

LIGHTS  
OUT!

The  
**ROBERT R. MCCAMMON**  
Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 1

July 1989

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Presented by:  
Hunter Goatley

Title by:  
Robert R. McCammon

Logo Drawn by:  
Dana Goatley

Additional Editing by:  
Karl Hayes  
Curt LeBaron  
Heather Stone

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Lights Out!  
c/o Hunter Goatley  
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**Goat Busters**

A Message from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *Lights Out!* - *The Robert R. McCammon Newsletter*. It is my intention to provide you with news on upcoming McCammon novels and short stories, interviews, photos, original fiction and non-fiction, and contests. Let it be known that my full-time job is computer programming, not writing, so I'll make no claims or guarantees for the quality of the articles I do. However, I hope that you will find the newsletter informative and entertaining.

As most of you know, Robert R. McCammon goes by Rick; throughout the newsletter, you'll find that I refer to him as Rick, McCammon, RRM, and Robert R. McCammon. Why the differences? Variety, I guess.

My first McCammon novel was *They Thirst*, which I picked up simply because it was a vampire novel that had a neat cover! To this day, the book has the distinction of being the only horror novel I've read that has spawned a nightmare. After *They Thirst*, I read *Mystery Walk* and decided that *They Thirst* was not a one-shot: Robert R. McCammon was good. I collected his first 3 novels and looked for more of McCammon's works.

I started kicking around the idea of doing a newsletter when *Stinger* was released, but all I did was talk about it. I wasn't sure where I could get the information that I would want to put it in the newsletter, and I didn't know how to start looking for those sources. I pretty much gave up on the idea for about 6 months.

In August of 1988, I talked at length with a book dealer in Atlanta, David Hinchberger of the Overlook Connection. Dave mentioned to Rick that I was thinking about doing a newsletter and, with Dave's encouragement, I wrote to Rick to present the idea myself.

A few weeks later, Rick called to talk about the newsletter. He liked the idea and, very modestly, said he was flattered that I wanted to do it. I warned him that I wasn't sure if I would have the time to do it, since I already have one job, but that I wanted to provide a means of communication among his fans.

Nine months later (only two months after our daughter was born), the first issue was mailed out. My apologies to those of you who sent in requests for more information and thought I forgot about you.

Because of production delays, I was overwhelmed with stuff I had collected for this issue. As a result, the promised bibliography will appear in the next issue. You'll also notice the absence of pictures; at this point, production costs are too prohibitive to include much. As the newsletter grows, the format will change to reflect that growth.

This is your newsletter; I'm interested in hearing what you would like to see in it. Please send your comments to:

Hunter Goatley  
44 East 600 South  
Orem, Utah 84058

And now, on to the goodies...

## Who is Robert R. McCammon?

by Hunter Goatley

Robert R. McCammon, who prefers to be called Rick, is quickly becoming one of the most popular horror authors around. Two of his novels, *Swan Song* and *Stinger*, sold over a million copies each and landed RRM on *The New York Times* bestsellers list. His publisher, Pocket Books, recently re-released his first four novels and published *The Wolf's Hour* in March 1989. With each release, McCammon's books are drawing an ever-widening audience, making him one of the true masters of modern horror.

What is it that makes RRM's books so popular? First, his characters are some of the most realistically drawn in modern fiction. McCammon's characters are you: they are so well-defined, that you can quite easily put yourself in the characters' shoes. Second, McCammon's knack for writing suspense is unparalleled. He is as capable of writing gut-gnawing tension as he is of writing gut-wrenching horror. With so many trash horror novels published today, it is exciting to know that there are some real authors who can make a scary story without "going for the gross-out."

RRM's first novel, *Baal*, was published in 1978 by Avon Books as a paperback original. Rick was working for a Birmingham newspaper as a headline writer when *Baal* sold over 300,000 copies. Not bad for a first novel, and good enough to encourage Rick to work on his next two novels.

The next book to see publication was *Bethany's Sin* (1980 by Avon Books), although *The Night Boat* was actually the second book Rick completed. *The Night Boat* had already been accepted for publication by Avon when an Avon executive heard about a movie that had something to do with Nazis living underwater. He assumed that the storyline of *The Night Boat* was too similar to the movie, so he decided Avon would not publish Rick's book. Rick scrambled for something else to sell and managed to write *Bethany's Sin* in about 3 months. Meanwhile, someone else at Avon saw the Nazi movie (*Shock Waves*, 1977) and decided that *The Night Boat* was not at all like the movie, so Avon bought both *Bethany's Sin* and *The Night Boat* for publication. In the end, *Bethany's Sin* was released in January 1980 and *The Night Boat* followed in August of the same year. At this point, RRM's books were selling well enough that he was able to quit his newspaper job to concentrate solely on writing.

*They Thirst* was written when Rick wondered what would happen if vampires tried to take over a large metropolitan area. Though originally set in Chicago, the finished book told the story of Prince Vulkan and his attempt to gain control of the world, beginning with Los Angeles. Published

in 1981, *They Thirst* was the book that first brought well-deserved attention to Robert R. McCammon. A new market opened up when Rick was published in hardcover.

*Mystery Walk* was the first of RRM's books to be published in hardcover. Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston placed the cover art for *Mystery Walk* on the cover of *Publisher's Weekly* for the week of February 25, 1983, and on the cover of their own catalog for the season. The story of Billy Creekmore and Wayne Falconer was selected by the Literary Guild Book Clubs that year. *Mystery Walk* continued to bring in the same praise garnered by *They Thirst*.

In *Usher's Passing* (1984), RRM updated readers on the Usher family from Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher." *Usher's Passing* was virtually ignored by the publisher (again, Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston) for some unfathomable reason. The book tells the story of Rix Usher, who has been called back to his family home, Usherland, because his father is dying. One of the 3 children will inherit the \$10 billion family business, Usher Armaments. The story, which contains many autobiographical elements, is still considered by many to be one of RRM's strongest works. At the very least, *Usher's Passing* is a daring book that produced wonderful results.

1984 also saw the release of a paperback edition of *Mystery Walk* from Ballantine Books. The edition was printed with three different covers: all have the title stamped in foil and all feature a small painting in the upper right corner. The differences lay in the colors of the foil (gold, silver, and red) and the subject of the painting.

Though *Usher's Passing* was reprinted in paperback by Ballantine in 1985, it was 3 years before RRM published anything new. By this time, a new publisher was behind him: Pocket Books; they were ready to give McCammon's new novel the advertising push necessary to make it very successful. In June 1987, Pocket released *Swan Song*, and so began the journey that would make RRM one of the most popular authors in the horror genre. *Swan Song* made the *New York Times* bestsellers list, where it stayed for 4 weeks. *Swan Song* sold almost a million copies in its first printing; it is currently in its fourth printing and is still selling well.

