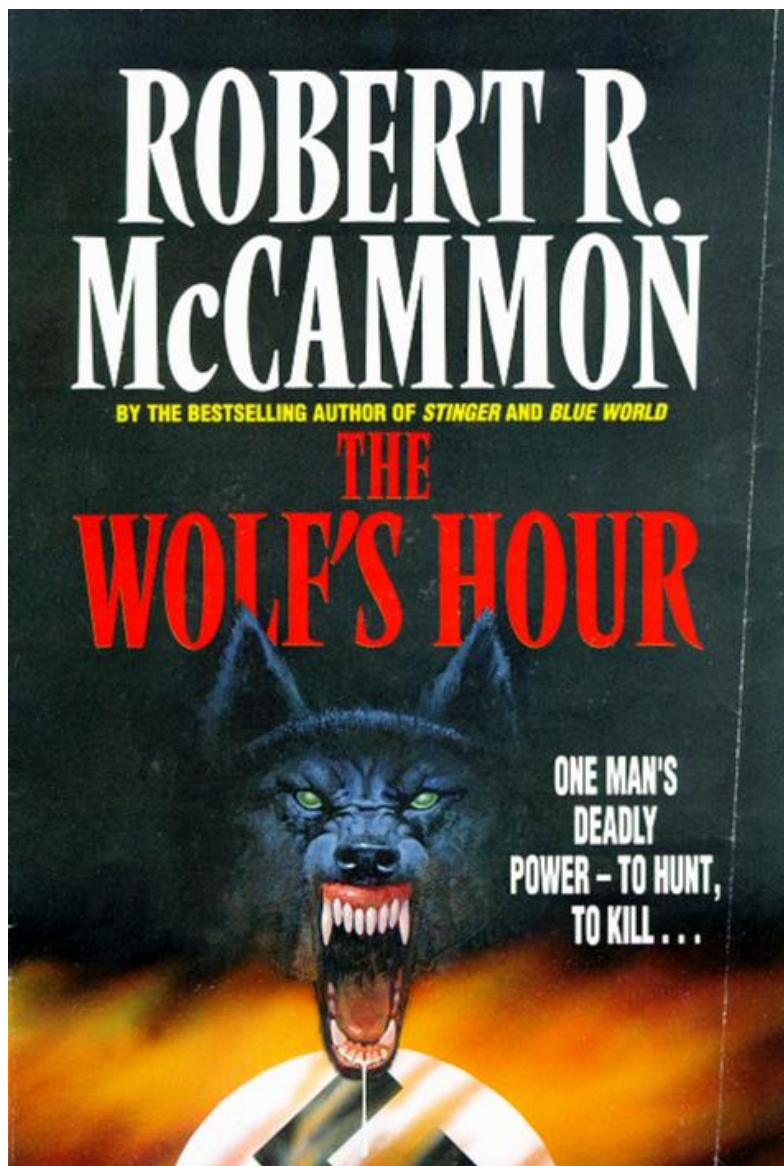

LIGHTS OUT!

The
ROBERT R. McCAMMON
Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 2
October 1989



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- The Almost-Complete Robert R. McCammon Bibliography
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 - A Review of *Blue World*
- News: *Mine* in Hardcover & British *The Wolf's Hour*

Lights Out!

The
Robert R. McCammon
Newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 2 October 1989

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Goat Busters

A Message from the Editor

Well, we've made it to the second issue of *Lights Out!*—*The Robert R. McCammon Newsletter*. I'm fresh back from a two-week vacation to my home state, Kentucky. We drove 4,523 miles during those two weeks—it's pretty tiresome stuff. Still, it was a much-needed break from work and a lot of other things, so I'm ready to get going on issue number 2.

Everything you've ever heard about publishing is true: no matter how well you've planned things, you're still going to miss deadlines. In this case, I had a project at work that demanded a lot of my time, so that kind of pushed this issue off a week or so.

There's not a lot of news on the McCammon front this time, but this issue is full of lots of new things, not the least of which is an original McCammon short story.

I am working with Rick McCammon on a possible series of author interviews, all conducted by Rick.

I recently finished reading *Razored Saddles*, the sort-of-Western anthology edited by Joe Lansdale and published by Dark Harvest. Some interesting stories, for sure! So . . . does it strike anyone else as odd how Dark Harvest books are very collectable, yet the quality of the books is frequently pretty lousy? I gave up counting the typographical errors in *Razored Saddles* when I reached 40—and that only included misspelled words, repeated words, and missing words. I didn't bother to count all of the punctuation errors. It sure seems to me that a little more care would go into the production of a book that will become an instant collector's item upon publication.

Some *Lights Out!* statistics: there were initially 300 copies printed of issue number 1. By the end of August we had completely sold out. I printed another 300 copies of issue number 1 (which can be identified by the words "Second Printing" on the publication box on Page 2) and those are well on their way to becoming extinct.

And finally, as most of you know already, we have a new address for *Lights Out!* mail. Please send all correspondence to:

Hunter Goatley
Lights Out!
P.O. Box 2111
Orem, Utah 84059-2111

Thanks to the following people for writing or calling with their thoughts on issue number 1: Ron Alfano, Jim Colson, Craig Goden, Dave Hinchberger, Jill Johnson, Scott Johnson, Joe R. Lansdale, Peter McMillan, Jim Orbaugh, Ken Owens, Ray Rexer, Jodi Adam Rothberg, Jodi Strissel, Terry Swindle, Mark Turek, Michael Yates, and Mark Ziesing. I hope I didn't forget anyone!

Things Unearthed...

News items of interest

Mine Completed;
Currently Scheduled as May Hardcover

As we reported last issue, the next McCammon novel will be called *Mine*. The book has been turned in to Pocket Books and is scheduled for publication in May 1990 as a hardcover edition. The release will follow on the heels of the Pocket Books paperback edition of *Blue World*, McCammon's short story collection, scheduled for April 1990. An excerpted chapter from *Mine* may appear in the collection.

Mine is about a woman who was a member of the Storm Front, an outfit similar to the SLA that Patty Hearst belonged to in the 1960s. The woman goes insane, kidnaps another woman's baby, and goes underground with the child. The novel chronicles the cross-country search for the kidnapped child.

McCammon Short Story "Lizard Man"
Appears in Dark Harvest's *Stalkers*

The newest McCammon short story is entitled "Lizard Man" and will appear in Dark Harvest's new anthology *Stalkers*. As the title implies, the book's central theme deals with people or things stalking others. "Lizard Man" is about an old man who traps alligators in the swamp and comes to realize that he is being stalked . . .

Other authors represented in *Stalkers* include Joe R. Lansdale, F. Paul Wilson, Dean Koontz, Rick Hautala, Richard Laymon, John Coyne, Rex Miller, and eleven others. The book is scheduled for publication in October 1989. There will be a limited edition (750 copies) signed by all contributors (\$65.00) and a trade hardcover (\$19.95).

For more information, write to Dark Harvest, P.O. Box 941, Arlington Heights, IL 60006.

Simon & Schuster Audio's
Something Passed By

We reported last issue that Simon and Schuster Audio would be releasing a second audiocassette collection based on McCammon's work. The tapes, entitled *Something Passed By*, will consist of more stories from *Blue World*. The release date for the tapes has been rescheduled for

April 1990 to coincide with the release of the Pocket Books paperback edition of *Blue World*.

Something Passed By will feature the following stories:

- "Something Passed By"
- "Makeup"
- "The Red House"
- "Pin"
- "Chico"

Three of the five stories are available only in *Blue World*. The reader for the tapes has still not been decided, though William Windom, who read the stories for *Nightcrawlers*, is a strong possibility.

British Hardcover Editions of
The Wolf's Hour and *Bethany's Sin*

Continuing the recent tradition of British hardcovers of American paperbacks, British publisher Grafton Books will publish hardcover and trade paperback editions of *The Wolf's Hour* in October 1989. The Grafton edition marks the first and only hardback appearance of the book. The print run for *The Wolf's Hour* is the same as Grafton's April *Blue World* print run: 2,000 hardcover editions and 4,000 trade paperback editions.

