

Follow me. For I am...

PHANTOM STRANGER

A Grave Situation

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Quick Introduction:

Follow me. For I am... The Phantom Stranger!

These words sang to me when I was young. The Phantom Stranger, no doubt one of the many, lesser-known heroes, was always one of my favorites. I would thrill to his adventures both with the JLA and by himself.

He was man of compassion, yet he was a man of limitless potential. Possibly as powerful as the Spectre himself! The true limits of the power of the Phantom Stranger have yet to be tested. No one knows where he came from. No one knows where he goes. That mystery appeals to me. There is so much you can do with it when it comes to writing.

This story just came to me out of the blue and it took me less than two hours to write from beginning to end.

So it may not be my best work.

I read plenty of Phantom Stranger when I was young, but that was years ago. I have recently read the first three issues of his own mag, which are all reprints from the 50's. So in DC continuity, that's when this story occurs. I hope I got his character right? I think I did...

Enjoy this new adventure of the Phantom Stranger.

PAGE ONE - ONE LARGE PANEL

SPLASH PANEL

Young girl (Jody) is in a cemetery at night. She is twelve years old and is dressed like most twelve year olds are. She is a pretty girl with a slim build and long, blonde hair. The kind of girl who could be a cheerleader at her school.

She is at her mother's grave, sad and wailing. Her entire body language speaks of anguish. Hidden amongst the trees where you can barely see him is the Phantom Stranger, watching silently.

JODY
My fault! It's all my fault! My
mother is dead because I killed
her!

PAGE TWO - FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

Darkness. The stars shine and the moon is full. A girl (Jody) walks up to a creaking, swinging gate at a cemetery outside of town.

JODY
(Thought)
I know I shouldn't have snuck out
tonight. But I had to. I just had
to!

PANEL TWO

A frightened Jody grabs hold of the gate and walks through, into the graveyard.

JODY
(Thought)
She's around here somewhere. I
know she is!

PANEL THREE

Creeping stealthily through the dark graveyard, Jody spots the grave she looking for off in the distance.

JODY
(Thought)
There it is!

PANEL FOUR

Jody sits on her knees at her mother's grave and begins to cry...

JODY
Oh Mother. I'm sorry. I'm so
sorry! It was all my fault!

PAGE THREE - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Off to the side, hiding from sight amongst the trees, the concerned Phantom Stranger watches silently.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL TWO

From behind the grave rises the ghost of Jody's mother! Jody doesn't notice because her head is hung low in shame.

JODY
>Sniff<

PANEL THREE

The ghost continues to rise and Jody, with her head still low, "senses" someone (or something) is watching her.

JODY
???

PANEL FOUR

Jody looks up and sees what is obviously her mother in ghostly form, looking right at her. Her mother looks like she could be a ghostly, older version of Jody herself.

At first, Jody is surprised...

JODY
!!!

PANEL FIVE

...And then, of course, she is frightened.

SFX
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!!!!

PAGE FOUR - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

As Jody now stares silently at the ghost, (unable to talk or cry, due to sheer fright), she hears a voice from afar.

FATHER (O.S.)
Jody? Jody, was that you? Are you
here? JODY!!!! I know you're here!

PANEL TWO

Jody turns to see her father running toward her. Her father is a somewhat husky man, wearing a business suit and a trench coat.

JODY
Father!

PANEL THREE

Jody hugging her father fiercely at the grave site.

JODY
Father? Do you see her? She's
here!

FATHER
Who's here? What's wrong, Jody?

PANEL FOUR

Jody turns back to the grave. There is nothing there but the grave itself.

JODY
She's gone! But... But she was
here! I saw her! I know I saw
her!

PANEL FIVE

ON THE FATHER, WITH A VERY CONCERNED LOOK.

FATHER
Saw who, Jody?

PANEL SIX

On Jody, who looks like she wonders if she might be losing her mind.

JODY
Mother! I saw Mother!

PAGE FIVE - FIVE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Suddenly, between the father/daughter and the gravestone, appears... The Phantom Stranger! His eyes are covered by the brim of his hat.

Father and daughter see him and react with surprise.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL TWO

On father, with one arm still around his daughter.

FATHER
Who are you? Where did you come
from?

PANEL THREE

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER
I am...a stranger. I was led here
by the cries of the innocent.

PANEL FOUR

On Jody, looking angry and hurt.

JODY
No. NO!!!!!!

PANEL FIVE

Jody runs away from the Stranger and her father. Her father puts his hand out toward her and calls after her.