The enormous success of *Swan Song* was followed by *Stinger* in April 1988, also from Pocket Books. *Stinger* tells the tale of a small, dying town in Texas called Inferno and how its inhabitants, at war with each other, react to the arrival of an alien named Daufin—and an alien bounty

## Lights Out!

hunter called *Stinger*, who is chasing it. The book, which reads like a horror movie from the 1950s, is unusual because it is over 500 pages long and set in one 24-hour period. Many readers weren't even aware of the time span until they neared the end of the book and read about the sun rising again. Like its predecessor, *Stinger* sold nearly a million copies and again landed RRM on *The New York Times* bestsellers list.

Seven months after the release of *Stinger*, in October 1988, Pocket Books re-released RRM's first four novels, with brand new covers that featured artwork by Jim Warren and Rowena Morrill, the artist for the covers of *Swan Song* and *Stinger*. By this time, the original Avon editions were becoming more and more rare as collectors sought them out. The decision to reissue the novels brought the stories to RRM's expanded audience. The rights to both *Mystery Walk* and *Usher's Passing* are still held by Ballantine Books; a second paperback printing of *Mystery Walk* was made in Canada in December 1988, and *Usher's Passing* saw a fourth printing in December 1987.

This past March saw the release of RRM's latest novel, *The Wolf's Hour*. McCammon, a long-time history buff (with an emphasis on World War II), combined the suspense of a World War II thriller with an update of the werewolf tale. Unlike most werewolf novels, where the werewolves are "the bad guys," the main character of *The Wolf's Hour* is the lycanthrope. The combination of the two genres creates a fascinating story that is already enjoying immense success and has once again put McCammon on the *New York Times* bestsellers list.

1989 also saw the British release of *Blue World*, a collection of short stories and the novella "Blue World." The book contains 13 stories, old and new. British hardcover and trade paperback editions were just published in April, marking the first time a McCammon book was published outside the U.S. before publication stateside.

RRM lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with his wife of almost 8 years, Sally.

### Things Unearthed...

News items of interest

*The Address* Shelved;  
*Mine* to be Next McCammon Novel

The next McCammon novel, probably to be released in 1990, was reported to be a book called *The Address*. I spoke with Rick on June 5, 1989, and learned that he has put *The Address* aside and is almost finished with a novel entitled *Mine*, which should be available next year.

"*The Address* was too dark, very depressing," Rick stated. "I just didn't care for it." So in March, he shelved approximately 250 pages of *The Address* and began work on *Mine*, a story that he has been kicking around for a few years. When asked if he would go back to *The Address* sometime, Rick said, "If I can figure out how to make it positive, I may try to do it again."

*Mine* is about a woman who was a member of the Symbionese Liberation Army, the same outfit to which Patty Hearst belonged in the 1960s. The woman goes insane, kidnaps another woman's baby, and goes underground with the baby. The novel chronicles the cross-country search for the child.

The first draft of *Mine* should be finished as you read this, but the book will not be available before mid-1990.

British *Blue World* Released;  
American Edition Scheduled for April 1990

*Blue World* is McCammon's first short story collection. It was thought that the book would be released in October 1989 by Pocket Books, but I recently learned that the release has been scheduled for April 1990. Meanwhile, the British edition of the book was recently released and a number of copies made their way to U.S. dealers.

*Blue World* contains all of McCammon's pre-1989 short stories, as well as 3 new short stories, and a new novella entitled "Blue World", which is about a priest's obsession with a porno star who is being stalked by someone. Readers of the now-defunct magazine *The Horror Show* may recall an excerpt from a "story-in-progress" called "Something Passed By;" that story is among the new ones found in *Blue World*.

The British *Blue World* was simultaneously released in both a hardcover edition and a trade paperback edition to handle the demand for this long-awaited collection. The hardcover (the only planned hardcover edition) was limited to 1500 copies, about 1000 of which went to libraries in England. Several dealers in the U.S. carried the British hardcover, which sold out before its publication in April. You may still

be able to obtain a copy from mail-order dealers.

McCammon Edits New Anthology:  
*HWA Shared World Series*

The Horror Writers of America (HWA) has decided to promote itself with a new "shared world" anthology series, a relatively new concept in the horror genre. Though familiar to science fiction fans, "shared worlds" have never really been tried (excepting the *Greystone Bay* series edited by Charles L. Grant). In a shared world anthology, different writers contribute stories that share settings, situations, and/or characters with the other stories in the collection.

HWA is inviting members to write stories that fit the shared world series, which will be published by Pocket Books. Though work has not really started on the series, the first three editions are already in the planning stages. Obviously, no scheduling has taken place, but a Pocket Books spokeswoman told me that they hope to publish one edition per year, possibly the same month each year, beginning sometime in 1990.

Robert R. McCammon has been selected to create the shared world for the first volume and act as editor for the book. Each volume will have from ten to fifteen stories by well-known authors in the genre. Authors who may appear in the first edition include Robert Bloch, Harlan Ellison, Anne Rice, and Stephen King. Ramsey Campbell and F. Paul Wilson are slated to create the next two volumes in the series.

*Dark Harvest* Publishes Hardcover  
Edition of *Swan Song*

By the time you read this, the Dark Harvest hardcover edition of McCammon's 1987 epic novel *Swan Song* should be available. This book marks the first hardcover edition of the novel; a planned British hardcover never materialized and a paperback edition was published late last year.

The Dark Harvest edition will be presented in three states: (1) a signed, slipcased, leather-bound edition of 52 copies (lettered A to ZZ); (2) a limited edition of 650 signed, slipcased editions; (3) and a regular trade edition. Both limited states were sold out from the publisher months before publication. The few dealers able to acquire one of the lettered editions are already charging up to 4 times the original cost of the tome. The regular limited edition (isn't that amazing? — we now have limiteds of limiteds) is still available from many mail-order dealers, but the price on it (originally \$55) has already doubled with some dealers.

About the only piece of information I have is that the illustrations were done by artist Charles Lang. I tried

to find out more information about the publication, but, in response to my request for detailed information, Dark Harvest only sent me the flyer that they mail out to everyone on their mailing list.

Simon & Schuster Releases  
McCammon Audio Tape

A new Simon and Schuster Audio audiocassette features three stories by Robert R. McCammon. *Nightcrawlers: Stories from Blue World*, released in March 1989, is a two-cassette package that consists of stories read by noted character actor William Windom. Fans of the television series *Murder She Wrote* will recognize William Windom as the doctor of Cabot Cove.

The three stories selected, "Nightcrawlers," "Yellowjacket Summer," and my personal favorite, "Night Calls the Green Falcon," are taken from the forthcoming collection *Blue World*. The readings show not only McCammon's versatility in style and subject matter, but also how gifted William Windom is. As is true of most dramatic readings, each character has his or her own voice, a trick that Windom pulls off most convincingly. His knack for Southern accents perfectly complements "Nightcrawlers" and "Yellowjacket Summer."

