



Strange Magic

Gord Rollo

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A MAN HIDING FROM A TERRIBLE PAST...

Wilson Kemp is a man living a lie in Billington, Pennsylvania. He's been in hiding for a long time, running from a dreadful secret that has forced him to change his name, move to this small secluded town, and abandon what had once been a stellar career. Once, he'd been a talented escape artist on the brink of fame and fortune, but now he's a broken down alcoholic scared of his own shadow. Mind you, he has good reason to be scared because his worst fear has finally caught up with him, and the sleepy little town of Billington is about to be declared a war zone.

HIS DARK SECRET ABOUT TO BE REVEALED...

With the aid of a malevolent entity trapped within an old wooden trunk, a stranger from Wilson's past has hunted him down; an insane fellow magician who will stop at nothing to get his twisted, bloody revenge. To survive, Wilson will have to conquer his own inner demons to fight his old enemy in a battle that will lead to the gates of death and beyond. To live, Wilson will have to accomplish the greatest magic trick of all time: escaping from the dark pit of Hell itself...

Strange Magic Details

Date : Published January 2013 by EnemyOne (first published 2009)

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Author : Gord Rollo

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From Reader Review Strange Magic for online ebook

Lilian says

The idea behind it was good, it could have been very entertaining. However the sheer volume of basic grammatical and stylistic mistakes made it a tough read. The writing was just plain bad and obviously no editor had ever come close to this book. It's unfortunate because it might have been a decent story. However, things like possessives instead of plurals (seriously, what is with people adding apostrophes every time a word ends in "s"?), the inappropriate capitalization (in the Maple tree), etc., make the book highly annoying.

Ever the optimist I continued, and I did make it to the end, but unfortunately I'll never read another book of Mr. Rollo's. It's a pity, he does have good ideas.

PS: ".... a knife to her trembling throat..." can a throat actually tremble?

Pagetransquility says

The first half of this book does an excellent job of developing it's main character, yet leaving most about him a mystery. The lead up to the second half builds an almost frustrating anticipation as to what the secret is that the whole book is centered around. When the explanations start coming they are so captivating the story takes on an all new exciting energy which whisks you away along twists and turns in the plot that you will not be able to predict. There are psychologically disturbing moments that add to the horror along with small amounts of dark humor. The author includes some interesting and educational bits of information pertaining to the book's theme of magic. All of the characters are significant, and are presented in a way which leaves a lasting impression that provides even more to the story to think about. This tale keeps you wondering the whole time what is real or what is even possible. An exceptional book which was highly recommended to me. For someone who believes there is no true magic in this world, I would in turn recommend it to anyone looking for a reason to suspend their disbelief.

Bandit says

I like magic and magicians. I liked Gord Rollo's Jigsaw Man and Crimson. Of course, I liked this book. The writing is very solid, not so much of a "Wow, look at that exquisitely crafted sentence"" factor, but good fast paced story with sympathetic characters, suspense, horror, occasional gore and a few genuinely disturbing moments. Very good read, I highly recommend it.

Steve Vernon says

A simple but fun read that gave me the feeling that I had woken up in the middle of a pleasingly cheesy Grade B Roger Corman directed horror movie. A nifty twist at the end kept me guessing. Definitely a beach read...too bad it's the middle of January.

Steve

Tressa says

I'm a solid fan of Gord Rollo's, and while this book is an enjoyable horror read, it's not as good as the more complex *Crimson* or the fabulous character-driven *Jigsaw Man*.

I agree with another reviewer who said he couldn't get into the characters. They weren't as fleshed out as I like my characters to be, but for some reason a lot of horror stories are more into getting on with the gory stuff than slowly building the characters.

All in all, I did enjoy this story and read it in two days and was even surprised twice by twists I should have seen coming but didn't.

Looking forward to Gord's next book.

"grindy" Jake says

I had been looking for a grand horror novel; something that will chill me to the bone, something that will get me legitimately creeped out. Something that will pull me in and drag me through the very depths of hell sealed between its pages. *"Strange Magic"* quenched my thirst.

Wilson Kemp, a desperate recovering alcoholic, is struggling to pull his life together after years of living at the bottom of a bottle. Gord gives his character much life and detail, constructing a very believable protagonist who is someone who the reader can actually care about. Wilson Kemp is a very "real" person. My only main gripes with the character himself are toward the end of the novel; he seems to man-up a little suddenly, but certainly not so much that it seems unbelievable.

The characters are crafted beautifully, the villain so delicious fucked-up, and the supporting characters filling their roles well; nobody seems unnecessary. It's full of good twists and is well-constructed as far as plot.

I can see how it's not exactly the book for everyone, some of the scenes may be a little too gorey for some, but fans of gritty horror will rejoice. I already placed an order for *"The Jigsaw Man"*. I can't wait to get my hands on it.

Matt R. says

Strange Magic is a good dose of horror and a creepy tale of revenge. A small family is terrorized by the past of Wilson Kemp, a former magician fighting evil and personal struggles. I always enjoyed watching magicians like Doug Henning, David Copperfield and more recently Criss Angel and this book reminded me of magic nostalgia. There are some good twists in the story and it is hard to put down. I am looking forward to Rollo's new book this fall.

