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# Strange Highways



## Synopsis

Joey Shannon, an alcoholic whose life has been going nowhere for 20 years, returns to his hometown for the funeral of his father. As he leaves town, he gets a mysterious second chance to relive the night in 1975 when his life began its downward spiral: to both literally and figuratively take the road that he didn't originally take. On this road he is supremely tested by conflict with his successful and charismatic older brother P.J., by conflict between his cynicism and his lost faith, and by conflict between the ultimate good and evil.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Collection of tales from horror novelist Koontz. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This collection includes a new novel along with previously published novellas and short stories. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I flipped through a lot of Koontz books on shelves in bookstores to find a short story collection. I'm a writer, and I love Koontz's works, but I never found a short story collection by him...until I discovered *Strange Highways*. *Strange Highways* is a collection of two novellas, and twelve short stories. Not every short story collection is "perfect." King's *Night Shift* collection could have done without two stories, but again, short story collections always have "slinkers," but if you like most of the stories, then I'll say it's a pretty good collection. The first story is the self titled "*Strange Highways*," which takes up the first hundred and sixty eight pages. The story deals with a failed man named Joe

Shannon, who came back to his hometown in order to bury his father. He is haunted by a ghost, and on the same night, Joe has the ability to go back in time to stop a serial killer who will shock you and may not totally be human at all. 5/5--a must read for any Koontz fan

"The Black Pumpkin," is the second story, and one of my person favorite. Tommy warns Frank not to buy that black pumpkin because the pumpkin carver is a very strange man, not to mention he warns Tommy about the evil pumpkin. And that night, Frank gets what he deserves. 5/5--a great and enjoyable read about an evil pumpkin

"Miss Attila the Hun" is a straight up, alien invasion like short story. A lovely school teacher is put to the test when she confronts a mysterious being that wants mankind to go "mad." This is one of those stories where you get something good out of bad. 3/5--worth reading, but could have been a lot better.

"Down in the Darkness" puts a man to the ultimate test when he discovers his new home has a strange cellar that only he could enter, and what's waiting down there is nothing more but evil. The man than decides to get rid of a "few people" in this cellar. 5/5--a good story about the human condition and the supernatural.

"Ollie's Hands" puts a mute man to the test when he saves a pretty girl from suicide. He has strange powers, mostly from his hands. When the young woman wants more powers from Ollie, she doesn't know there's a price to be paid, even Ollie couldn't control it. 5/5--another great story about human condition and a gift that has prices.

"Snatcher" deals with Billy, a man who gets his money from stealing purses. When he steals a black purse from an old lady, he gets more than he wanted: a gets a mysterious creature that wants to collect him. 5/5--the first time we meet this creatue, it almost reminded me those goblins out of Darkfall.

"Trapped" puts a single mother and her child in a battle with lab created rats. This story is a little creepy, it actually gave me a few chills. 4/5--a good mixture of horror and science fiction, however, it didn't really bring nothing new to the field.

"Bruno" is the weakest story of all. It's about a private eye being a doorway to alternative possibilities, brining a human like bear animal and an alien. 2/5--I wasn't really into it at all.

"We Three" is a mixture of horror and science fiction. It puts three children at risk at the end of the word (which they had caused) with a mystetrious baby in the girl that wants to destroy the remaining humans. 3/5--a good concept, but it could have a little longer.

"Hardsell" puts a police officer on the trail of a serial killer who can actually change into other beings, and our police officer might have the same ability as well. 3/5--the twist was okay, but this story does have some plot holes.

"The Night of the Storm" is a straight up science fiction story about robots ruling the world. When a group was scent to "hunt" in the woods in order to feel more alive again, they are put in situation with their true creators...men. 4/5--I like the concept of robots vs. human, however, it was hard to relate to these characters.

"Twilight of the Dawn" is the last short story in this collection. It's about a man who doesn't believe in God, who doesn't want his young son

to fall victim of God. When both the wife and son dies, the man sees something supernatural, questioning his faith. 5/5--a good story about faith and human's beliefs, not to mention it's the saddest story in this book. "Chase" is a novella about a Vietnam vet being stalked by a killer after he saved a girl who was on the killer's hitlist. 3/5--it's an okay story, but it could have been a lot better and more a thriller. Strange Highways is one of those books you must get if you like Koontz's work or if you like speculative fiction.