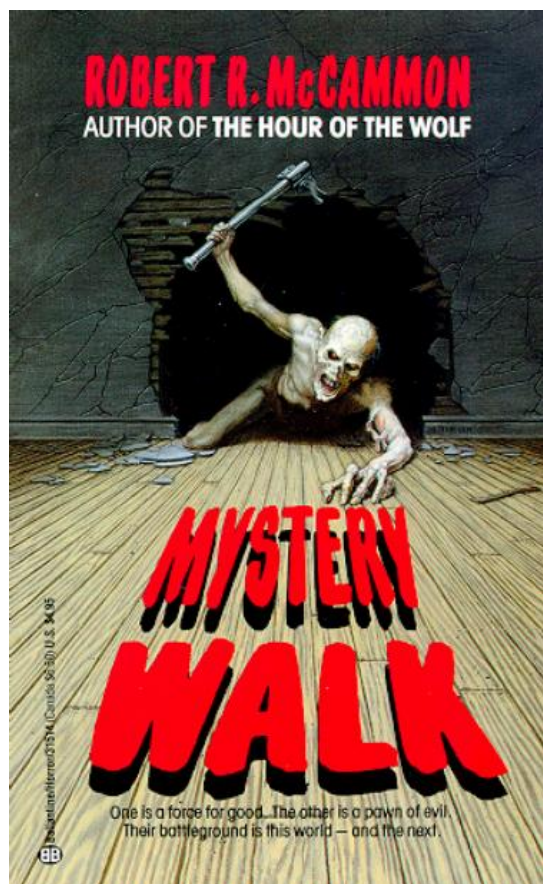
The cover art is by Bruno Elletori, the same artist responsible for the covers of Grafton's editions of *Stinger* and *Blue World*.

Bethany's Sin will finally be released in a British hardcover edition by Kinnell, the same publisher that produced last year's *Stinger* hardcover. At least three different times during the past year, rumors of the book's release were circulating. Though I don't have a firm publication date, it appears that it could be published soon. As with the other British editions, *Bethany's Sin* will have a small print run, though I don't know the exact numbers.

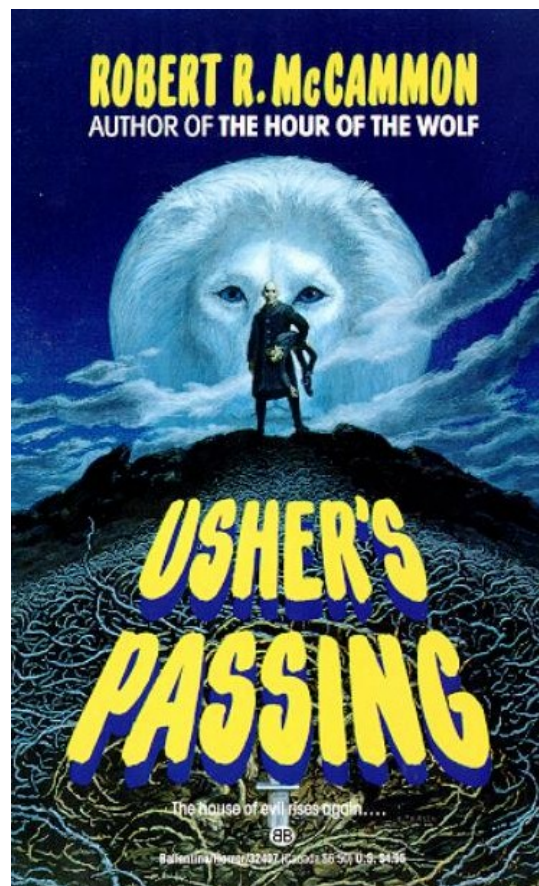
Miscellany: Reprints, Reprints,
and More Reprints

Ballantine Reprints

Ballantine Books is reprinting paperback editions of *Mystery Walk* and *Usher's Passing* in October 1989. Both books feature new cover art that closely resembles the



Cover for Ballantine Reprint
of *Mystery Walk*



Cover for Ballantine Reprint
of *Usher's Passing*

theme of the Pocket Books editions of McCammon's other novels.

An interesting note: the original cover flats produced for the reprints state "Author of *The Hour of the Wolf*." The title has been correctly changed to "Author of *The Wolf's Hour*" on the covers of the published books.

Possible They Thirst Hardcover

It appears that Dark Harvest may be publishing a hardcover edition of Robert R. McCammon's 1981 vampire epic *They Thirst*. While nothing has been signed yet, McCammon has approved the new edition; talks are currently underway between Dark Harvest and McCammon's publisher, Pocket Books.

British Usher's Passing Available

The original first British printing of *Usher's Passing* (a Pan Books paperback from 1986) can be purchased from Craig Goden, owner of The Time Tunnel. The book has been out-of-print for the last couple of years, but Craig was able

to dig some up. Craig's prices are just about the most reasonable in the business; you can order from Craig by writing to this address:

The Time Tunnel
313 Beechwood Avenue
Middlesex, NJ 08846
201-560-0738 (9AM-9PM ET)

Non-fiction Book Planned:
The Robert R. McCammon Companion

Dave Hinchberger, owner of the Overlook Connection mail-order business, is working on a non-fiction book covering McCammon's career. The book, tentatively titled *The Robert R. McCammon Companion*, may see release sometime in 1991.

Dave is currently in the process of gathering material for the book, which will include interviews with McCammon, photos, and essays on McCammon's work by other authors.

Dave is seeking copies of local reviews, interviews, photos, and related material; if you've got something to send, you can mail it to this address:

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

Idaho Town Named for McCammon
(Well, Not Really)

McCammon, Idaho, is a sleepy little town located just off Interstate 15 in Southern Idaho, about 20 miles southeast of Pocatello. The following excerpt about McCammon is from *History of Idaho*, edited by James H. Hawley and published in 1920:

McCammon, situated in the western part of Bannock County, is a junction point for the main line and Salt Lake City & Butte division of the Oregon Short Line railway system. It is in the irrigated district of the Port Neuf-Marsh Valley project and is an important shipping point. The village was incorporated in 1908 and two years later reported a population of 321. In 1918, the population was estimated at 600. McCammon has a bank, a weekly newspaper, waterworks, electric light, modern public school building, a telephone

exchange, well stocked stores, churches of various denominations, etc.

McCammon boasts a population today of approximately 770. Big growth rate since 1918, huh?

Ziesing Publishes Lansdale Collection
By Bizarre Hands

Joe R. Lansdale's first short story collection, titled *By Bizarre Hands*, is scheduled for publication this month by Mark Ziesing, the same publisher who brought us the *Book of the Dead* hardcover in July. The collection includes stories spanning Lansdale's career, no small feat considering Lansdale has written over 100 short stories in many different genres.

When I spoke with Mark in August, the book was being typeset; it should be available in late October. There will be both a signed, slipcased limited edition (\$65.00) and a regular trade edition (\$25.00). You can order directly from Mark by writing to this address:

Mark V. Ziesing
P.O. Box 76
Shingletown, CA 96088
(916) 474-1580 — 10 AM–4 PM PT Mon–Fri



The Almost-Complete Robert R. McCammon Bibliography

Compiled by Hunter Goatley & Robert R. McCammon

The following bibliography contains listings for all of McCammon's books and short stories, along with selected interviews and non-fiction. The short story listings include the first appearance of a given short story, followed by any additional reprints of the story.

Non-British foreign editions were omitted from the list. German editions of *Mystery Walk* and *They Thirst* were published a few years ago, and there will soon be French and Japanese editions of some of the novels. *Lights Out!* will pass on more information as it becomes available.

Every attempt was made to ensure that this list is accurate and up-to-date. If you find that an item is missing, please send the bibliographical information to *Lights Out!* Thanks to Jim Orbaugh for supplying information about the limited editions.

BOOKS

Baal

1. New York: Avon Books, August 1978. Paperback.
2. London: Sphere Books, December 1979. Paperback, 9 printings to date.
3. Bath: Firecrest/Chivers Press, July 1985. Hardcover.
4. New York: Pocket Books, October 1988. Paperback.

Bethany's Sin

1. New York: Avon Books, January 1980. Paperback.
2. London: Sphere Books, October 1980. Paperback, 6 printings to date.
3. New York: Pocket Books, October 1988. Paperback.
4. London: Kinnell, September 1989. Hardcover.