Adamus says

This was my first book by this author & I really enjoyed it. The story & characters were all great & I really like his writing style. Even tho it felt kinda short to me the story was well written & I will def be picking up more material from this author!

Vicki says

First off, I'll apologise as I am rubbish at writing reviews but i feel compelled to write one about this book as its one of the best horror books I've read in a long time!

I won't say much about the plot but it gathers momentum and i was dying to find out who the Stranger was and what nasty little secrets he was keeping..

Gord Rollo is a brilliant author, his style of writing is very direct and he gets to the nitty gritty rightaway whilst at the same time painting a picture with his words and descriptions that you feel your there with his characters.

I honestly think he's a better author than Stephen King and I've LOVED all his books that I've read and i look forward to reading the others....infact I've just bought a Kindle this morning lol as i was getting frustrated his books aren't as widely available in paper form

Rhonda says

Gord Rollo's latest release, *Strange Magic*, tells the story of former magician Wilson Kemp. Wilson has been trying for years to escape his past, going as far as changing his name, moving, and giving up his career as a magician. His wife and daughter know nothing of his past life, but unfortunately, his past has finally caught up with him and he may not be able to keep it hidden any longer. Someone in town known as "the Stranger" is killing both humans and animals, leaving messages at the scene of each crime for "The Iceman", which happens to be Wilson's old stage name. Wilson is now scared for the life of himself and his family. He is not sure who "the Stranger" really is, but fears it may be his old partner, "The Heatseeker". The problem with that scenario is that "The Heatseeker" has been dead for twenty-two years!

Intense, imaginative, well-balanced, fast-paced... you name it and Rollo has accomplished it in *Strange Magic*! Ever since Leisure started putting out Rollo's work I've been grabbing them up off the shelf immediately and I haven't been disappointed yet. *Strange Magic* may very well be my favorite so far. A couple of the characters' actual identities are kept secret through a good chunk of the book. Usually it is hard to keep up such a "front" that well without the reader figuring it out prior to the big "reveal", but Rollo managed to accomplish this without a hitch! I was ultimately pleasantly surprised, and a bit disturbed, with both of the characters once I found out who they really were. In addition, the death scenes within the book aren't overly gruesome, yet still cringe-worthy enough that both gore lovers and those of the weak stomach should be able to enjoy them. It is truly a well-rounded book and I feel that Rollo has definitely written something that all horror fans will love.

In addition to reading the Leisure addition of *Strange Magic*, I also had the pleasure of reading Rollo's short

story, "Peeler", a tie-in story to *Strange Magic*. This story can currently be found in the limited edition of *Strange Magic* published by Bad Moon Books. Peeler is the name of one of the side characters from *Strange Magic* who happens to have what you might call a weird "fetish" for peeling off his own skin. In this short story, we get to learn what causes Peeler to mutilate himself and where he was at prior to the time-frame of *Strange Magic*. The story is a bit gross, yet definitely ties into the whole magical element playing throughout the novel. It's a must-read for die-hard Rollo fans, and it's a shame that Leisure couldn't have included it in their edition of the release. Hopefully, this story will be released in a short story collection from Rollo, for those that are unable to get their hands on a copy of the limited edition of *Strange Magic*. I highly recommend reading both *Strange Magic* and the tie-in story, "Peeler"!

Contains: Adult Language, Adult Situations, Mutilation

Review also posted at MonsterLibrarian.com

Monster says

Surprising, disturbing, and sometimes heart wrenching, *Strange Magic* is an ambitious tale that follows Wilson Kemp through the despair of his many failures and the bitter depths of alcoholism. Kemp is wonderfully wrought, a completely broken character who is at once easily pitied. Kemp's life has spiraled out of control. He is suffering through a broken marriage, substance abuse, and the weight of a tragic past. Rollo masterfully traverses this fractured landscape, dragging the reader easily along as Kemp, faced with a horrific nemesis, is forced to rise above his self-loathing to redeem himself, and ultimately to confront the evil menace of the Stranger. Captivating and chilling, *Strange Magic* is a real page turner sure to excite even the most callous fans of dark literature.

Review by Bob Freeman

Abactor says

The very first book by Mr. Rollo that I read was the *Jigsaw Man*. It has now been about a year since I closed the last pages of that opus thinking that the author did manage to create something trully shocking, riveting and worth spending some time for. It was with precisely those ideas that I approached *Strange Magic*. In fact, it had been sitting in my reader for about ten months before yesterday due to incredible boredom caused by my overstretched (if something like this exists in the world) vacation I turned my undivided attention to this book. To be even more honest, during those ten months I occasionnally had some moments when I did start reading the book, but did not get as far as the first couple of chapters. Today I did it. Today I officially finished "*Strange Magic*" and today I can say that the book is outrageously weak and hollow.