The 3 hour tapes retail for \$14.95. A second McCammon audio collection, entitled *Something Passed By*, is scheduled to be released in December 1989. *Something Passed By* will consist of more stories from *Blue World* and will again be read by William Windom.

Signed & Slipcased *The Wolf's Hour*  
from the Overlook Connection

March 1989 saw the release of McCammon's *The Wolf's Hour* by Pocket Books. In a time of limited editions for seemingly every book in the genre, there was no limited edition of the *The Wolf's Hour*. Enter Dave Hinchberger, owner of The Overlook Connection.

For the past two years, Dave has been selling books by just about everybody in the genre, with a special emphasis on Stephen King, Dean Koontz, and Robert R. McCammon. One of the items that Dave offered his customers, that other dealers didn't (and don't), was signed & numbered editions of paperback originals. For a couple of Joe Lansdale's books and Ray Garton's *Live Girls*, Dave printed some bookplates, had them signed by the author, numbered them, and inserted them, permanently, before the title page of the paperback. The result was a limited edition of a book that had no limited edition.

When Pocket reprinted McCammon's first four books in October, Dave put together a signed and numbered set of the books, limited to 100 copies. After the success of that set, Dave was ready to go one step farther for *The Wolf's Hour*: a slipcase to store it in.

The slipcased edition is limited to 200 copies and consists of a copy of the Pocket edition of *The Wolf's Hour*, with inlaid autograph page, in a black slipcase custom-fitted for the book. The title logo and McCammon logo are displayed on the side of the slipcase in red foil. This is one nice-looking slipcase! I was impressed when I received my copy.

*The Wolf's Hour* slipcased edition can be ordered by writing to Dave at the following address:

The Overlook Connection  
P.O. Box 526  
Woodstock, GA 30188  
404-926-1762

If you call and get Dave's answering machine, you're in for a treat. Dave's machine is actually hooked up to his computer to bring you The Audio Connection, a series of recordings that will lead you through the latest information about your favorite authors and new releases. Of course, you can also leave a message. If nothing else, Dave will add you to his mailing list and you'll receive, roughly bi-monthly, the best catalog put out by a mail-order horror dealer.

New Zombie Anthology Contains McCammon's  
First Living Dead Story

Robert R. McCammon joins, among others, Stephen King and Joe R. Lansdale in a new zombie anthology called *Book of the Dead*. The collection is edited by John Skipp and Craig Spector, authors of the phenomenal vampire novel *The Light at the End*, and was published in June 1989 by Bantam Books. A special hardcover edition is being published by Ziesing Press and should be available when you read this.

The Ziesing Press edition consists of two states: a regular trade edition and a limited edition of 500 signed and numbered copies. I spoke with Mark Ziesing in March about *Book of the Dead* and found that, despite the fact that he wasn't pushing the book yet, the limited was well on its way to being sold out. Indeed, by May, all 500 copies had been sold — at least a month before it was actually published!

The book is a collection of stories based on the ideas presented by George Romero in his trilogy of *Dead* movies: *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*, and *Day of the Dead*. Skipp and Spector decided that it would be fun

to collect and publish a collection of zombie stories and found several authors eager to participate.

Some of the authors and titles included in *Book of the Dead* are:

- Robert R. McCammon — "Eat Me"
- Joe R. Lansdale — "On the Far Side of the Cadillac Desert with Dead Folks"
- Steven R. Boyett — "Like Pavlov's Dogs"
- Edward Bryant — "A Sad Last Love at the Diner of the Damned"
- David J. Schow — "Jerry's Kids Meet Wormboy"
- Les Daniels — "The Good Parts"
- Stephen King — "Home Delivery"

As you can see, there are some wild titles here! I just finished McCammon's "Eat Me," a story that deals with love after death in a weird, yet touching, way. I just finished the book and enjoyed most every story. Without a doubt, Joe Lansdale's story is one of the strangest stories you're likely to read this year; I'm sure it will be a contender for an HWA Bram Stoker Award next year.

*Book of the Dead* includes a foreword by George A. Romero.

A "sneak preview" of the anthology was published in the Fall 1988 issue of *Midnight Graffiti* magazine (#2). Excerpts from 7 of the stories, including McCammon's, were presented.

As the editors proclaim in their introduction, this book strives to "go too far." From what I've seen, it's certainly not for the squeamish (so we'll love it, huh?!?!).

The trade hardcover edition is priced at \$22 and can be ordered from:

Mark V. Ziesing  
P.O. Box 76  
Shingletown, CA 96088

Ziesing Press will also be producing Joe Lansdale's first short story collection later this year.

McCammon's "The Thang" Published  
in *Hot Blood*

*Hot Blood*, subtitled "Provocative Tales of Horror," collects stories dealing with horrific sex. Originally subtitled "Erotic Tales of Horror," *Hot Blood* contains yet another new McCammon story, "The Thang", which is a bit of a departure from Rick's typical style. This hilarious tale begins with an Oklahoma man in New Orleans who has decided his "thang" isn't big enough and consults a "voodoo woman"

for help! Suffice to say that, when the man doesn't follow the instructions he was given, "thangs" get out of hand.

*Hot Blood* is one of the better anthologies released recently. While there are a few stories that fall a little flat, the majority work well. And Ray Garton's "Punishments" is just about the sickest story I've read since... since... since Garton's "Sinema" in *Silver Scream!*

*Hot Blood*, edited by Jeff Gelb and Lonn Friend, was published in May by Pocket Books (\$4.95) and can be obtained from your local bookstore.

Post Mortem Presents New  
Ghost Stories

This is one of McCammon's biggest summers for short stories. His story "Haunted World" shows up in the new anthology *Post Mortem*, edited by Paul F. Olson and David B. Silva. "Haunted World" tells what happens when the place(s) people go after they die fill up and the dead start spilling back into our world. Everyone is included, from savage cavemen to Roman soldiers to Nazis to William Shakespeare and Thomas Edison — all return to the world of the living. While most of the living are getting used to the idea, the ghosts are becoming more and more solid...

*Post Mortem* collects 17 stories, plus an afterword by Dean R. Koontz. Other authors represented in *Post Mortem* include Gary Brandner, Ramsey Campbell, William F. Nolan, Kathryn Ptacek, and Janet Fox. The book was published in hardcover by St. Martin's Press and can be obtained from many book dealers.

World Fantasy Convention 1989  
Guest of Honor: Robert R. McCammon

The 1989 World Fantasy Convention will take place in Seattle, Washington, over the weekend October 27-29, 1989. This year's theme is "The Roots of Fantasy: Myth, Folklore, & Archetype." The Guests of Honor are Robert R. McCammon, Ursula K. LeGuin, and S. P. Somtow, with Ginjer Buchanan serving as Toastmaster.