The Night Boat

1. New York: Avon Books, August 1980. Paperback.
2. London: Sphere Books, May 1981. Paperback, 5 printings to date.
3. New York: Pocket Books, October 1988. Paperback.

They Thirst

1. New York: Avon Books, May 1981. Paperback, 3 printings.
2. London: Sphere Books, December 1981. Paperback, 6 printings to date.
3. New York: Pocket Books, October 1988. Paperback.

Mystery Walk

Literary Guild Book Clubs selection

1. New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston, May 1983. Hardcover, 3 printings.
2. London: Pan Books, 1984. Paperback.
3. New York: Ballantine Books, April 1984. Paperback, 3 printings.

Usher's Passing

1. New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston, October 1984. Hardcover.
2. London: Pan Books, March 1986. Paperback.
3. New York: Ballantine Books, October 1985. Paperback, 5 printings.

Swan Song

1. New York: Pocket Books, June 1987. Paperback.
2. London: Sphere Books, 1988. Paperback.
3. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, June 1989. Deluxe

hardcover edition limited to 672 signed, numbered, and slipcased copies (including 52 leather-bound copies lettered A-ZZ).

4. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, June 1989. Trade hardcover edition.

Stinger

Literary Guild Book Clubs selection

1. New York: Pocket Books, April 1988. Paperback.
2. London: Kinnell, 1988. Hardcover.
3. London: Grafton, May 1989. Paperback.

The Wolf's Hour

1. New York: Pocket Books, March 1989. Paperback.
2. London: Grafton, October 1989. Hardcover edition limited to 2,000 copies.
3. London: Grafton, October 1989. Trade paperback edition limited to 4,000 copies.

Blue World

Short story collection

1. London: Grafton, April 1989. Hardcover edition limited to 2,000 copies.
2. London: Grafton, April 1989. Trade paperback edition limited to 4,000 copies.
3. New York: Pocket Books, April 1990. Paperback (scheduled release date).

Contents:

- "Introduction"
- "Yellowjacket Summer"
- "Makeup"
- "Doom City"
- "Nightcrawlers"
- "Pin"
- "Yellachile's Cage"
- "I Scream Man"
- "He'll Come Knocking at Your Door"
- "Chico"
- "Night Calls the Green Falcon"
- "The Red House"
- "Something Passed By"
- "Blue World"

Mine

- New York: Pocket Books, May 1990. Hardcover (scheduled release date).

SHORT STORIES

"Best Friends"

1. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Deluxe hardcover edition limited to 552 signed, numbered, and slipcased copies (including 52 copies lettered A–ZZ in walnut slipcase).
2. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Trade hardcover.
3. In *Night Visions: Hardshell*. New York: Berkley, August 1988.
4. In *Night Fears*. London: Headline, 1989. Trade paperback.

"Black Boots"

1. In *Razored Saddles*, eds. Joe Lansdale and Pat LoBrutto. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, August 1989. Deluxe hardcover edition limited to 600 signed, numbered, and slipcased copies.
2. In *Razored Saddles*, eds. Joe Lansdale and Pat LoBrutto. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, August 1989. Trade hardcover.

"Blue World"

In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Chico"

In *Blue World*, 1989.

"The Deep End"

1. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Deluxe hardcover.
2. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Trade hardcover.
3. In *Night Visions: Hardshell*. New York: Berkley, August 1988.
4. In *Night Fears*. London: Headline, 1989. Trade paperback.

"Doom City"

1. In *Doom City*, ed. Charles L. Grant. New York: TOR, December 1987.
2. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Eat Me"

1. Excerpt from story in *Midnight Graffiti #2*, Fall 1988.
2. In *Book of the Dead*, eds. John Skipp and Craig Spector. New York: Bantam, June 1989. Paperback.
3. In *Book of the Dead*, eds. John Skipp and Craig Spector. Willimantic, CT: Ziesing Press, July 1989. Deluxe hardcover edition limited to 500 signed, numbered, and slipcased copies.
4. In *Book of the Dead*, eds. John Skipp and Craig Spector. Willimantic, CT: Ziesing Press, July 1989. Trade hardcover.

"Fragments of Horror from the Notebook of Robert R. McCammon"
Excerpts from novels and stories in progress

The Horror Show—Robert R. McCammon Special, Spring 1987.

"Haunted World"

In *Post Mortem—New Tales of Ghostly Horror*, eds. Paul F. Olson and David B. Silva. New York: St. Martin's Press, March 1989. Hardcover.

"He'll Come Knocking On Your Door"

1. In *Halloween Horrors*, ed. Alan Ryan. New York: Doubleday, September 1986. Hardcover.

2. In *Halloween Horrors*, ed. Alan Ryan. New York: Berkley, Charter, October 1987. Paperback.
3. In *Halloween Horrors*, ed. Alan Ryan. London: Sphere Books, 1988. Paperback (all but a few copies were destroyed because of copyright infringements).
4. In *Halloween Horrors*, ed. Alan Ryan. London: Severn House, 1988. Hardcover.
5. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"I Scream Man"

1. *The Horror Show*, Winter 1985.
2. In *Best of the Horror Show*, ed. David B. Silva. Chicago: 2AM, November 1987. Trade paperback.
3. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"A Life in the Day of"

1. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Deluxe hardcover.
2. In *Night Visions IV*. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1987. Trade hardcover.
3. In *Night Visions: Hardshell*. New York: Berkley, August 1988.
4. In *Night Fears*. London: Headline, 1989. Trade paperback.

"Lights Out"

Excerpt from *Swan Song*

The Twilight Zone Magazine, August 1987.

"Lizard Man"

1. In *Stalkers*, eds. Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, August 1989. Deluxe hardcover edition limited to 750 signed, numbered, and slipcased copies.
2. In *Stalkers*, eds. Ed Gorman and Martin H. Greenberg. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, August 1989. Trade hardcover.

"Makeup"

1. In *Masters of Horror*, ed. Frank Coffey. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1981. Hardcover.
2. In *Masters of Horror*, ed. Frank Coffey. New York: Ace, 1982. Paperback.
3. In *Masters of Horror*, ed. Frank Coffey. New York: Berkley, 1988. Paperback.
4. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Night Calls the Green Falcon"

1. In *Silver Scream*, ed. David J. Schow. Arlington Heights, IL: Dark Harvest, 1988. Hardcover.
2. In *Silver Scream*, ed. David J. Schow. New York: TOR, 1988. Paperback.
3. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"The Night I Killed the King"

Unfinished short story

Lights Out!—The Robert R. McCammon Newsletter, Vol. 1 No. 2, October 1989.

"Nightcrawlers"

1. In *Masques*, ed. J.N. Williamson. Baltimore, MD: Maclay and Associates, 1984. Hardcover.
2. In *Best of Masques*, ed. J.N. Williamson. New York: Berkley, June 1988. Paperback.
3. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Pin"

In *Blue World*, 1989.

"The Red House"

1. In *Greystone Bay*, ed. Charles L. Grant. New York: TOR, October 1985. Paperback.
2. In *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories 1985*, ed. A. Saha. New York: DAW, 1986. Paperback.
3. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Something Passed By"

In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Stinger"

Excerpt from *Stinger*

The Twilight Zone Magazine, June 1988.

"Swan Song"

Excerpt from *Swan Song*

The Horror Show—Robert R. McCammon Special, Spring 1987.

"The Thang"

In *Hot Blood*, eds. Jeff Gelb and Lonnn Friend. New York: Pocket Books, May 1989. Paperback.

"Yellachile's Cage"

1. *The 1987 World Fantasy Convention Program Book*, 1987.
2. In *Blue World*, 1989.

"Yellowjacket Summer"

1. *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, October 1986.
2. In *Blue World*, 1989.

SELECTED SHORT NON-FICTION

"About *The Wolf's Hour*"

In *Mystery Scene #20*, March 1989.

"How I Wrote *Baal*"

In *Baal*. New York: Pocket Books, 1988.

"How I Wrote *Bethany's Sin*"

In *Bethany's Sin*. New York: Pocket Books, 1988.

"How I Wrote *The Night Boat*"

In *The Night Boat*. New York: Pocket Books, 1988.

"How I Wrote *They Thirst*"

In *They Thirst*. New York: Pocket Books, 1988.