FATHER
Jody! Come back here!

PAGE SIX - SEVEN PANELS

PANEL ONE

Stranger puts his hand on the father's shoulder.

PHANTOM STRANGER
Wait...

PANEL TWO

On father and Stranger as the father turns back to the Stranger, scratching his head.

FATHER
Tell me, Stranger, did you by
chance happen to see a ghost?

PHANTOM STRANGER
No. No I did not.

PANEL THREE

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER
She'll be okay. Tell me what
happened to her mother.

PANEL FOUR

On father. Adjusting his coat and looking emotionally uncomfortable.

FATHER
You're very perceptive, Stranger.
But very well. I feel I can trust
you.

PANEL FIVE

On father, now looking sad.

FATHER
A year ago today, it was. It was a
warm and sunny day. You couldn't
ask for better weather. It was in
the afternoon, when--

PANEL SIX

On father and Stranger. Father is pointing his thumb over his shoulder in the direction Jody ran.

FATHER
--my wife, her mother--

PANEL SEVEN

Back on close up of father.

FATHER
--went to pick Jody up from school.

PAGE SEVEN - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Stranger and father.

FATHER
I don't really know the details of
what happened. I wasn't there.
But somehow there was an accident.
My wife died instantly. Jody
walked away without a scratch.

PANEL TWO

On father, looking even more sad.

FATHER
She hasn't been the same since.

PANEL THREE

On Stranger.

PHANTOM STRANGER
She blames herself for the
accident. She feels it was all her
fault.

PANEL FOUR

On father. Surprised.

FATHER
Why would she think that?

PANEL FIVE

On Stranger, looking in the direction Jody ran.

PHANTOM STRANGER
I'll try to find out.

PANEL SIX

On father, now obviously alone in the graveyard.

FATHER
What? Where did he go? He just
disappeared! Like a phantom!

PAGE EIGHT - FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

We see Jody sitting on a log in a wood close by the graveyard. She is still crying.

JODY
>Sob<

PANEL TWO

She looks up and sees the Phantom Stranger standing in front of her, staring down at her. His mysterious eyes again cloaked by the brim of his hat.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL THREE

Uncharacteristically, Stranger gets down on one knee and looks at Jody with great compassion.

PHANTOM STRANGER
It wasn't your fault, Jody.

PANEL FOUR

On Jody. With tears.

JODY
But it was my fault!

PAGE NINE - FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Jody, remembering that awful day.

JODY
We were on our way home from school. I wanted the radio on but Mom didn't. So we fought about it.

PANEL TWO

On Stranger and Jody.

JODY
She wanted it off and I kept turning it on! I didn't know what would happen! She was distracted and we crashed!

PANEL THREE

On terrified Jody.

JODY
And now her ghost has come back to
haunt me because she hates me! I'm
sorry! I'm so sorry!

PANEL FOUR

Close on Stranger. We see his eyes oddly shine under the
shadow of his hat.

PHANTOM STRANGER
Jody. Look into my eyes. Learn
the truth.

PAGE TEN - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Jody, now back by a quiet farm road on the sunny day a
year ago.

JODY
What? Where am I? How did I...?

PANEL TWO

Looking from Jody's back past Jody and down the street,
where we see a car heading towards Jody.

JODY (CONT'D)
That looks like... Oh no! It
can't be!

PANEL THREE

Hearing a noise, Jody looks the other way.

JODY (CONT'D)
And here comes the other car!

PANEL FOUR

As the other car gets closer, it swerves into the wrong
lane.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL FIVE

Close on Jody, with look of horror as she realizes the cars will meet.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL SIX

On Jody, with her eyes pushed shut hard and her hands over her ears.

SFX
CCRRAASSSHHH!!!!

PAGE ELEVEN - SIX PANELS

PANEL ONE

On Jody and Stranger, back in the wood by the graveyard.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL TWO

On Jody, looking both frightened and somewhat relieved.

JODY
(Small Letters)
It wasn't my fault.

PHANTOM STRANGER
No it wasn't. And the ghost was
the result of a guilty imagination.

PANEL THREE

Jody's father appears beside Jody.

FATHER
I never thought it was, Jody.

PANEL FOUR

Jody and her father hugging.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL FIVE

They turn to see the Stranger has disappeared.

JODY
Who was he, Father?

PANEL SIX

On father.

FATHER
I don't know, honey. I guess he
was some kind of...phantom
stranger!

END STORY.