The Convention is being held at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel & Towers. Attending memberships are limited; the cost is \$80, payable in U.S. funds. Supporting memberships are \$30.

For more information, write to:

World Fantasy Convention 1989  
P.O. Box 31815  
Seattle, WA 98103-1815

McCammon Western Story in  
*Razored Saddles*

Just before finishing this issue, I learned that Dark Harvest will be releasing an anthology entitled *Razored Saddles* that will contain another McCammon short story. As the promotional flyer states, the book, edited by Joe Lansdale and Pat LoBrutto, features "stories inspired by every aspect of the West or Western myth," from the Modern West to the Futuristic West to "just plain odd Westerns."

Rick McCammon's story is entitled "Black Boots" and is about a gunfighter in the West who is losing his mind while being pursued by a man in black boots. As his sense of what's real and what's not real is leaving him, he has to kill this man in black boots over and over again; and the man in black boots is getting faster...

Other authors represented in *Razored Saddles* include Joe R. Lansdale, F. Paul Wilson, Richard Laymon, David J. Schow, Richard Christian Matheson, Chet Williamson, and eleven others. The book is scheduled for publication in August 1989. There will be a limited edition (600 copies) signed by all contributors (\$59.00) and a trade hardcover (\$19.95).

For more information, write to Dark Harvest:

Dark Harvest  
P.O. Box 941  
Arlington Heights, IL 60006

## The Contest

Next issue will feature a contest whose winner will receive an *original Robert R. McCammon manuscript!*  
The task: complete Rick's unfinished short story "The Night I Killed the King!"

Stay Tuned...

## The Robert R. McCammon Interview

by Hunter Goatley

*Editor's note: This interview was conducted January 28, 1989, at Rick McCammon's home in Birmingham. Armed with a borrowed tape recorder (it belonged to the boyfriend of a friend of Sally's) that didn't pick up voices from very far away and my list of stupid questions, the following conversation took place.*

*Reference is made to several "future projects" that are no longer "future" because of my delays in publishing this newsletter. With that in mind, let's begin...*

**HG:** Welcome, Rick!

**RRM:** THANKS!

**HG:** What are you currently working on? What's the title of your work-in-progress?

**RRM:** It's called *The Address* and it's set in Hollywood from 1919 to 1991. It's about a house in Hollywood and the people who lived there from 1919 to 1991.

**HG:** Sounds interesting.

**RRM:** I hope it'll be. [Shouts into the decrepit tape recorder] I HOPE IT'LL BE!

**HG:** Do you have any idea when it might be out?

**RRM:** In 1990, I guess. There's *The Wolf's Hour* in March, *Blue World* in October, so I guess this will be out the following May or June.

**HG:** I read about *They Still Thirst* in *The Horror Show* a couple of years ago. Has that been totally abandoned, or...

**RRM:** [laughs] No, I was really never planning on doing that; it was fun to just play around with. I played around with it mentally. At some point I may do it, but I've got other ideas, things I'd rather work on right now than go back to things from the past. *They Thirst* is pretty much in the past.

**HG:** It sounded great.

**RRM:** Well, you know, you could do a lot of things [with it]. As a matter of fact, there was a person who was working on a sequel, but it didn't work out. I thought about it, but... We'll see; it might be fun to do sometime.

**HG:** Let's talk about film adaptations. Do you have anything coming up? Of course, there was "Makeup" on *Darkroom* and "Nightcrawlers" on *The Twilight Zone*.

**RRM:** Well, it's not a film adaptation, but I've got a dramatic adaptation, or rather a dramatic reading of some stuff from *Blue World*. It's going to be coming out I guess

next year some time. William Windom has read some stories from it. It's going to be on Simon and Schuster Audio. That's kind of a first for me; I've never had anything like that yet. I think there are two cassettes; each runs about 90 minutes. That should be pretty interesting.

As far as dramatic movies and stuff, I don't know. I guess there are some things working; I have some things optioned, but we'll just have to wait and see what's going to happen.

**HG:** Will the audio tapes for *Blue World* consist of all the stories or just some of them? [Editor's note: *Nightcrawlers: Stories from Blue World* consists of "Nightcrawlers," "Yellowjacket Summer," and "Night Calls the Green Falcon."]

**RRM:** I think there are some of them. I'm very excited about that book because there are some new stories that have never been published and also the novellette "Blue World" is one that's never been published. "Blue World" is different [from my other stuff] because it's more a psychological piece. It's about a Catholic priest in San Francisco who becomes obsessed with a porno star being stalked by someone. I'm excited about it, because it's different.

**HG:** Didn't you write "Blue World" in about a week?

**RRM:** Yeah, how did you know about that?

**HG:** Other interviews.

**RRM:** Really? Yeah, I wrote it in about a week. That's the fastest I've ever done anything and it's like 140 pages. I was very excited about it and it just went...

**HG:** How long does it usually take you to write a book?

**RRM:** It takes about 9 months; that's writing, research, the whole thing. You may have been thinking about a book, getting it together in your mind, for months, but it takes about 9 months when you start doing research. You can be thinking about a book years before you start writing it. You just have a sense, or you hope you have a sense, when you're ready to write a particular book. For instance, *The Lady*. I started that; I wasn't ready to do it because it's a different experience. It's really not that complicated, but it's told in first person viewpoint of a black woman who's like 120 years old. I just wasn't ready to do that yet. I think you know when it's time, when it's right to do things. I started *Swan Song* years ago and put it aside because I wasn't ready to do it. Things kind of happen in their own time.

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I started *Swan Song* years ago and put it aside because I wasn't ready to do it.

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**HG:** When you write, do you do complete rewrites of anything, or...

**RRM:** No, because of the [computer] system I work on. It is very helpful in terms of editing on screen as I go, so I can edit on the screen, and then have an edited page rather than a type-written page, so it makes it go a lot faster.

**HG:** You usually work from 11 PM to 4 AM, is that true?

**RRM:** Yeah. [But] I've found when I'm nearing the end of my writing, I work in the day, too, so I kind of go into a double shift.

**HG:** Let's talk about your books. Do you have a favorite among your own works?

**RRM:** I've been asked that before and I've said, "Well, the book I've just finished is my favorite." I really did enjoy working on *The Wolf's Hour*. That was the most fun. *Stinger* was the most difficult. [The books] have personalities in a way. *Swan Song* was the most satisfying, but the one I enjoyed doing the most—there's a lot in the book, and I'm very proud of it—is *Mystery Walk*. And maybe because it's set in the South. It seems to me to be real; the people seemed real and remain real, and I'm very satisfied with how they turned out.

**HG:** I discovered you from *They Thirst*, but *Mystery Walk* was the one that made me want to find everything else you had done.