"Innocence and Terror—The Heart of Horror"

In *How to Write Tales of Horror, Fantasy, and Science Fiction*, ed. J.N. Williamson. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1987.

"Track of the Cat, by Walter Van Tilburg Clark"

In *Horror: The 100 Best Books*, eds. Stephen Jones and Kim Newman. New York: Carroll & Graf, 1988.

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

American Fantasy. "The American Fantasy Interview with Robert R.

McCammon"

American Fantasy, Winter 1988.

Goatley, Hunter. "The Robert R. McCammon Interview"

Lights Out!—The Robert R. McCammon Newsletter, July 1989.

Grabowski, William J. "Interview with Robert R. McCammon"

The Horror Show, Summer 1985.

Grabowski, William J. "Interview with Robert R. McCammon"

The Horror Show—Robert R. McCammon Special, Spring 1987.

Labbe, Rodney. "Interview with Robert R. McCammon"

Footsteps #8, November 1987.

Lansdale, Joe. "Interview: Robert R. McCammon"

The Twilight Zone Magazine, October 1986.

Raley, William G. "Coffee Shop: An Interview with Rick McCammon"

After Hours, Winter 1989.

Strissel, Jodi. "Interview with Robert R. McCammon"

Castle Rock, November 1988.

Taylor, J.R. "Personalities: Robert R. McCammon"

I Cover the War, October 1987.

Taylor, J.R. "Personalities: Robert R. McCammon"

I Cover the War, October 1988.

Wiater, Stanley. "Horror in Print: Robert R. McCammon"

Fangoria #44, May 1985.

Wiater, Stanley. "Interview: Robert R. McCammon"

Fantasy Review #101, May 1987.

Wiater, Stanley. "A Sting in the Tale"

Fear, Nov/Dec 1988.

DRAMATIZATIONS

"Makeup"

On *Darkroom*, ABC-TV, 1981. Directed by Curtis Harrington. Teleplay by Jeffrey Bloom. Starring Billy Crystal and Brian Dennehy.

"Nightcrawlers"

On *The Twilight Zone*, CBS-TV, 1985. Directed by William Friedkin. Screenplay by Philip DeGuerre. Starring Scott Paulin.

Nightcrawlers: Stories from Blue World

Dramatic reading on audiocassette, Simon & Schuster Audio, 1989. Read by William Windom. Running time: 180 minutes on 2 cassettes. Includes "Night Calls the Green Falcon," "Nightcrawlers," and "Yellowjacket Summer."

Something Passed By

Dramatic reading on audiocassette, Simon & Schuster Audio, 1990. Includes "Something Passed By," "Makeup," "The Red House," "Pin," and "Chico." ■

Robert R. McCammon Q & A

Do you have questions you'd like to ask Robert R. McCammon? Beginning next issue, *Lights Out!* will carry a McCammon Question & Answer column. Simply send in your questions and we'll pass them on to Rick, who will answer them here. Write today!

Blue World

A Review by Hunter Goatley

While Robert R. McCammon's novels have consistently sold well, only recently have his short stories begun to receive the recognition they deserve as some of the best in the genre. "Makeup" did not appear in print until 1981; since then, however, McCammon's shorter works have cropped up in many of the best anthologies of recent years: "Nightcrawlers" in *Masques*, "Night Calls the Green Falcon" in *Silver Scream*, and "Haunted World" in *Post Mortem*, to name a few.

Until recently, McCammon fans have had to search for obscure books and magazines to find his earlier short stories. But in April 1989, the British publisher Grafton Books released *Blue World*, the long-awaited Robert R. McCammon short story collection. The book was released in two states: a limited number of hardcovers, published primarily for British libraries, and a trade paperback edition. Both editions made their way to many U.S. mail-order dealers.

McCammon's American publisher, Pocket Books, has scheduled its release of *Blue World* for April 1990. The company's audio division, Simon and Schuster Audio, released an audiocassette featuring dramatic readings of three of the *Blue World* stories in March 1989. The stories are read by William Windom. The tape was so successful that a second collection is scheduled for release in April 1990.

Blue World collects eight of McCammon's previously published stories, plus three new stories and a new novella, also entitled "Blue World." The older stories include the rare shorts "I Scream Man!" from *The Horror Show*, and "Yellachile's Cage," published in the *1987 World Fantasy Convention Program Book*. The new short stories are "Pin," "Chico," and "Something Passed By"; all three of the stories differ from McCammon's usual style, "Pin" being the most bizarre.

"Pin" tells the story of a man who is going to the local McDonald's to shoot everybody there. Before he goes, he decides to drive a straight pin through the center of his eye. He believes that once the pin passes through, the secrets of the universe will be revealed to him. After the revelation, he'll kill the McDonald's patrons. The story is told from the man's viewpoint and jumps from subject to subject, just as you might expect the man's mind to work. I think most people have hangups about their eyes (why else wouldn't everybody switch from glasses to contact lenses?). "Pin" is a story guaranteed to make you squirm.

"Chico" is about a twelve-year-old, mentally handicapped boy who is also deaf, mute, and blind in one eye (pretty pitiful, huh?). Afraid of losing Chico to the authorities, Chico's poverty-stricken mother is living with a cruel, abusive man named Salomon, who keeps the welfare workers at bay while enjoying the welfare check Chico brings in. The story is a nifty little revenge tale of sorts — I won't give it away, but suffice it to say that roaches play a big part in the story. And, no, it's not like all those other roach stories...

The last new short story is "Something Passed By," a weird vision of the earth after "something passed by"—a comet, a magnetic storm, a black hole, something—and "warped" the molecules of matter. This is an earth where water explodes, but gasoline is safe to drink; a land of "concrete quicksand" where sidewalks will briefly liquify, swallow people and things, then solidify again; a land of "gravity howitzers," and the "pharaoh effect," where rooms in houses are completely devoid of air. Like "Pin," this story is a fascinating look at a very bizarre situation.

Sharp readers will notice (actually, you'd have to be living

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in a cave not to) that "Something Passed By" contains the names of twenty-five horror authors. "Disguised" as streets and buildings, the list includes Lansdale's EXXON, King's Lane, Bradbury Park, Bloch School, Spector Theatre, and Skipp Religious Bookstore (!).

Among the reprinted stories in *Blue World* is McCammon's classic "Nightcrawlers." Originally published in the 1984 anthology *Masques*, "Nightcrawlers" is set in an Alabama diner on a stormy night. One of the refugees from the storm is a Vietnam vet named Price, the sole survivor of his army unit, the Nightcrawlers. Price was exposed to a chemical he termed Howdy Doody that left him with the ability to make things in his head come true. And the things that are coming after him now are the Nightcrawlers... This excellent story was adapted for television in 1985 on CBS-TV's revival of *The Twilight Zone*; that episode was one of the few true successes of the recent series.

McCammon's first published short story was "Makeup," a neat "Twilight Zone-ish" tale about a small-time thief who steals the makeup kit of a dead horror film star, Orlon Kronsteen; the thief discovers that the makeup kit holds some very special makeup. This story has a tie-in with McCammon's 1981 novel *They Thirst*, in that Prince Vulkan's castle in the novel belonged to Orlon Kronsteen.

One of the most enjoyable of the reprints is "Night Calls the Green Falcon," a fun action tale centered around a has-been serial-movie star, the Green Falcon, who goes after a serial killer known as the Fliptop Killer. The novella, which was one of the highlights of the 1988 anthology *Silver Scream*, is a touching look at a hero from the past and what his life is like today. In homage to the old movie serials, the novella is broken up into 10 chapters, each of which ends with a cliffhanger. Fortunately, though, you don't have to wait a week to see what happens next.

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The other reprints include "Yellowjacket Summer," about a boy who has special communication with the stinging insects; "He'll Come Knocking at Your Door," a tale about an unusual Halloween tradition; "Doom City," about a man who wakes to find that his wife has become a dried-up corpse; and "The Red House," a fiery story about a very unusual family. These stories continue to demonstrate McCammon's knack for crafting exciting shorter pieces of fiction.

And now we come to the collection's previously unpublished novella, "Blue World," which is about a priest's obsession with a porn star and the killer who is stalking them. "Blue World" holds the distinction of being written in just a week—all 140 pages of it. This fact is evident in the story's pacing; it never slows down, and I got the feeling that McCammon had a ball writing it.

