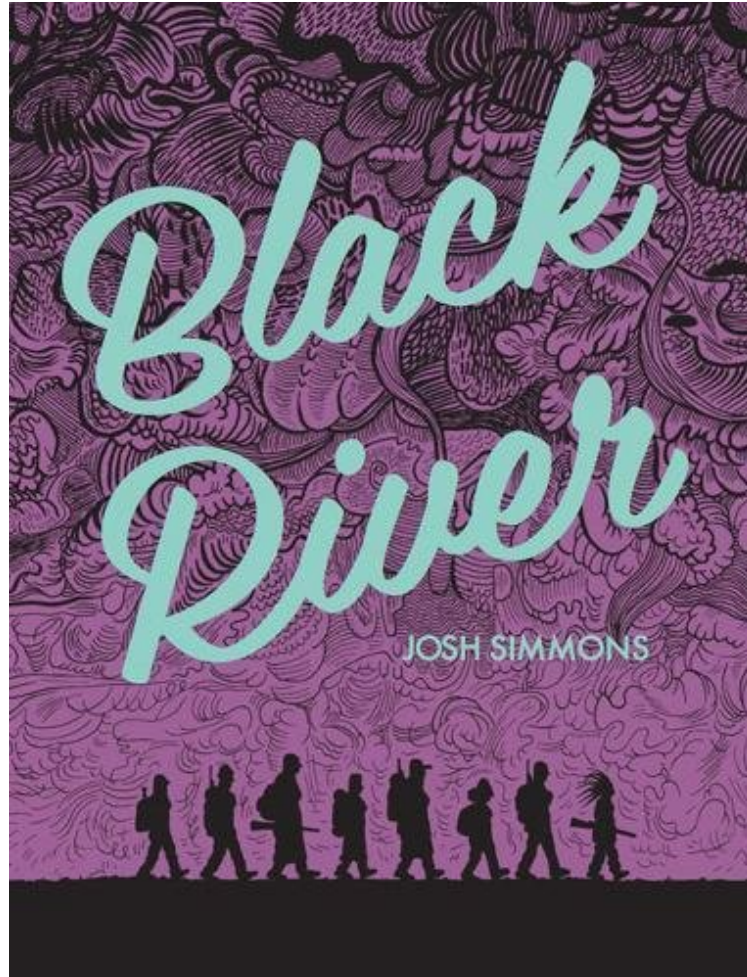


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Black River

Josh Simmons

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Josh Simmons : Black River before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Black River:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. M.O.O.N that spells Black RiverBy Eharper25Reminded me of a certain group from The Stand. Dark and brutal but what do you expect from the apocalypse?5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. I'm preparing for the worst. In the dystopian literature that I've actually readBy Erick S HaightIn fiction, when given the choice between utopia and dystopia, I tend to fall into the more pessimistic camp. At the movies, whether it's lighter (as in "Mad Max: Fury Road") or a bit darker and sardonic (as in Terry Gilliam's cut of "Brazil"), dystopian visions seem more realistic. Which is more likely to come to fruition years from now -- the gleaming electronics of "Prometheus" or the dessicated dank of "Alien"? The future strikes me as more likely to be parched and rusting, the beginning of "WALL-E" rather than the end, and while I hope for otherwise, I'm preparing for the worst.In the dystopian literature that I've actually read, there is only one masterpiece: "The Road" by Cormac

McCarthy. Relentless in tone and economical in prose, it's the kind of work that I wholeheartedly recommend to everyone despite the knowledge that it might devastate the reader with images that you'll never be able to shake. (I even bought it for my father, which is sort of horrible if you've actually read the book.) To unpack everything that McCarthy pours into nearly each sentence is to admire a master of craft at the apex of his abilities, and I'm not sure I'll ever read anything so moving and memorable again in my life. Having said that, "Black River" by Josh Simmons is a new graphic novel that comes as close to McCarthy's magnum opus as any graphic novelist ever will, and it's hung with me all day. Mordantly humorous and bleakly harrowing, with an ending that offers as much hope as one can see with one's eyes squeezed shut, Simmons has written and drawn a richly detailed universe despite the brevity of presentation that a slim black-and-white tome offers. Where ongoing graphic novels such as "The Walking Dead" detail periods of hope as humans interact within the ruins of civilizations past, "Black River" offers no such illusions of conciliatory contact. When the s*** goes down -- and "Black River" is snapshot after snapshot of a world of unrelenting and pervasive s*** -- you'll never be able to wash the s*** stains from your soul. And if you're like me, you can't get enough of these snapshots, even if they can be hard to look at from time to time. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Surreal horror that leaves you in a cold sweat By David Weigel You wouldn't want to be a character in a Josh Simmons story. The artist/writer has become a real master of surrealist horror. There is no predicting where one of his stories will go; you just know it's going to end in tears, or some less pleasant bodily fluid. "Black River" is no exception. It's his longest and wordiest story, with the most characters, and most potential for fear and dread. The story seems simple at first. Some undetermined apocalypse has reduced civilization to husks, occupied by tired, dirty, heartless scavengers. Simmons focuses on a shifting crew of women, plus a quiet man who seems to be along for hook-ups, as they travel to something more secure. If you've read any post-apocalypse survival stories, you think you know where it's going, and you can probably predict one of the plot pivots. But Simmons is too weird to tell you something familiar. His narrative becomes unmoored from time and place. Elements of fantasy creep in. Striking images appear on the page, unexplained but ominous. Like the best of his work -- much of it collected in the "Furry Trap" anthology -- it gnaws at you. Simmons's art is cartoony but highly detailed, and makes the moments of horror even more disturbing than they might be in something photo-realistic. I do think his short stories work even better, but like them, this refuses to leave my brain alone.