**RRM:** I'm very pleased with how it turned out. I know, like we were saying, there are things in it that I look back on and kind of cringe and think, "Why did I do that?" But basically, I'm very pleased how that turned out.

**HG:** Was there any kind of inspiration for *Mystery Walk*? Anything from your experiences that you drew upon when writing it?

**RRM:** I used to go into that area as a kid with a boyhood friend of mine whose grandparents had a farm there. It just seemed kind of a bleak and atmospheric area. I don't know exactly how I developed the plot. I don't really know where that came from, and I don't exactly know how he became an Indian, but I know the atmosphere—the background—is authentic. Particularly in that book, because those are all places that I saw and bits of people here and there that I knew as a kid. That seems to be a very authentic book, from my experience.

**HG:** Obviously, there is a part of you in all of your characters.

**RRM:** Yeah.

**HG:** Are there any characters that come to mind as being very autobiographical? For instance, I was re-reading just this morning *Usher's Passing* where Rix Usher worked at all of these jobs that you did, writing ad copy, working at a B. Dalton.

**RRM:** Yes, that's right. Rix is a very autobiographical person. I was raised by my grandparents, who are very wealthy. You know, there's a price that you have to pay—no matter who you are—there's a price that you have to pay for growing up. You're expected to be perfect, you're expected to do this, that, and the other. My grandfather wanted me to go into the furniture business; he owned a furniture company. They wanted me to have their house; they have a big house that is kind of dilapidated now, kind of fallen to pieces, but they don't see it that way. They still see it as being huge. It was built in the 1930s. My grandfather had one of the first department stores in Alabama; he owned Dolphin Island, down near Mobile. He kind of had a plan for me. He wanted me to go into the furniture business; he wanted me to keep the house as it was, as it is. And there comes a point when you have all of these things that you want, and still you've got to determine to make your own way. I had everything I could possibly want as a kid. I wanted a bike, I got a bike—whatever I wanted, that was fine. But, yet, you have all of these things and the time comes where it's like, "We've given you all of these things, and now we want you to be this person." And there comes a point where you have to say to yourself, "I don't want to be that person." You want to be somebody that you envisioned yourself.

**HG:** You were expected to pay them back.

**RRM:** Yeah, you were in a situation where you were expected to pay them back and you didn't realize that you were paid to do something that was in the future. So when I first started writing, my grandfather said that that was nothing but a hobby, I shouldn't ever expect to make a living as a writer. I should basically do what he wanted me to do.

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There was a time when I almost tried to do something else...

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**HG:** Was there a time after *Baal* was published that you wondered the same thing? Or, after making that sale, did you feel pretty confident that you could keep it up?

**RRM:** Well, there was a time when I almost tried to do something else, while I was trying to finish *Usher's Passing*, because I didn't feel my career was going anywhere. I'd been working for a long time, and the work does get harder. It really does get harder. Because the craft of it gets easier, you know what you do, you know how to do it, but the stories get more complicated. The stories get more real and the characters get more real, so it's more difficult in that regard. After *Usher's Passing*, my career was not going very well. I felt I was doing good work, but my work didn't sell very well. So I was thinking, "What else can I

do?" and I determined that there was nothing else that I could do. That was kind of a turning point when I realized there was nothing else I *could* do. I said, "Well, I'm in this for better or worse..."

**HG:** Could you tell me a little more about what it was like to write *Swan Song*? Did it come easily to you?

**RRM:** It really did. In every book I have signpost scenes. I have a scene in the beginning, middle, and end, and other parts along the way. By the signpost scenes, I know where I'm going, which direction I'm going. But it was pretty easy to write. It wasn't like I was struggling to get characters together; it moved by itself. I guess that sounds ghostly or mysterious, but I don't mean it that way. The hardest one was *Stinger*. That one almost drove me crazy, it was tough. It was set in 24 hours, and I had to have all the characters at a particular place at the end. The first time I wrote through it, I didn't have Sarge where he needed to be. I had to go back 160 pages or so to start him moving in the direction he needed to be. It's the kind of thing where you write and write and write and you realize that you've screwed up, you haven't gotten the character where he needs to be, something is messed up and you can't figure it out. You just kind of lay your head on the typewriter and you sit there (I don't know how long I sat there), and the awful thing is that nobody is going to do it for you, you know? Your mother is not going to come and do it for you [laughs]. You've got to eventually get up and put in another piece of paper, and start back 160, 200 pages back where you screwed up and start again. Such is life! [laughs]

**HG:** I understand *They Thirst* started out set in Chicago.

**RRM:** It did.

**HG:** And you got about 200 pages into it and it just...

**RRM:** It didn't. I wanted a place with a larger sense of motion. It was set in Chicago in the winter, when it was cold and frozen, you know, there was no motion. Everything was frozen solid, so I needed a place where there were a lot of characters and a lot of movement and interaction.

**HG:** I said earlier, *They Thirst* was the first book of yours I read (I was attracted by the cover art; you know, a vampire novel!). It has the distinction of being the only horror novel I've read that spawned a nightmare for me. It was another of those "everybody's a vampire but me."

**RRM:** Oh, yeah. Somebody called me after reading that and said, in hushed tones, "Are there... are there really vampires?" He was serious! So evidently it sparked it in his mind that there might really be vampires.

**HG:** The way it was presented, it was very believable in how quickly they could take over.

**RRM:** There was something that somebody pointed out about that book, that these things could be going on in Los Angeles and Hollywood and you would not know it; you would not know that it was going on. There was a story that stuck with me. This runaway girl was talking about where she went in Hollywood. She lived in one of these old, dilapidated hotels in Hollywood. It was a rent hotel and she lived with other runaways on the second floor. She said that they got along OK, they were fine, they had plenty to eat and everything, but she said there were some men who lived in the basement, who lived down there in the dark. She said she didn't want to go down to the basement, because they were real strange. I read that, or heard that somewhere, before I started the book, and it stuck with me. Things go on there that you probably wouldn't know about. So much could go on there that could go unnoticed. I think that's probably true of *The Address*, too... Things go on that go unnoticed.

**HG:** Did you ever have any problem getting into some of the characters that are so radically different from you, like Kobra or Roach or *Stinger*?

**RRM:** No, not really. I don't know why, but it's not hard to get nasty. It's not hard to think nasty, I guess.

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It's not hard to think nasty...

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**HG:** It has that effect when reading it. You're always able to put yourself in the hero's place, but with your stuff, more than most people's, it's easy to feel like the bad guy, too.

**RRM:** It's never that hard to put myself in that position. You mentioned a while ago that there's a part of me in all characters, that a part of the writer is in all characters. That's certainly true, whether the character is vicious, or the good guy; you're really part of them. I do believe it's true that a horror writer is able to live out his... his... I won't say compulsions... his... wonderments... you know, how would you kill someone? A horror writer, better than most, is able to act that out, think it out, fantasize it out on paper. Everybody says, "Boy, you sure did a good job," and they pay you for it. You did a good job, and you were wondering what it would be like...