The main character of "Blue World" is Father John Lancaster, a priest whose church is located next to the porno district of San Francisco. While listening to confessions one afternoon, he is visited by a woman named Debra Rocks, a porn star whose best friend was killed the night before by a "freak." After the woman departs, Father Lancaster grows curious about the world that exists around the corner from his church, and one night when he can't sleep, he visits the area and is shocked by what he sees. Even more, he is shocked by the fact that he likes what he saw. Meanwhile, his obsession with Debra Rocks grows.

As the story progresses, Father Lancaster (as "John Lucky") befriends Debbie Stoner, the real woman behind Debra Rocks. As he gets caught up in her world, the "freak" continues to kill other actresses that appeared in one of Debra's movies—and Debbie and "Lucky" are next on his list.

In "Blue World," McCammon explores the feelings of a man of God who becomes obsessed with a lifestyle completely different from his own. It was very interesting for me, a Catholic myself, to read about Father Lancaster. Without giving anything away, let me say that the novella has a very satisfying ending.

Oh, and what does "blue world" mean? It refers to the times just before dusk and just before dawn, when the world

looks blue. As Debbie puts it, the blue world is "God's way of sayin' there would always be a new day."

Blue World is a fine collection that should win over many new fans, even those who aren't particularly fond of short stories. Many times, it seems that short story collections contain a few good stories sandwiched among a bunch of losers; in this case, there is no loser story. ■

The HWA Awards Banquet

by Jodi Strissel

The Horror Writers of America held its second annual Bram Stoker Awards Banquet on the weekend of June 16, 1989, at the Warwick Hotel in New York City.

On the morning of June 17, a 10:30 AM business meeting was held. Members had the opportunity to air complaints and concerns they had regarding the organization. Among

the topics discussed were the purpose of the HWA treasury, and what should and shouldn't be printed in *Transfusions*, the HWA newsletter. The question of appropriate newsletter topics arose because *Transfusions* had recently printed an article containing a rumor that a major publisher had overprinted a limited edition. The complaining party wanted names and facts; if those could not be provided, the

David Schow, Robert R. McCammon, Craig Spector (Photo by Beth Gwinn)





Les Daniels, Craig Spector, Douglas Winter, John Skipp,
Joe R. Lansdale, David Schow, Robert R. McCammon (Photo by Beth Gwinn)

objector felt that the piece should not have been published.

Other complaints focused on requirements for active membership in the organization and requirements needed for consideration for a Bram Stoker Award. Officers were adamant about not changing any of the policies.

The first of three afternoon meetings began at 1:00 PM; it was entitled "Movies & TV—Do It to Them While They Do It to You" and dealt with the rights that authors have (or don't have) once a novel has been sold for production as a movie or television play. This was a very intriguing panel and included special guest speaker-writer-producer-everything Lou Puopolo. Puopolo worked on this summer's surprise hit-movie *Field of Dreams* and was quite an interesting man to talk to; he emphasized that authors should be aware of what they are agreeing to when they sign away the rights to a story. The other two panels were "If We're Still in a Boom, Why Are We Busted?" and "Small Press Magazine Doesn't Always Mean Fanzine."

The awards dinner began at 8 PM, but the awards ceremony itself didn't get underway until almost 10 PM.

The nominees and winners in each category were the following:

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN NOVEL

- *The Silence of the Lambs*, by Thomas Harris (winner)
- *Black Wind*, by F. Paul Wilson
- *Queen of the Damned*, by Anne Rice
- *Stinger*, by Robert R. McCammon
- *The Drive-In*, by Joe R. Lansdale
- *Flesh*, by Richard Laymon

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN FIRST NOVEL

- *The Suiting*, by Kelley Wilde (winner)
- *Resurrection, Inc.*, by Kevin J. Anderson
- *Demon Night*, by J. Michael Straczynski
- *Cities of the Dead*, by Michael Paine
- *Deliver Us from Evil*, by Allen Lee Harris
- *Fear Book*, by John Byrne

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN NOVELLETTE

- "Orange is for Anguish, Blue for Insanity," by David Morrell (winner)

- "The Skin Trade," by George R. R. Martin
- "The Juniper Tree," by Peter Straub
- "Nightflyer," by Stephen King
- "The Function of Dream Sleep," by Harlan Ellison

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN SHORT STORY

- "The Night They Missed the Horror Show," by Joe R. Lansdale (winner)
- "She's A Young Thing and Cannot Leave Her Mother," by Harlan Ellison
- "Jack's Decline," by Lucius Shepard
- "The Thing at the Top of the Stairs," by Ray Bradbury
- "The Music of the Dark Time," by Chet Williamson
- "Nobody Lives There," by Carol Orlock

SUPERIOR ACHIEVEMENT IN FICTION COLLECTION

- *Charles Beaumont: Selected Tales*, by Charles Beaumont (winner)
- *Blood and Water and Other Tales*, by Patrick McGrath
- *Angry Candy*, by Harlan Ellison
- *The Toynbee Convector*, by Ray Bradbury
- *The Blood Kiss*, by Dennis Etchison
- *Scare Tactics*, by John Farris

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

- Ray Bradbury
- R. Chetwynd-Hayes

It was great for Joe Lansdale to win for best short story; I felt it was a well-deserved award. David Morrell gave an exceptionally touching speech when he accepted his award for best novelette. He spoke of the escape that horror novels provide us when dealing with horrible situations in real life; in particular, Stephen King's *The Tommyknockers* helped Morrell cope with his son's death from cancer. R. Chetwynd-Hayes made his first trip to the United States from England to accept his lifetime achievement award.

All in all, it was a very pleasant weekend at the Warwick. Although one could still see the odd fan seeking autographs, for the most part it was just as professional as it was enjoyable.

Next year the Awards weekend will be held in Providence, Rhode Island, in honor of H. P. Lovecraft. In 1991 it will be held in Los Angeles. Future annual weekends will alternate between the East and West coasts. ■

Recommended Reading List

Compiled by Hunter Goatley

This issue's recommendations feature a mix of old and new titles, as well as some horror-tainted science fiction (or is that science-fiction-tainted horror?).

From Terry Swindle, New Whiteland, Indiana:

- *Dark Advent*, by Brian Hodge. If you liked King's *The Stand* and loved McCammon's *Swan Song*, you'll totally enjoy this book. Rick and Sally McCammon's names are listed on the Acknowledgments page.
- *The Hyde Effect*, by Steve Vance. A werewolf story with a different slant: the authorities catch him and say, "Prove it!" (Mistake!)
- *Bishop's Landing*, by Richard Forsythe. A good ghost and haunted house story.

From Ken Owens, Turlock, California:

- *The Killer Inside Me*, by Jim Thompson
- *Silent Terror*, by James Ellroy
- *Weaveworld*, by Clive Barker
- *Lori*, by Robert Bloch
- *Joe Bob Goes to the Drive-In*, by Joe Bob Briggs
- *Charles Beaumont: Selected Stories*, edited by Roger

Anker

- *The Asimov Chronicles*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg

From Chris Kenney, Orem, Utah:

- *Headhunter and Ghoul*, by Michael Slade.
- *The First Deadly Sin*, by Lawrence Sanders. Not horror, but it is.

From Hunter Goatley, Orem, Utah:

- *Sunglasses After Dark*, by Nancy A. Collins. The best vampire novel I've read since Ray Garton's *Live Girls*; just as original, but not as erotic. Highly recommended.
- *Dydeetown World*, by F. Paul Wilson. A wonderful little science-fiction story about a private investigator, and the clones and street urchins of the future. I read it in a single day. Highly recommended.
- *The Abyss* by Orson Scott Card. A great novel based on the screenplay. The movie was great until the end; after reading the book, you'll feel a *lot* better about the whole movie. Card's characterizations add a lot.
- *Resurrection, Inc.*, by Kevin J. Anderson. What happens

Lights Out!

when a company starts resurrecting dead bodies to be Servants—and the Servants begin remembering their previous lives? Fun science fiction/horror blend.

