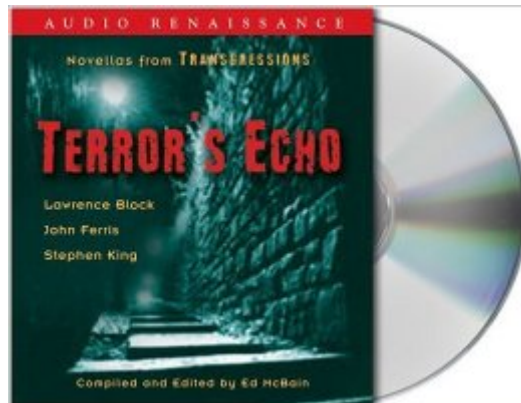


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Transgressions: Terror's Echo: Three Novellas From Transgressions



Synopsis

Novellas from Transgressions by Lawrence Block, John Ferris, and Stephen Kingâ€™s Kellerâ€™s Adjustmentâ€• by Lawrence Block: Keller, everyoneâ€™s favorite hit man, is backâ€• dealing out philosophy and murder on a meandering road trip across America. â€•The Ransome Womenâ€• by John Farris: A young and beautiful artist is flattered when her idol, the reclusive portraitist John Ransome offers her a modeling contract. Flattery turns to terror when she discovers the fate shared by Ransomeâ€™s past subjects. â€•The Things They Left Behindâ€• by Stephen King: In the wake of the worst disaster on American soil, one man is coming to terms with the aftermath of the Twin Towersâ€• when he begins finding the things they left behind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After the success of his novel BLACKBOARD JUNGLE, Evan Hunter (Ed McBain) turned to what were then referred to as "novelettes," his subject being the 87th Precinct detectives of Isola (think New York). As time passed, the 87th Precinct novelettes grew to full-length novels. Fifty years later, McBain persuaded nine other mystery, thriller, and horror writers to submit what are now called "novellas" of around a hundred pages each. The result was one of my most enjoyable reads of 2006. I don't know why I don't read more anthologies. It was in an anthology that I first experienced Stuart Kaminsky, Sharyn McCrumb, and Lawrence Block. Coincidentally, one of the best novellas in this anthology is one by Block. Block returns with his enigmatic hit man Keller in KELLER'S ADJUSTMENT. Block manages to make us feel empathy for the man. Although he has sex with a

Phoenix real estate saleslady, Keller is essentially a lonely man. He needs somebody to talk to. He once had a dog, but a former girlfriend took it with him when she left; he went to a therapist, but the therapist turned into a snoop, and he had to dust him. Unwilling to take a chance on a living breathing entity, Keller buys a stuffed animal to talk to. Jeffrey Deaver also responded to the call with *FOREVER*. In it he introduces Tal Simms, a mathematician/statistician working for Westbrook County Sheriff's Department. Simms is considered a "computer geek" by the rest of the detective squad, especially homicide detective Greg "Bear" LaTour. Simms and his eventual partner LaTour are confronted with several suspicious suicides. Older rich couples are killing themselves under dubious circumstances. In most respects, the underdog character Simms is every bit as likable as Lincoln Rhymes.

Reviewing an anthology like this is rather difficult; the best way is probably to divide them into three groups. The OK: * "Walking Around Money" (Donald Westlake) is the story of hapless thief John Dortmunder; it's amusing, but didn't excite me. * "Merely Hate" (Ed McBain, the editor of the anthology), is a compelling story, one of dozens set in the 87th Precinct. It's lucky that his knowledge of Islam isn't pivotal to the story, because there are numerous errors (though not quite as glaring as, say, those in Matthew Reilly's "Scarecrow" or Tom Clancy's "The Teeth of the Tiger"). * "Keller's Adjustment" (Lawrence Sanders) is a character study about an unusual assassin. I haven't read anything else by Sanders, so I can't really say much more. The not-so-great: * "The Corn Maiden" (Joyce Carol Oates) didn't live up to its billing ("a spiral of destruction and despair"); its language shifts on a dime from educated to stilted, and it's badly edited, too (one character's surname is spelled *four* different ways). * "The Resurrection Man" is a fictional biography of a man doing a necessary, but despicable, job in the 19th century. It's fascinating, but rather thin on plot. The great: * "Hostages" (Anne Perry) is the most "literary" of the works here, but it's still a compelling read about the tragedies of human nature. * "Archibald Lawless, Anarchist at Large" (Walter Mosley) would make a great novel. * "The Things They Left Behind" (Stephen King) is an elegy about life, loss, and ultimately hope, in the wake of 9/11. [It's also the shortest novella in the anthology by far.] * "The Ransome Women" (John Farris) is an unusual love story, and a perfect entertainment for a rainy night.

As the editor of this compilation (Ed McBain, aka Evan Hunter) says, novellas are rather unusual these days, although in the old pulp fiction days they were fairly thick on the ground. A novella is, as defined in the publishing world, a story that is longer than a short story (which usually runs up to

5,000 words) and shorter than a novel (usually more than 60,000 words), somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000 to 40,000 words. And apparently a novella (sometimes called a novelette) is hard to write because it tends either to compress to a short story or expand to a novel. Yet, the ten writers here, none of the neophytes, met their charge from McBain to come up with a genuine novella with aplomb (except perhaps for Stephen King, whose novella really reads like a short story - but then he's a big enough name that it's no surprise that his story made the book without any criticism). As in any collection there are some hits and some misses, but in fact I was engaged by every single entry. Some, though, were a cut above the rest -- Walter Mosley's 'Archibald Lawless, Anarchist at Large: Walking the Line' and Lawrence Sanders's 'Keller's Adjustment.' (I will admit that I tend to read everything these two writers produce and they are particular favorites of mine. Mosley, in fact, I consider to be one of our best writers, regardless of genre.) As is usual for me, I could not get as involved in the story by Joyce Carol Oates, but I suspect that is some peculiar allergy of mine; I've rarely thoroughly enjoyed anything of hers, even though I can admire her skills and obviously plenty of others admire her more than I. Ed McBain's contribution takes place in his familiar Eighty-Seventh Precinct. One theme that recurs in the stories is the changes in the post-9/11 world.

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