**HG:** Well, it's good you can get it out that way...

**RRM:** Yeah!

**HG:** What can you tell me about the limited edition of *Swan Song*?

**RRM:** I hear that it's going to be out this summer. It's an illustrated version. I'm very excited about it. It should be a real quality production. I don't know what the art is going to look like or anything. It sounds good.

**HG:** I was a little bit disappointed that *Swan Song* was a paperback original. It was so good, I wanted something a bit more permanent.

**RRM:** I'm glad it's working out this way. It's going to look good, and it's going to last awhile.

**HG:** Does it bother you that your books come out in paperback first?

**RRM:** A book like *Swan Song* would be so expensive that people couldn't afford it. Also, unless you're a big name, it's very hard to sell hardbacks. I want my books to be read by the largest number of people. In that regard, I'm glad that they're paperbacks and people can afford them.

**HG:** Let's talk a little bit about short stories. Was it hard for you to do short stories in the beginning?

**RRM:** I started out doing short stories in college, but I couldn't get anything published. I'd send my short stories out and they'd all come back rejected, so I never thought I was a very good short story writer because the first novel I wrote was published. "Makeup" was my first published short story. Somebody asked me to do a short story for this book and I did it. Now I try to write short stories in between books. I try to get a stockpile of them, but if somebody has a theme book or something, and they ask me to do something, and I think it's interesting... Sometimes you just don't have a good idea for a short story. Then I've got two short stories upstairs that I haven't finished. One's called "Dark Eye", the other's called "The Night I Killed the King," about a guy who finds the real Elvis Presley and tries to kill him, because he's an Elvis Presley impersonator (I'll never finish the story, that's why I'm telling you about it). He's an Elvis Presley impersonator and he's found that Elvis is alive, so he decides to go kill him, because he knows that when people find that Elvis is still alive, all Elvis impersonators are out of jobs! [laughs] I'll never finish the story! I say that because it's not that easy. Sometimes you're writing a story and, smack!, you hit the wall! It's like, "Where do I go from here?!" You don't know where to go... But I do tie short stories into books.

**HG:** What do you have new that's coming out?

**RRM:** I have a story in a book called *The Book of the Dead*; it's called "Eat Me." I've done other short stories over the past few months, but I've forgotten what books they're in. I did one called "Lizard Man" and I've done a couple of others, but... [laughs] Like I said, I have some short stories in the *Blue World* book: "Something Passed By," "Pin" is different, "Chico" is another one that's different. I have one called "Haunted World" in a book called *Post Mortem*. It's about a world, our world, in which all the people who ever died start coming back to life. All the years, all the generations and ages, come back to life at the same time. It's total chaos. [laughs] It's funny, but then again, hopefully it's kind of serious, too. I

don't know when either book is coming out. I enjoy short stories, but they can be tough to do.

**HG:** I know you don't read a whole lot in the genre, but who, or what, do you read?

**RRM:** Well, I read Joe [Lansdale's] stuff, Peter Straub, Thomas Harris... What can you say, really? It's hard to just pick authors out of the air. I like Clive [Barker's] work. Mostly I read biographies and histories. I get a lot of manuscripts to read. I have one now that looks pretty interesting; it's a vampire novel. These are just manuscripts that the publishers send.

**HG:** To get quotes from you?

**RRM:** Yeah. I don't know how much that helps. It helped me! Thank God Dean [Koontz] and John Saul read *Swan Song*! It really helped me! Thank God they didn't say, "I really hate to do this and I'm not going to do this!" So I better not say anything...

**HG:** What about the cover art for your novels, from the old Avon covers to the new reissues to the British editions. Have you been happy with the cover art? And do you have much say in what's done?

**RRM:** I have more say now than I did. Again, that's one of those things where you're never going to be totally satisfied. I've never been satisfied, though some of the British covers come close.

[Tape change]

**HG:** Let's talk about hope at the end of your novels. *They Thirst* is one that has almost no hope until the very end and I've found that it's too powerful for some people. When I read *Cujo* by Stephen King, I felt ripped off that the kid died. I'm sure that that was realistic, but I felt ripped off that I struggled with them through 300 or 400 pages and the kid died...

**RRM:** I like to have somebody to root for. That may be old-fashioned, it may be unrealistic, but, man, I'm tired of dark all the time. I don't think something has to be dark all the time. I can get hot about that! [laughs]

**HG:** That's a problem I have reading some of the older stuff, Poe and Lovecraft; I like Poe, I don't care for Lovecraft, but both are very dark, gloomy... I feel like crap after reading them.

**RRM:** Yeah. I'm trying to work more humor in. I think there's more humor in *The Wolf's Hour*.

**HG:** *Stinger* was full of it.

**RRM:** I hope so. It's kind of difficult to put humor in sometimes. I just do not like dark, dark upon dark, and more dark, without hope. I don't see the point of traveling with people if you feel there's no destination.

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**HG:** It's not fun.

**RRM:** No, it's not fun. It doesn't take you anywhere. And there are some who will say, "Yes, it does take you somewhere: it shows you how decrepit and how cruel, cruel this world is!" And I'm sure that's true, it is a cruel, cruel world, but I don't want to be a part of saying, "Yes, it is a cruel, cruel world." They'll say, "That's fine. That's the way it ought to be." I don't think that's the way it ought to be at all. And I want to say that's not the way it ought to be.

**HG:** I think *Swan Song* got the message across well: even after a nuclear war, there's still hope...

**RRM:** There is hope if you can somehow get rid of a person's greed for power, which really doesn't mean anything. Everybody wants more of what they have more of. It seems to me that if you get rid of that and you get people working together, maybe that sounds corny, maybe it is corny, but if you get people working together, things get done.

**HG:** We were talking earlier today about comic books. [Your story] "Night Calls the Green Falcon," which blew me away: was that influenced any by the comic series *The Watchmen*? Did you read *The Watchmen*?

**RRM:** No, I haven't read *The Watchmen*, but it is influenced by all the comics I used to read as a kid. And it's influenced by all of the serials that I used to go to when I was a kid, the Batman serials, Zorro—those were great.

**HG:** I loved the story. The whole thing, the serial killer, the serial chapters, the serial star...

**RRM:** You know, it's funny. Somebody said, "This is interesting how McCammon did this. This guy used to be in the serials and then there was a serial killer." And I sat there and thought, "I didn't even think of that!"

**HG:** Really?

**RRM:** Really. I didn't even think about the idea that there was a serial killer and this guy was in the serials. I didn't even think about it until someone pointed it out.

**HG:** We were talking about a favorite among your own works. Do you have a favorite short story that you've done? Or is that too hard to decide?