- *Those Who Hunt the Night*, by Barbara Hambly. Listed as fantasy, this vampire novel takes place in turn-of-the-century London. Though it is a bit slow, it's an enjoyable read with some interesting vampire lore.
- *Goat Dance*, by Douglas Clegg. Ancient forces of evil struggle to come back to earth. Clegg does an excellent job of bringing you into the characters' nightmares.
- *The Drive-In II: Not Just One of Them Sequels*, by Joe R. Lansdale. More of the adventures of the survivors from *The Drive-In*, and including the new Popalong Cassidy!
- *Cold In July*, by Joe R. Lansdale. A nerve-wracker.

- *Soft And Others*, by F. Paul Wilson. This short story collection includes the classics "Soft" and "Cuts," as well as the new "Buckets." Though not every story works, the majority do; it's definitely worth reading.
- The *Dracula* series by Fred Saberhagen. This excellent fantasy series presents Dracula as a "good guy." If you've ever read any Saberhagen, you know he's got a good style. The series, which is currently being reprinted by Tor Books, is regarded by many as some of his best work. The five titles are *The Dracula Tape*, *The Holmes-Dracula File*, *An Old Friend of the Family*, *Thorn*, and *Dominion*. Find them; you won't be sorry.

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

The Robert R. McCammon Calendar

October 1989:	"Lizard Man" in Dark Harvest's <i>Stalkers</i> anthology "The Night I Killed the King" in <i>Lights Out!</i> <i>The Wolf's Hour</i> British hardcover (Grafton Books) <i>Bethany's Sin</i> British hardcover (Kinnell) Guest of Honor at the 1989 World Fantasy Convention in Seattle
April 1990:	<i>Something Passed By</i> audiocassette from Simon & Schuster Audio <i>Blue World</i> paperback from Pocket Books
May 1990:	<i>Mine</i> hardcover from Pocket Books

Coming Attractions

The next issue of *Lights Out!* will be published in January 1990. The planned features include:

- An interview with Joe R. Lansdale conducted by Robert R. McCammon!
- The best conclusion to "The Night I Killed the King" !
- A report on the 1989 World Fantasy Convention!
- Robert R. McCammon Q & A
- And, as always, the latest news

See you in January . . .

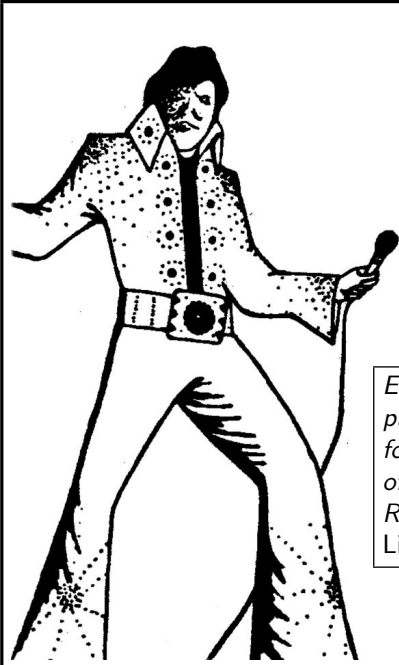
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Deadline for Vol. 1 No. 3:
December 15, 1989



The Night I Killed the King

by Robert R McCammon

Editor's note: So you're an aspiring writer, huh? Been trying to get those stories published? Well, here's your chance to collaborate with a Famous Author! The following story is an uncompleted short story by Robert R. McCammon in need of an ending. If you can come up with the best ending, you will win an original Robert R. McCammon manuscript, as well as see your conclusion in the next issue of Lights Out! The rules for the contest follow the story.

© 1989 by Robert R. McCammon

Ten o'clock on a Friday night. Nasty rain comin' down, like silver needles. Miralee and me were sittin' in the parkin' lot of the Kentucky Fried Chicken place in Eustace, Arkansas, our windows rolled up and steam on the glass. "Oh Lord!" she said suddenly. "Oh Lord, that's him! Look at the way he walks!" She sat up straight, and I picked the gun up from the floorboard.

Me and Elvis, we were one of a kind.

I always got mistook for him, even before Miralee dyed my hair black and froze it in the pompadour and I started wearin' the Elvis outfits. I'm talkin' about the *real* Elvis, of course, when he was somebody worth lookin' at and he hadn't lost the Tupelo snarl, not when he was big as a whale's belly and—God forgive me—all used up. I weigh about a hundred and fifty pounds soakin' wet, so my Elvis is the King of Dreams, back before he made them dog-ass movies and carried his soul in his wallet.

I'm not knockin' money now, hear? Money is the green grease that runs this world, and you gotta have a wad of it to get by in this day and age. I used to do all sorts of things; I've been a truck driver, a mechanic, a coffin polisher in a funeral home, a used-car salesman, and a bartender in a country-western joint. You do what you have to do to get by, am I right? And nobody ever said Dwayne Pressley wasn't one to grab hold of an opportunity when it come a 'knockin'. That's why I started wearin' the Elvis outfits, doin' the makeup and all, and Miralee and me went into the soul-channelin' business.

Templin is a quiet town. Hell, Arkansas is a quiet *state*. Miralee, my girlfriend goin' on six years, works at the Sophisticated Lady Beauty Shoppe on Central Street in Templin. She can tell you right off: people in Templin have

been starved for entertainment for years. Last entertainer who passed this way was Joey Heatherton, and her bus was lost on the way to the National Guard Armory in Eustace, forty miles south of us. Anyway, Miralee knew about my Elvis impressions. When you kinda look like the King and your last name is Pressley, you go with the flow, know what I mean? I can sing some, and it ain't hard to find somebody who can play a guitar. Miralee got the band together for me. She's a smart little lady, and ambitious to boot. She went right out and bought some Elvis tapes for the VCR, and I started studyin' 'em. This was right after I got fired from the Templin Tap Room for sellin' liquor to minors under the table. Man's got to make a profit, don't he? Hell, that's the American way! So, anyhow, I had plenty of time to lay in bed and study ol' Elvis in them concert videos. There were tapes of him just talkin', too, about his life and everythin', so I could get the twang of his accent Memphis-perfect. Then I started practicin' with the band. You know the songs: "Hound Dog," "Burnin' Love," "In the Ghetto," "Jailhouse Rock," all those tunes that make the memories glow like barbecue coals on a summer night. I was better at the motions than I was at the singin', but then again you might have to say the same thing about the King, too.

Miralee got the costumes for me, all them black leather and high-collared jobs covered with rhinestones. She talked Mr. Riggston at the Tap Room into lettin' us do a show there on a Saturday night, and if I said I wasn't sweatin' bullets I'd be a damn liar. The first few numbers were pretty bad, and I split my tight britches, but I just kept on goin' cause some woman screamed "ELVIS!" and it kinda fired me up. I found out later that Miralee gave her five

dollars to do it. But we did good. So good Mr. Riggston wanted us back the next weekend, and he even put an ad in the *Templin Journal*. About a month after that, you couldn't stir the folks in the Tap Room with a thin stick. Like I say, people were starved for entertainment.

"Ain't no way!" I told Miralee, as I watched the fella go into the Kentucky Fried Chicken place. I was wearin' a cap to hide my pompadour, and I didn't have my Elvis makeup on. I put the pistol down again. "That can't be him. Fella's as big as a barn door."

"I say it *is* him!" Her eyes, blue as Christmas, locked on me in that way she has that'd make a pit bull turn tail. "You saw the way he walked!"

"Hell, he's a big fat guy. All big fat fellers waddle like that."

"No! I mean how he moved his shoulders! You know what I'm talkin' about, you've seen it a hundret times in those videos! I say that's him, and don't you say different!"

When Miralee gets excited, she don't want nobody to slap a wet rag in her face. And God knows I wouldn't want to try. Miralee is a hundred pounds of dynamite with a two second fuse. I just shrugged. The fella I'd seen shamle into the Kentucky Fried Chicken joint had worn a raggedy brown overcoat and had on a cowboy hat

The fella I'd seen . . . had on a cowboy hat that looked puke green with mildew.

that looked puke green with mildew. He'd weighed maybe near three hundred pounds, and the collar of his coat was up so you couldn't see even his profile. As far as I was concerned, it was just some big fat Eustace dude who wanted a bucketful of fried chicken at ten o'clock on a Friday night.

"I'm goin' in to see," Miralee said all of a sudden. She opened the door, slid out from under the Chevy's steerin' wheel, and stood in the rain. "Keep that damn gun ready," she told me, and before I could say yea or nay she was stridin' across the parkin' lot.

