved it.

Marcy, whose real name was Michaela, had been the one who suggested to Marcus that he should try for the police. She was five years older than he was and had already been on the force for three years. Her father had been a cop, and she had always wanted to follow in his footsteps – to make him proud of her. She had succeeded

the moment she was accepted and he had told her exactly that every chance he got.

Marcus applied and was accepted before he had completed the application form. He passed the physical test with flying colors, breaking the course record in the sprint and number of pushups he completed in one minute. A 'staggering seventy', the instructor had dubbed it that night over drinks in the training center bar. The actual number had been closer to eighty, but the name sounded good and so stuck.

Marcus loved the force. Even on the hot summer days. Yet he could never fully forget the thrill of the fight either; it was part of him, and he knew it would haunt his dreams for the rest of his days.

For years Marcus was plagued by a recurring dream; he was back in the ring, back fighting Papp. The German's face was broken open and bleeding, his nose shattered, left cheek swollen so badly that his left eye looked as if it had simply been erased from his features. They were in the last round, and he was pummeling the German who would (always) raise his hands up to cover his face, leaving his body open. Marcus had him trapped in the ropes and he was about to fall. Marcus would glance over at the clock and see he still had just under a minute to knock the guy out. He knew he wouldn't get up, and so planned on taking his time. Then out of nowhere the bell began to sound: it rang and rang. Marcus stopped punching and looked around...and that was when the German unleashed his lucky shot. Just as the punch hit Marcus would wake, his heart racing. The ringside bell would melt away and become the howling impatient cry of a baby woken from sleep. His blood would be pumping, his whole body tense. He would jump out of bed in a state of confusion each time, his mind lost until it all slotted back into place one piece at a time.

He hadn't realized how deep he had been in the daydream, not until the ear-piercing cry of a young baby finally pushed its way through the image. It sounded like

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