**RRM:** Well, there are two that I really like that I guess could be my favorite two. One is "Something Passed By." I'm excited about that, because it's got other horror writers' names in it. Everybody I could think of came together. And

I'm also excited about "Haunted World." Neither of those are out yet, but...

**HG:** I liked "Makeup," although it was slaughtered on the TV show *Darkroom*. The story itself had a Robert Bloch ending, a *Twilight Zone* ending to it.

**RRM:** Well, the dramatization changed everything about the story, down to the minor characters' names, for some reason. I could just see a big table full of people saying, "I don't think this guy's name should be Joe; his name should be Red. Don't you think his name should be Red?" (laughs) "No, I think his name should be Mr. Green. And I'll fight to the death to see his name changed to Mr. Green!" I can just see that. I don't know why that should be so.

**HG:** Were you pleased with *The Twilight Zone* adaptation of "Nightcrawlers?"

**RRM:** Yeah, they did a good job, and I was excited about how it turned out. When I sat down to watch "Makeup," I was scared because this was my first thing on TV. And then after it was on a few minutes, I wasn't frightened anymore because it wasn't my work. It didn't have anything to do with me or what I had written. I was kind of waiting in trepidation to see what *The Twilight Zone* would do; I wasn't committing myself emotionally, whether I should be nervous or excited. But they did a good job.

**HG:** I liked your short story "Best Friends."

**RRM:** Well, that was different. I wrote that specifically to try my hand at more graphic horror. I wanted to do something more strictly horror because I figured people would enjoy reading that kind of horror—die-hard horror fans [would]. So I figured I'd go ahead and try something that was just outright horror.

**HG:** Horror Writers of America (HWA) is a relatively new organization. Didn't you start HWA?

**RRM:** The idea. Other people did the work, really put it together.

**HG:** Are you still active in it? Weren't you the editor for the first year's newsletter?

**RRM:** No, just the first two issues. I'm active in that I'm on the Board, whatever that means. I don't really have to be active in it anymore because it's gotten off to a good start. Dean [Koontz] and Charlie Grant... Dean worked so hard on it, he got such a good foundation, that it's going to run itself. It's strange to think that it's really happened. But it has happened. It was amazing to go to that convention in New York and see all of those people there, people who were happy in being part of the group.

I've heard it said that there were some politics involved, this, that, and the other. I hope that doesn't happen,

I think that's a bunch of bullshit that doesn't need to be there. It may be that wherever people gather there's going to be politics and those kinds of things, but I hope that doesn't get into the organization. You know, who knows this person better, who likes this person better; that doesn't need to be there. There were a lot of very pleased and happy people there, happy to be part of a group or community, and that's very exciting. I'm very glad it's worked out so well.

I think there are great things ahead for it, too. I think there are a lot of things in the future, the bringing together of American and European horror writers and bringing the work of European horror writers to American readers, it's going to help with that. There are a lot of things left to be done... I hope there'll be an HWA anthology soon. We were hoping to do an HWA calendar, and some other stuff. I'm hoping that HWA gets tougher in terms of dealing with publishers, and dealing with agents, too. That's where the organization can be important—how does it deal with publishers? how does it deal with people who hold purse strings?—those things.

**HG:** Were you surprised that you won the Bram Stoker award for Best Novel for *Swan Song*?

**RRM:** I knew it was up (of course, I knew it was up!), I could see the voting, so I was excited about it and I hoped it worked out. I was extremely floored about "The Deep End," which won Best Short Story. I thought I had a pretty good chance to win with *Swan Song* because I could see how the voting was going in the newsletter, but I had no idea about "The Deep End." It took me by surprise.

**HG:** What other awards have you gotten?

**RRM:** *Usher's Passing* won an award here for Best Book of the Year for 1984 from the Library Association, which was neat, because it was the first time a horror novel had won.

**HG:** Things have been nominated for World Fantasy Awards, *Swan Song*...

**RRM:** *Swan Song* was [nominated], "Best Friends" was [nominated], "Nightcrawlers" was nominated. Awards don't... [struggles with how to say this] If you're proud and pleased with what you've done, if you feel you've done a good job and the best job you can do, that's, you know, that's it. You can't do any better. So whether somebody... And, gee, there are so many good books out there, really, really good books, and people doing the very best they can do, only one can win an award.

Of all the things that people in HWA seem to get fired up about, it's the awards. I hope it doesn't turn into just an awards ceremony. To me, awards are fine, they're fine for ego. But you know whether you've done a good job or not; nobody has to tell you whether you've done a good job

or not. You don't have to tell somebody else that they've done a good job. And again, there are so many good books out every year, that just saying, "Well, this person did a good job and he did a better job than this person here..." How can you do that? But I guess it's just a measure of our society; we need to have some sort of criteria.

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If you're proud and pleased with what you've done, if you feel you've done a good job and the best job you can do, that's, you know, that's it. You can't do any better.

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What was really neat, though, about HWA is that some people earned awards who I don't think had ever won anything, in terms of the World Fantasy context. And they were so thrilled at being recognized that it would break your heart. They worked long and hard and were so thrilled to be recognized, it just meant everything to them.

**HG:** A little more personal history. How did you meet your wife, Sally?

**RRM:** I met her at a B. Dalton bookstore where she was working. She was teaching first grade and working there at night. I was working at a B. Dalton bookstore, not the same one, but one of my first jobs was working there. So we met and I asked her out. Our second date was to see, on Halloween, "The Innocents" or something like that, and an old movie, silent film, where everybody looks like they used to sit in a flour factory, everybody's walking around with flour all over their faces... Strange movie. That was our second date. [Calls for Sally] Sally, how long have we been married?

**Sally:** 7 1/2 years.

**Rick:** 1981. [Calls] Thank you. [laughs]

**Sally:** I'll remind you in August about it again. Our anniversary?

**RRM:** Right, right. Sally taught third grade for three years and first grade for seven years, and I worked at a newspaper as a copy editor, I worked at a department store in their advertising department, and I worked at B. Dalton bookstore.

**HG:** And became a writer.

**RRM:** And became a writer. Again, that was a period of feeling kind of caged or trapped, because I wanted to be a reporter and I was working at the newspaper with this guy. I asked him, "What are my chances of becoming a reporter?" I was working at the copy desk, copy editing stuff, and he said (he didn't like me for some reason) that they didn't work like that, they didn't promote people from the copy desk. If they needed reporters, they hired reporters from outside. And he said as long as he worked in that place, I

## Lights Out!

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would never be a reporter. I don't know why he said that; he just did not like me for some reason. But really, he said as long as he worked in that building, I would not be a reporter.