I watched her go in. I picked up the pistol again, a little snubnosed .38 with six bullets in it. I shook a bit; the night was chilly for mid-October. I watched the restaurant's front door, and my fingers played with the .38's bone-white grip. I was scared as hell, but my mind was made up. If the King showed up with a hankerin' for fried chicken on this rainy Friday night, I was gonna kill him.

We didn't stop with the shows at the Tap Room. We were packin' 'em in every Friday and Saturday night, and suddenly Mr. Riggston was my best buddy. But then Miralee started readin' a paperback book she'd bought at a garage sale, and she walked around the house with glassy eyes. When Miralee's thinkin', she's walkin'. Round and

round the house, all night long, like a cat who hears a mouse but can't find the hole. I got a look at the book's cover: *My Seven Selves*, it was called. Written by some woman whose picture showed her in a long white robe starin' at a big crystal ball in her palm.

Miralee stopped her walkin'. One mornin' she looked at me and asked, in a quiet voice, "Dwayne? You ever hear of somethin' called channelin'?"

This was her drift: that some folks—and the lady in the white robe was one of 'em—could call back the souls of the dead and make 'em talk. Yessir, believe it! That these folks, channelers they were called, could let themselves be took over by the souls of dead people and the dead people would talk through 'em. "That's the most craziest thing I've ever heard in my—" I stopped what I was sayin', 'cause Miralee had a look on her face that makes silence golden.

"Crazy or not," Miralee said, "there's money in it."

My ears perked up like a hound dog's.

The road to riches is paved with suckers and that's God's honest truth. I started studyin' the Elvis tapes harder than ever, 'til I knew every twitch and sneer. I read that book by the white-robed woman, and though I didn't get the drift of all of it, I learned enough of the babble to get by. Mostly, I worked on my Elvis accent, 'cause Miralee said that soundin' like the King was gonna be real important. Then, when she thought I was ready, she called ads in to the newspapers in Little Rock, Memphis, Knoxville, Birmingham, and Atlanta. After that, we waited.

Wasn't two days before we got the first call, from a Tennessee woman. She wanted to know if her husband was messin' round on her, and since the ads said that Elvis knew everythin', just like God, she figured that he was the one to ask. She showed up at the house on a Tuesday afternoon—a little fireplug of a woman with a white beehive hairdo—and I was scared again like my first night on stage, but I gave her the show Miralee and I had worked out. I didn't pretend I *was* Elvis, see, but I pretended I was took over by his soul and channelin' him right there in the livin' room. I wore my Elvis outfit, of course, and I had my makeup on. Oh, I gave her a dandy show, fallin' down on one knee and gyratin' around and actin' up a storm. Then I took her hands and I said, "Darlin'," in the King's voice. She looked just about to faint. "Darlin'," I said, "your man's a good 'un. He knows he better not mess around on you, 'cause you'd leave his ass in a minute and find a young stud, wouldn't you?"

"I sure as hell would, Elvis!" she answered, in a choked-up voice.

"He best hold tight to you," I told her, "and you hold tight to him. You be a good wife to him, and he won't do no strayin'. That's what the King has to say to you, darlin'. And one more thing: you've been a mighty loyal fan and I sure do appreciate your love." Then I sang "Amazin' Grace" to her, real quiet-like, and she just about fell out of

her chair. Tears ran down her cheeks. She held my hand to her face, and she kissed my ring that has the big E on it in false diamonds.

I didn't like it when she cried. I don't know; it made my heart hurt, kinda. I stood up and gave a few half-assed twists and shakes, and Miralee told the woman it was the King goin' back to Rock 'n Roll Heaven. Then Miralee told her it would be fifty dollars. The woman didn't flinch, but I did. I put on my sunglasses, and I watched the woman take bills out of her purse and scratch up some change. She only had forty-one dollars. We took it.

But by God if that woman didn't leave smilin' and happy. Miralee said, "Tell your friends about the King's comeback!" and that Tennessee woman answered, "I will, I will, you better believe I will, oh mercy I'm still shakin' like a schoolgirl!"

I went to the bathroom, took off my shades and looked at my face—the King's face—in the mirror. Lord, lord; what a world this has turned out to be.

The telephone rang. Fella from a little town in Georgia wanted to know if he should open up a bowlin' alley or not. Miralee said Elvis didn't give advice over long-distance. The fella said he'd be there to see us on Thursday night. And that was just the beginnin' of it.

People are lonely. They want to believe, more than anythin'. They want to connect with somethin', they want to see into the future. Listenin' to those people, and seein' 'em look at me like I was really Elvis . . . well, the world's just one big Heartbreak Hotel, and all of a sudden I had the room keys in my fist. At fifty dollars a pop, ten or twelve "fans" a week, you'd better believe Miralee and I were standin' hip-deep in high cotton.

I watched the Kentucky Fried Chicken place, the pistol in my hand and rain runnin' down the windshield. The door came open, and Miralee walked out. Walkin' fast, too. My heart started hammerin'. She was comin' back to the car. I didn't want to hear what she was gonna tell me, not really. I wasn't ready for it. But then she slid back under the steerin' wheel, her black hair drenched, and she looked at me and said, "It's him. I swear to God it is." Her voice was steady, not nervous at all. She was ready, even if I wasn't. "He's buyin' two buckets of chicken, and he'll be out in a minute or two. Lord, he's gotten so fat!"

"It's not him," I said. "No way."

"I heard his voice. He tried to disguise it, and he sounds like he's been garglin' with glass, but I'd know that voice anywhere." She nodded, her mind made up. "It's him, all right. When he comes out the door, you go get him." She turned the key, and the noise of the engine firin' made me jump. "Can you believe it?" Miralee asked me, her knuckles bleachin' white as she gripped the wheel. "That sumbitch pretends to be dead for goin' on ten years, and he shows up just when our business is gettin' good!" She revved the engine, and the Chevy shook like a bull about

to charge.

And that was the point, of course. That was why we were sittin' out there in front of the Kentucky Fried Chicken place, and me with a gun in my hand. We'd been hauntin' that parkin' lot for over a week, waitin' for the King to show up. *Stalkin'* him, I guess you might say. We had to kill him. Had to. See, we were makin' almost a thousand scoots a week soul-channelin' the King into our livin' room, and then all of a sudden the *Midnite Tattler* reports that a Zippy Mart clerk in Eustace says Elvis walked in at three o'clock in the mornin' and bought an armload of Little Debbie cakes and a six-pack of Dr. Pepper, and that he winked at her and left hummin' "My Way." She said he'd changed a lot, of course, but she was an Elvis fan and could see it was him right off. Not long after that, a fella says he was huntin' squirrels in the woods north of Eustace when he comes face-to-face with the King pissin' in the bushes. Said Elvis squawled and took off like Bigfoot, and that he moved mighty fast for a man his size. Well, it wasn't long before other folks said they'd seen Elvis too, and by God if some agent fella from New York didn't go on a TV show and tell the world he'd been communicatin' with Elvis over the phone for the last two months, that the King had been hidin' out and now he wanted to get back into show

Somethin' . . . kingly. Like he owned the world,
and everybody else was just rentin' space.

business, write a book, and star in a movie of his life and all.

You can guess what happened to our business. How can you soul-channel Elvis if he's still alive? Folks wanted their money back, and some of 'em even said they were gonna put the law on us. And while all that was goin' on, the reporters were swarmin' all over Eustace tryin' to hunt the King down. Miralee and me both knew a stone-cold fact: if the reporters found Elvis, we were fit to be flushed.

Where to look was the problem. I remembered somethin' from one of the tapes. Elvis was a young fella, sharp and lean as a blade, and he was about to go over to Europe in the Army. Reporter asked him what he was gonna miss most, and he drawled it with a sneer: "Southern fried chicken."

We knew that sooner or later, if the King was anywhere near Eustace, he'd make a late-night run on the only Kentucky Fried Chicken place in twenty miles.

But with that pistol in my hand and murder on my mind, I hoped I'd been wrong. I hoped Miralee was wrong too, but she's got a good eye. She sure as hell would know Elvis if she saw him, even if he did weigh near three hundred pounds.

