

The Molossus of Old Man Moyer: An Original Horror Novel

Joe Lyon

Lyonic (Jul 28, 2023)

Softcover \$12.99 (262pp)

978-1-956189-14-8

Violent and foreboding, The Molossus of Old Man Moyer wraps warnings about greed into its supernatural horror story.

In Joe Lyon's horror novel *The Molossus of Old Man Moyer*, a former convict is caught up in an elderly billionaire's attempts to cheat death.

Upon his release from prison, Jimmy secures a job transporting bodies to their final resting places. When he's assigned to transport a renowned psychic, Deacon, he expects to be undertaking a straightforward three-hour drive. But as Jimmy travels, Deacon haunts him, delivering dire warnings.

With Deacon's spirit distracting him, Jimmy hits a dog that belongs to wealthy Colman. Determined to make up for his failings, Jimmy visits Colman and learns about the Molossus, an ancient dog of unimaginable power that brings wealth to its hosts—at a horrifying cost. Colman is still hoping to escape the Molossus's curse.

While the curse of the Molossus is the book's focal point, a parallel narrative also consumes considerable space: Detective Blackwell investigates several missing persons cases with the help of a psychic, Vera. Blackwell discovers a bloodstained manuscript whose last owner died while working for Colman. Though the storylines do connect in time, they seem disparate when they're introduced, muddling the book's progression even as they contribute to its reigning unsettled atmosphere. Dread is also established via details about everyday objects, as when doors are compared to wide-open mouths and when shadows are said to move with ill intent. Elsewhere, mentions of the cloying stench of decay and coverage of skin peeling away from apparitions further this dark, twisted tone.

The cast's development is somewhat uniform. It focuses on people's flaws: Jimmy murdered someone and concocts lies to avoid triggering his PTSD, Colman is an over-the-top villain driven by greed who leaves a trail of bodies behind him, and Molossus is chill inducing, with its unnatural eyes and appearances in people's dreams. Blackwell stands apart because of his redeeming qualities, including his attempts to prevent more deaths. But people are ill distinguished beyond these roles, with only subtle clues to flesh them out, as with Jimmy's habit of lying about who he murdered and why.

Taking sharp turns that warp expectations, *The Molossus of Old Man Moyer* is a visceral horror novel in which an unrelenting supernatural force chooses a new host—and makes everyone else a pawn in its plot to achieve its goals.

JOHN M. MURRAY (October 7, 2023)

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