The basic story is that of revenge of a dead friend to his alive friend because of some - should we be able to call it - preposterously stupid accident. The entire novel reads as if the author was making it up using the leftovers of his imagination feast. The story is old as the world. The line with the pervert pastor is completely off the road - I am in complete darkness as to why the author wanted to introduce this plot element in the first place. I hoped that in the end he would manage to converge all the separate threads of the story into one magnificent bulk of a readning. But that simply did not happen. The novel is flat. There is no life to the characters, all of whom seem to have been diligently taken from the "*Story-writing for Dummies*. Write your firs story in two days". All is predictable. And what is not is not sufficiently so. Honestly, I did expect

something much better than this block of threadbare trivialities. Don't read the book. Don't waste your time. There is nothing to remember, nothing to be taken aback with, nothing to shock you. Why bother yourself with this still born child of a book!

PS

Read the Jigsawman.

Terry Weyna says

Reading *Strange Magic* made me think deeply about a number of issues I doubt Gord Rollo intended me to be thinking about. I wasn't pondering whether good and evil are entirely human or whether there is a supernatural agency at work in some forms of evil (and good); I wasn't thinking about addiction, its causes and cures; I wasn't thinking about the redemptive power of love. Instead, I was thinking about whether a book can be considered good when it has a decent story but is poorly written, with numerous grammatical and spelling errors. I was thinking about the value of revision. And I was thinking about how necessary a good editor can be.

Strange Magic has a decent storyline that unfolds with fine suspense over the course of the novel. I liked its grounding in stage magic and the mechanics of escape artistry. I found the drunken clown who is the hero, Wilson Kemp, to be believably pathetic, and felt all the emotions about him — disgust, impatience, sympathy, understanding, hope — that I suspect the author intended me to feel. I was frightened by the Stranger, and more frightened by his trunk, a wooden traveling crate that used to be an important prop for a magic show but now seems to have its own consciousness, its own appetites. I found somewhat unbelievable Wilson Kemp's ex-wife, who seems eager to take her husband back despite his lack of any real effort to stop drinking.

The novel opens with a scene of terror arising from both a human agency and a supernatural one. We learn through this scene, with its sacrifice of an innocent life, that the Stranger is looking for Wilson Kemp, but we don't know why. When we meet Wilson Kemp in the next chapter, we get no clue why the Stranger would be looking for him; the man can't even perform as a clown at a children's birthday party without screwing it up so badly that he'll be lucky to escape criminal charges, much less ever be hired again. Then we meet the third major character, who we know as Tom — as in Peeping Tom, a man who thinks of himself primarily as a pervert, but believes himself to be a powerful, frightening figure (and, indeed, he does bring a form of terror to the women of the town when he reveals himself to them from his various perches outside their windows). All three of these characters have little control over their lives, but instead are in thrall to their darker sides: the Stranger is governed by his desire for revenge, Kemp is the helpless captive of his alcoholism, and the man who transforms into Tom is a weak, frightened individual who can't fight his sexual urges. Free will is an illusion at best, with or without an invasion by the supernatural.

And the events unfold mostly without the aid of the supernatural. It is only in the final chapters of the book that the inhabitant of the trunk plays a substantial role in the narrative. It is a fault in the novel that this supernatural force is ill-defined and a sort of *diabolus de machina*, one that forces what we thought was the climax to be relegated to the status of false climax, and making the apparent villain of the piece almost irrelevant except as a mechanism to get the trunk in the vicinity of Kemp. When the true villain makes his appearance, the suspense ratchets up. But even the second resolution seems to be false, for the final lines in the book suggest that there is more horror waiting in the wings.

It's a decent story, entertaining enough to provide a few good hours of reading for any horror fan. But I was

repeatedly pulled from the narrative by elementary errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. One character is described as wearing a "Pittsburgh Steeler's jacket," for instance. In the thick of the action, this character's daughter "rolled out of harms way." Within a few pages, the good guy has lost track of the bad guy, sees the bad guy's knife, and wonders why the man "had ran right past it." And then that knife "must have tore through some vital organs." Yikes! These aren't errors made in dialogue by the characters; they are the author's. It's had to get caught up in the action of a climactic scene when one is constantly pulled back to the page by such elementary blunders. I have never read a published novel with so many basic mistakes. They make it impossible for me to recommend this novel.

There is one potentially redeeming factor to be considered. I purchased this novel for my Kindle, for which it was apparently self-published in 2013. Perhaps the text is not identical to the text used in the Dark Regions Press hardcover edition in 2009 or the Leisure Books mass market paperback edition in 2010. Take a quick glimpse through a hard copy of this novel to see whether any of the sorts of basic mistakes I've highlighted jump out at you — and a quick glimpse should be all that's necessary, as they appear with great frequency. If not, and you're a horror fan, *Strange Magic* might be worth your while.

Originally published at <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

James says

Gord Rollo's twisted vision of magic tricks will keep you on the edge of your seat. He turns something innocent into a non stop story of horror and dread.

This was a great read! Gord proves once again why he is one of the best in his business.

A+++

DJMikeG says

Good, fun, quick book. Rollo had my expectations very high after his excellent debut "The Jigsaw Man". This one fell short of those expectations, but its still a good read. Whoever edited this book didn't do a very good job, there were many grammatical and spelling errors. Don't hold that against Rollo, however, its a copy editors fault.