In this Shirley Jacksonesque graphic novel, set in a horrific (and blackly funny) post-apocalyptic world, a group goes in search of a semi-civilized city. Josh Simmons returns with his first full-length graphic novel since 2007's acclaimed *House*. A group of women, one man, and two dogs are making their way through a post-apocalyptic world in search of a city that supposedly still has electricity and some sort of civilization. Along the way, they go to a comedy club, take a drug called Gumdrop, and encounter gangs of men who are either fools, lunatics, or murderous sadists. In other words, all manner of terrors. Josh Simmons is one of the fields most distinctive voices in the horror genre (*The Furry Trap*, *House*), and this full-length graphic novel is his best work yet, echoing director John Carpenter's perfect tick-tock pacing, as well as Shirley Jackson's ability to transcend genre and turn it into literature. Black white

...[Black River] is a dark, post-apocalyptic survivalist story that makes *The Walking Dead* read like an all-ages comic. ... Nihilistic, apocalyptic fiction seems a dime a dozen in today's landscape, but Simmons manages to shock most jaded readers by giving you the sense that anything horrible can and will happen. There are some seriously disturbing scenes that are made all the more chilling by Simmons' black and white artwork and the seeming glee he takes in depicting them. That's not to say it's a completely dire read; the dark humor gives these women a strange but believable presence and life within this terrible world. - Rich Barrett, *Mental Floss* Josh Simmons' *Black River* is an impressively unnerving work, a slim black-and-white tale of a group of (mostly) women making their way through a post-apocalyptic landscape, struggling for survival and hope. ... Informed by dreams and shot through with gut-level anxiety rather than heroic cliché, *Black River* winds in an unpredictable pattern. No one is safe. No one is nice. Any one of its characters could be us. - Hillary Brown, *Paste* ... [A]n amazing depiction of bleakness... Simmons is no stranger to creating atmospheric horror, using dense black-and-white linework for vivid depictions of destroyed cities and people with nothing left to lose. Dead, angular trees, plain, grimy clothing, and eyes that range from burnt-out to sheer insanity mix with swirling, angry backgrounds, setting a scene better than any horror movie could. - Publishers Weekly Simmons is a grimly witty take-no-prisoners storyteller, and his smart and violent tale is well paced and startling. - Richard Pachter, *The Miami Herald* Simmons' take on the end of the world--fittingly illustrated entirely in black and white--is gruesome and brutal. Not for the squeamish--and for mature readers only--it is a tale of our biological response to our looming demise. Even when life is at its most despairing and unconquerable, we persist. ... [F]or fans of such melancholic end of world scenarios as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, it is sure to be a dark and grim treat. - Zach Hollwedel, *Under the Radar* Postapocalyptic storytelling isn't exactly in short supply for any medium these days, but Josh Simmons does it so damn well that you'll instantly forgive him for picking a well-worn concept. *Black River*... is unforgettably brutal. The vignettes a frigid orgy, a set from a calmly insane stand-up comic, an underwater hallucination are as visceral as they are eerie. - Abraham Riesman, *Vulture* It's a relentlessly grim story, without even

The Walking Dead's zombie menace to blame for humankind's descent into cruelty and violence and the shreds of civilization that do remain make it even more horrific. Simmons contrasts the austere beauty of the winter world with the frantic, gushing human struggle beneath. - Heidi MacDonald, The Beat [Black River] uses the genre not to entertain, but to carve away at something rotten. [It] documents a kind of moral entropy, the creeping disintegration of everything right and good ... think The Road, but filmed by Herschell Gordon Lewis... - Sean Rogers, The Comics Journal If you're looking for happy endings, this isn't the comic for you. There's only one type of closure in this world, and the most anyone can hope for is that when death comes it is swift. Josh Simmons does not pretend otherwise, and Black River is all the more powerful for it. This is a bleak, chilling but excellent graphic novel. - Pete Redrup, The Quietus This is a book about survival, told with delicacy and weight. ... This is a very fine comic indeed, and depending on how much gore you can stomach, this is a must read. - Daniel Carpenter, Bookmunch As creepy and dark as Black River gets, it never loses its sense of humanity... - Andrew Yates, Comics Tavern Black River is one of the most uncompromisingly brutal, bleak and violent books I've read in quite some time. - Andy Wolverton, Journeys in Darkness and Light Black River, unlike the many other post-apocalyptic stories, doesn't give its reader the satisfaction of a glimmer of hope. Nothing is going to get better. No one is going to survive. - Alex Hoffman, Sequential State About the Author Josh Simmons hails from Storrs Mansfield, CT, and lives in Seattle, WA.