The Kentucky Fried Chicken's front door opened, and

the King waddled out into the rain with his booty of buckets.

I saw it, then. The way he walked. Movin' his shoulders. Somethin' you just can't explain. Somethin' . . . kingly. Like he owned the world, and everybody else was just rentin' space. Seein' him in the flesh, even that big and all, froze me. I said, "Miralee, that's not him," because I didn't want it to be.

She said, "Go get him," and she gave me a shove.

He was headin' to a beat-up rust-bucket of a brown Cadillac. The rain was fallin' harder, and when I got out of the Chevy the rain pelted my shoulders. I had the pistol clenched in my hand, and I started walkin' toward the King.

"Hurry!" Miralee urged.

Elvis must've heard. He stopped dead, holdin' onto his buckets. He looked at me, his face hidden under the mildewed cowboy hat. I could tell he had three or four chins. I lifted the gun, and I said, "Into the car and get come on."

"Huh?" That voice. Oh lord, that voice.

I got my tongue untangled on the next try. "Come on and get into the car!" I motioned toward the Chevy.

"I ain't nobody!" he said, clingin' to his buckets so hard they were startin' to bust open at the seams and fried chicken pieces were squeezin' out. "You don't know me! I ain't nobody!"

"I know who you are," I said, and I meant it.

The bottom popped out of one of his buckets, and chicken wings fell out.

I pulled the hammer back. "Let's go," I told him. My hand was shakin' so hard I'm surprised the gun didn't go off right then and there. The King lifted his thick arms and dropped the buckets, and he walked over fried chicken toward Miralee and the Chevy. I opened the back door for him and he squeezed in, then I climbed in right after him. Miralee hit the gas as soon as the door was closed, and we headed out of the parkin' lot.

"We got him!" Miralee said, merrily. "We got that big sumbitch, didn't we!" She drove us over a curb and I heard the King's teeth click together. "We got him, sure did!"

"We got him!" I answered, half about to laugh and half about to cry. "Right here in the car he sits!" I poked him in the belly with the gun's barrel, just to make sure he was real, and my arm almost sank wrist-deep in flab. Elvis smelled like a pigpen, and he had a gray beard that didn't hide his triple chins. His clothes—blue jeans, a red checked shirt and that brown overcoat—were blotched with food stains. He breathed like a bellows, and I swear he made the whole car tilt slightly to one side.

"I ain't nobody," Elvis said. "I ain't nobody at all, mister."

"You're Elvis Presley and I got a damn gun in your belly!" I hollered at him. "You been hidin' and pretendin' you're dead and I got a good soul-channelin' business goin' and

then you decide to come back to life so where does that leave me, huh?"

"Where does that leave *us*?" Miralee corrected, driving through the rain. The wipers were sluggish, and they made a skreeking sound across the glass. We'd been plannin' on buyin' us a new BMW when we had thirty thousand dollars saved up.

"I ain't no—" He stopped, 'cause he must've known it was no use. He just sat starin' at nothin', his head titled forward. "I knew it couldn't be forever," he said, quiet-like. He shook his head. "Knew it couldn't be." He looked at me; I couldn't see his eyes under that hat, but I knew they must still be keen. I knew his stare could still strip the bark off a tree; I felt its power, directed right at me. Elvis said, "What're ya'll plannin' on doin' with me?"

"We're gonna kill you," Miralee told him, as brightly as you please. "Take you out to the woods and kill you. Bury you deep, too." I flinched a little, because I was thinkin' of how big the hole would have to be. We had a pickaxe and a shovel in the trunk. "You wanted to be dead, didn't you?" she asked. "Well, we're gonna help you out."

I have to say, I thought it was pretty disrespectful puttin' it this way to the King. I mean, I was ready to kill him and all, but . . . I was still respectful. The King was fat and he smelled like a goat, but he was still the King. Until I got

"We're gonna kill you," Miralee told him.

around to killin' him, I mean.

Elvis just sat there, and didn't say a word.

Miralee suddenly hollered and swerved the wheel, 'cause a van with ABC NEWS on the side came out of the rain and almost knocked us off the road. A few seconds later, a car with CBS NEWS and a blue blinker on it swept past us, movin' fast. Like I said, the reporters were crawlin' all over Eustace, tryin' to hunt Elvis down. We were headin' out of town to find a good spot in the woods, but a red light caught us before we got more than a mile away from the Kentucky Fried Chicken joint. Miralee pulled up beside a white station wagon that had somethin' written on the passenger door. I saw what it was: THE GERALDO RIVERA SHOW.

The King saw it too, and in the next second he moved like he had lightning in his pants. He whipped that door open and bellowed, "I'm Elvis Presley! They're gonna kill me!" and by that time I had an arm around his neck tryin' to keep him from gettin' out. He got stuck in the door, and Miralee was screamin', "Don't let him out! Don't let him out!" I jabbed the gun's barrel into his back, but he kept on thrashin'.

Fella got out of the station wagon. I saw who it was. That fella who went to Chicago to dig up Al Capone's vault.

He reached out for Elvis, and Elvis strained to grip his hand. That was when the light changed, and Miralee stomped her foot down on the pedal. The Chevy laid rubber, Elvis still tryin' to squeeze through the open door, and that TV fella gave a shout and jumped back into the station wagon's passenger side. His driver gave it the gas too, and started after us. Miralee shouted, "Get that door shut, Dwayne!" The King's blue sneakers were shreddin' on the pavement. I don't believe he wanted to jump, with the engine revvin' up toward fifty. He pulled himself back into the car with a big whuff of breath, and I reached over his belly and slammed the door shut. The station wagon with that TV fella in it was right on our tail, comin' up fast so they could read the license plate. Well, there was just one thing to do about that, wasn't there? I cranked the window on my side down, leaned out into the wind and rain, and shot at the station wagon's tires. My cap flew off my head, my pompadour whippin' around like a scalded poodle. My third bullet knocked out one of the wagon's headlights, and then the driver didn't feel so nosy; he hit the brakes, and the wagon skidded off the road into a tangle of kudzu vines.

We were out beyond the town limits by now. I cranked the window up and sat there shakin', realizin' I could've killed either one of those two fellas. Only one I wanted to kill was the King, and to tell the truth I was feelin' a bit queasy about the whole business. Miralee was still flyin' us along that rain-slick highway, but I said, "Don't want a

trooper pullin' us over, babe," and she cut the speed some.

I felt Elvis starin' at me again. He said, in his raspy, old man's voice, "I've got money. I'll give you all of it."

"Don't say that," I told him. I just couldn't stand it if the King started to beg. "You sit there and be quiet, all right?"

Miralee's head had cocked. "Money? How much money?"

"We're supposed to kill him, not rob him!" I complained, but she shot me a hard glance in the rearview mirror and I buttoned my lip.

"How much money?" she asked Elvis.

"A lot. A whole lot, darlin'." I winced when he used that word. "My place is six, seven miles from here. I'll show you. You don't really want to kill me, do you?"

Miralee didn't say nothin'. I didn't either. My throat was so dry I probably couldn't have said anythin'. I mean, it's one thing to plan on killin' somebody and another to do it. I guess it was the sound of the shots that got to me, or the way the gun smelled. Maybe it was the fact that the King was sittin' beside me, livin' and breathin'. No, no! I had to quit thinkin' like that! If I didn't kill him, our business was washed up! I had to go through with this, if I liked it or not!

Miralee said, "Show us where you live." Her voice was silky; it was the way she asked me to go down in the basement and clean out the spiders. ■

The Contest Rules

Okay, now the fun part: we need your ending to "The Night I Killed the King." The grand prize for the best ending, which will be determined by Robert R. McCammon, is an original McCammon manuscript!!!

The winning ending will be published in the January 1990 issue of *Lights Out!*

The following rules apply to this contest:

- All submissions must be received by December 1, 1989.
- Submissions must be typed on unlined paper.
- Entries will *not* be returned; send a decent photocopy of your ending. After the contest, all entries will be destroyed.
- Please submit your entry with a separate cover page that includes your name, address, and phone number. To eliminate any bias when the entries are judged, the cover pages will be removed so authorship remains unknown until a winner has been selected.
- By entering, you are granting *Lights Out!* one-time publishing rights to your ending.

Good Writing...

Lights Out!