**HG:** I'll bet that made you feel good.

**RRM:** Oh. I'd done some work (this was the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, the *Birmingham News* is the afternoon paper), so I'd done some work for the *Birmingham News* as a freelance reporter and I went to do stories like a rumored sighting of a Bigfoot-like creature. I spent time at the homeless missions, freelance stuff like that. But, anyway, this guy at the *Post-Herald* said that as long as he was at the paper, I'd never be a reporter, and it felt like, again, that I was trapped, because I would be at that copy editing desk if I didn't do something to get myself out of there. So I started working on *Baal* and it worked out.

**HG:** Were you able to quit working and become a full-time writer immediately after *Baal* was published?

**RRM:** No, it was a couple of years later.

**HG:** So after *The Night Boat* and *Bethany's Sin* were out.

**RRM:** Yeah. About that same time—1980. I had never dreamed of being able to make a living writing. What got me: there was a bookstore near the newspaper. I would go to this bookstore. They had all of these books, hardback books. And you know when you open up a book, you smell... I don't know what that smell is, but that's the most wonderful smell in the world. To smell that smell of ideas on paper. And I wanted to be part of that world, if I could possibly be. And the perfect pages. Of course, nothing is perfect, it's certainly not a perfect world, but it is a free world. You can construct your own world every nine months or so. One of the problems that I had working for other people is that I got bored silly after about 9 or 10 months. So now I can change it, I can shake it up. When I finish a book, I don't have to do the same exact thing; I can shake it up and do whatever I want to do. That to me is priceless.

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### *The Wolf's Hour*

A Review of Sorts by Hunter Goatley

Robert R. McCammon's latest novel is *The Wolf's Hour*, published as a paperback original by Pocket Books in March 1989. Set during World War II, *The Wolf's Hour* tells the story of Michael Gallatin, a British Secret Service agent, and his mission to prevent the Nazis from sabotaging the planned Allied Invasion in 1944. But Michael Gallatin is different from most espionage agents, because he is a lycanthrope—a werewolf!

When an American agent in Paris uncovers some information vital to the plans of the Allied Forces, the Nazis set up 24-hour surveillance on him to prevent his passing on the discoveries. The Americans approach the British for help, who in turn approach Major Michael Gallatin, a hero from early skirmishes in North Africa. When Michael agrees to parachute into Nazi-infested France, the action begins. The story takes Michael from Paris to bomb-gutted Berlin, where he poses as a German baron, Frederick von Fange, who is "engaged" to Germany's hottest film actress (and Allied agent) Chesna van Dorne. Together they search for the meaning behind the Nazi plan called Iron Fist. The action continues from a deadly hunt on a booby-trapped train to a Nazi concentration camp, where Michael discovers the atrocities the Nazis are capable of committing. As Michael encounters danger after danger, he uses his powers as both man and wolf to battle the evil Nazis.

Throughout the book, we learn about Michael Gallatin through a series of flashbacks to his childhood, when he was attacked by a werewolf after witnessing the slaughter of his Russian family. Mikhail Gallatinov, only 8 years old, manages to survive "the change," despite the odds. He is raised as a member of the werewolf pack, whose members include Wiktor, the leader of the pack, and Renati, the woman who let Mikhail live. As Mikhail grows and learns to control his new talent, Wiktor teaches the boy the various aspects of mankind's world—literature, arts, physics, mathematics, etc. Contrary to the other members' thoughts, Wiktor feels that the boy is special.

McCammon's descriptions of the transformations between man and wolf, and back again, are very vivid. The process is painful, involving the breaking and reshaping of bones and the bowing of the spine, but the exhilarations felt while in wolf form override the pain. Early in the novel, Wiktor dismisses the tales of the wolfman as lies, declaring that the moon and night have nothing to do with the change. In fact, some members of the pack can change selectively, deciding which parts of their bodies change first and how much they change. This laying down of the rules is an important part of the novel, as it establishes how these werewolves function. McCammon's werewolves, when in wolf form, are true wolves, bounding on all fours, howling various songs, etc.

The glimpses into the life of the pack are fascinating, as we see the pack fight a berserker (a wolf that kills for the pleasure of killing) and try to bear young. The acceptance of Mikhail into the pack is a slow process and is utterly believable. Wiktor's only command to Mikhail is, "Live free," and he asks several times the unanswerable question: "What is the werewolf, in the eye of God?" It is this question that Michael Gallatin tries to answer, or at least come to grips with, for the duration of the novel.

As is McCammon's trademark, the characters in *The Wolf's Hour* are real flesh and blood characters. Michael Gallatin is a very complex person, struggling with the beast and the man inside him. The cast is fleshed out by some sympathetic characters, including a German Army deserter

who helps the Allies and a downed Russian pilot.

The roster for the bad guys includes some very despicable Nazis, chiefly Colonel Jerek Blok and his bodyguard, Boots, whose name comes from his method for disposing of Gestapo enemies. Blok is in charge of the Iron Fist project and tries to stop the Allies from discovering the secret. An American big-game hunter, Harry Sandler, who has personal ties to Michael Gallatin, is also linked with the Nazis.

With *The Wolf's Hour*, McCammon very successfully melds two very different genres: the werewolf tale and the World War II suspense thriller. The twists, turns, and cliffhanger chapter endings are guaranteed to increase your heart rate and make you turn pages as fast as you can read.

## Recommended Reading List

Compiled by Hunter Goatley

Each issue of the newsletter will contain a list of titles that come highly recommended by someone (this time, me). Let me take this opportunity to ask you to branch out when reading—try other authors or other genres.

You will find that I'm a big fan of F. Paul Wilson and Joe R. Lansdale, as well as Robert R. McCammon. I heartily recommend any of the novels and short stories these guys put out.

The following titles are all books I've read within the last year that I enjoyed immensely.

- *The Silence of the Lambs*, by Thomas Harris; now available in paperback
- *Black Wind*, by F. Paul Wilson
- *The Nightrunners* and *The Drive In*, by Joe R. Lansdale
- *Night Visions VI*, edited by Dean R. Koontz
- *Battlefield Earth*, by L. Ron Hubbard
- *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*, by Orson Scott Card

If you want to recommend a book or books that others may have missed, send the titles and authors to *Lights Out!*.

## Coming Attractions

The next issue of *Lights Out! - The Robert R. McCammon Newsletter* will be published in October. Some of the features planned include:

- A previously unpublished McCammon short story (hint: it's connected to the contest!)
- A complete Robert R. McCammon bibliography
- A look at *Blue World*
- A look at the 1989 HWA Banquet and Awards by Jodi Strissel
- Letters from you about this issue, McCammon, or life in general
- The latest news

See you in October...

## Ads

Advertising rates for next issue:

- Classified ads: 75 cents per line (45 characters)
- Full page ads (7 X 9 in): \$50
- Half page ads (7 X 4.5 in): \$30

For more details, contact *Lights Out!*.

Deadline for Vol. 1 No. 2:  
September 15, 1989

## Lights Out!

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