Saw a lot of reviews and was frankly shocked to see that the title story; Strange Highways actually brought the rating down! Are you kidding me?? All of the stories in this book are great... but that one sticks out more than the rest. Strange Highways is a story that I hold very close to my heart. At only 154 pages long and an easy read, it's amazing how much this few-hour-read draws you in and keeps you in. Renown thriller writing Dean Koontz really hit it out of the park with this one. Synopsis (pulled from Wiki): A failed author returns to his hometown after many years to attend his father's funeral, only to find himself suddenly and inexplicably thrust back through time to relive a traumatic event from his past, and possibly to find redemption. In the introduction, Koontz lists the Centralia, Pennsylvania mine fire as an inspiration for this story. I first read this story back in 1999. My High School's summer reading list allowed us to choose 5 novels and my father just happened to own this one. Being someone who loved thriller movies, I decided to give this a whirl, heck it couldn't be any worse than "When Legends Die" off of the previous years reading list, right? Famous last words aside, at first, this book seemed reminiscent of the average Stephen King novel. A failed, alcoholic writer who was down on his luck. The first few chapters are depressing and dreary, but the erratic behavior of the lead character keeps you hooked just enough to want to find out what pushes him to behave the way he does. The payoff is well worth the wait. As the rain begins to fall after the main character, Joey's final farewell to his father, the action picks up. The man is given the opportunity to re-live a pivotal moment in his life. He has to choose between taking the road he took before, which is a safe, but petty and insignificant existence, or take the road he had decided to avoid years ago that would lead him into danger. If he goes down that path, Joey will have to confront someone close to him that is nothing short of true evil and save an innocent and pleasantly mysterious character. I will stop right there as I really don't want to give too much away. So I will give the pros and cons of this story. Pros: The story hooks you within the first few pages. It is short, but action packed. There are several moments in the story that make the hair stand up on the back of your neck. The imagery and the sense of urgency is well done. The main character is relatable and the heroine is mysterious to a

level that you never know where she stands or what her motivations are until the very end. You feel like you have to keep an eye on her throughout most of the read. The ending is very well done, ties everything together, and is extremely satisfying. Cons: There is a supernatural element to this story that is never fully fleshed out or explained. You find out why Joey is given a second chance and why he is the way he is. However, while it alluded that the supernatural element is religious in origin, it is never explained and really has the feel of a Deus Ex Machina. Overall Analysis: I love this story. It is my favorite of all time and that is saying a lot. It's short, but well-paced and very well done. It has one of two major flaws, but they add some mystery to the story and do not detract from it at all. Truly a wonderful read for those who like action/fantasy/religious philosophy/thriller. My hat goes off to Dean Koontz on this one.

Takes forever to get going. Author spends too much time in over-detailing things. For example, when a character walks into a room, the author will spend the equivalent of a page and a half describing every item in the room instead of just focusing on the gun on the table. Ending felt contrived and rushed.

This was supposed to be a collection of short stories. Instead it's just one, thus the two stars. The story itself is okay. It's one of Dean Koontz' stories from very early in his career. Do not get this if you are expecting the short story collection.

This book was very good. My husband liked it and can not shut up about how much he loved reading it.

I am reviewing the audio version of this book. It kept my attention very well--I listened to it while driving and my hour long trips went by quickly. At times I even stayed in my car to finish a disc after I arrived at my destination. My complaint is with the narrator. The voice used for the main two characters was annoying--the male character was childish-sounding and the female teenager "voice" didn't fit, either. However, the story was well-told.

Dean Koontz is one of my favorite writers. This part of the novel was unusual, but kept me interested. Good "read".

Book was not hardback, it was paperback in not very good condition. I would hate to see one in fair

condition. I need a refund because I paid 37.00 for this book because it was hardback. Thanks  
Tammie

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