



One Fearful Yellow Eye: A Travis McGee Novel

John D. MacDonald , Lee Child (Introduction)

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"To diggers a thousand years from now...the works of John D. MacDonald would be a treasure on the order of the tomb of Tutankhamen."

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

How to you extort \$600,000 from a dying man? Someone had done it very quietly and skilfully to the husband of Travis McGee's ex-girlfriend. McGee flies to Chicago to help untangle the mess and discovers that although Dr. Fortner Geis had led an exemplary life, there were those who'd take advantage of one "indiscretion" and bring down the whole family. McGee also discovers he likes a few members of the family far too much to let that happen....

One Fearful Yellow Eye: A Travis McGee Novel Details

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From Reader Review One Fearful Yellow Eye: A Travis McGee Novel for online ebook

Mackenzie Brown says

A book I loved better the second time of reading.

Bronzed beach bum McGee, turns up in snowy Chicago in December to help a widowed friend who tells him somebody has stolen her dead husband's fortune.

This book has one of the finest plots in the series and leaves you guessing until the very end. I also must admit that the poignant ending fired up my emotions as only truly great writing can. John D MacDonald was a master at work and the Travis McGee series is a timeless reminder of a man at the height of his power.

Bethel says

One of the best reads. Loved it. A great adventure with Trav !!

James Thane says

The eighth installment of the Travis McGee series takes place in Chicago rather than in Florida, and thus most of the usual cast, save for McGee himself, is MIA. It is not a book that would have endeared MacDonald to the Chicago Chamber of Commerce. The author was obviously not very fond of the Chicago, and through McGee makes some fairly cutting comments about the Windy City and its inhabitants.

For those unfamiliar with the series, McGee is a self-styled "salvage" expert. If someone is defrauded and has no legal recourse, McGee will use his considerable talents to recover what has been lost. His fee is fifty percent of the recovery; expenses come off the top.

In these books there is always a fragile woman who has been badly treated, sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally, and often both. In addition to recovering what has been stolen by the bad guys, it will be McGee's job to restore the poor woman to a state of health and physical well-being--unless, of course, she manages to get killed along the way.

In this case, one of these previously broken birds (the book's description, not mine), Glory Doyle, turns to McGee for help a second time. Her husband, a respected Chicago physician, has recently died and Glory discovers that during the last year of her husband's life, someone had managed to bleed him of his entire fortune. McGee comes to Chicago to chase down the money and punish the evil-doers. In the normal course of things, he will have to rescue a beautiful but frigid blonde who has no idea why she hates sex. Can McGee cure the poor woman and turn her into a sexual dynamo while at the same time he deals out justice to the bad guys? Is the Pope Catholic?

As the book progresses, we also get a heavy dose of McGee's philosophy as he ponders the mysteries of the universe and the failings of his fellow man. He's particularly hard on Chicago legend Hugh Hefner and the Playboy lifestyle.

This was in its day, one of the most popular mystery/suspense series ever written. But sadly it has not held up very well over time. One naturally expects that a book that was originally published in 1966 is going to show its age, but these books now sound positively archaic and re-reading them is almost always disappointing. When I first discovered the paperback reprints of these books back in my youth, I devoured them and couldn't wait to find another. Now, every couple of years or so, I pull one off the shelf, hoping to rediscover some of the magic that first drew me to McGee and his adventures. Unhappily, I haven't found it again in a long time. But that won't stop me from trying again in another couple of years.

Darwin8u says

"A man will let his money be taken only when the alternative is something he cannot endure."

- John D. MacDonald, One Fearful Yellow Eye

McGee does Chicago. I liked it, but didn't love it. Sometimes MacDonald takes McGee away from Florida and it seems to almost work, but I still think I prefer McGee on a boat to McGee in Chicago, in the snow. As a favor to an old flame, McGee goes to Chicago because her ex-husband's estate has been emptied and the relatives all think she did it. McGee looks into the hows and whys of the money disappearing. McGee's views (and I'd presume to a bit MacDonald's) on homosexuals and Blacks appear in this novel and they are nearly there, but only reach the uncanny valley of sensitivity towards other groups:

"I'm always skeptical of the male who makes a big public deal about how he hates fairies, how they turn his stomach, how he'd like to beat the hell out of them. The queens are certainly distasteful, but the average homosexual in the visual and performing arts is usually a human being a little bit brighter and more perceptive than most."

I have to remind myself that this was published in 1966. He is growing. Language like that was seen as progressive in the 60s, in certain circles. Hell, language like that might sound progressive in Texas, Idaho, or Arizona in certain circles now. I seem to always find areas where MacDonald nearly writes a perfect novel, but a couple things just block it for me. He is one of those writers I keep coming back from and keep ending up just a bit frustrated (and not just because I keep wanting to enroll him in sensitivity training classes). His books have the potential for real genius and the more I read the more I see this potential. Individually, however, this book doesn't get close.

Harv Griffin says

At the moment, due to Amanda's excellently written complete trashing of Travis McGee in her ★ review of MacDonald's DARKER THAN AMBER (she may have even called it Book Rape, I forget), a cautionary note to potential female readers may be appropriate.

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

ONE FEARFUL YELLOW EYE is Copyright 1966. Travis McGee's views on women are anchored in the Sixties. Travis easily makes my Top Ten List of favorite literary characters, but savvy 2012 women are going to have "issues." So, please Ladies, if you really want to pretend to be a hulking macho 6' 4" male animal for a few hours, may I suggest a nice Spenser by Robert B. Parker? Just not the first one. In THE GODWOLF MANUSCRIPT Spenser commits the penultimate PC boo-boo by having sex with both his client and his client's mother. Go for one of the later novels where Spenser is dating the shrink, and can put a politically correct spin on everything he is thinking and doing.

Also, in ONE FEARFUL YELLOW EYE the scene where Travis stumbles upon a dead guy who had been tortured for information so freaked me out that this may be the only one of the twenty-one Travis McGee novels that I have only read once. So far. Cut me some slack; Travis was also freaked out.

Some elegant plotting in this puppy near the end when it's clear that the good gals and guys have won, things abruptly tumble into hopeless disaster.

Book Reviews are almost obsolete in the post-Wikipedia era when copious details about any book can be accessed by anyone with just a couple of effortless mouse clicks. I don't know what to spill and what to hold back. In this one, McGee is again doing a favor for a friend. Although, there is a bit of loot to be recovered, if Travis can compose himself enough to stop looking at and thinking about that fearful yellow eye. @hg47

Kemper says

It'd been twenty-some years since I'd read the Travis McGee books, and when I heard that a movie version of *The Deep Blue Good-Bye* was in the works, I'd started picking up copies in used bookstores to give the series another read. I've had moments where I've started to regret that decision.

While I had fond memories of MacDonald's tales of the Florida beach bum who makes his living recovering funds that were stolen by semi-legal means or conned from the victims, re-reading these early books from the '60s with a 2010 perspective is starting to depress me because the attitudes and portrayals of women are so painful that they make an episode of *Mad Men* look like feminist propaganda.

McGee is summoned to Chicago by an old girlfriend, Glory, who had married Fortner Geis, a prominent and respected surgeon who has recently died after a long illness. Geis should have had a large estate to leave to Glory and his two grown children from a previous marriage, but all involved are shocked to find that Geis had spent his final months converting his funds to cash and now the money is gone. McGee's first theory is that it has to be some kind of blackmail, but what kind of threat could make a dying man leave nothing for his family?

I often laughed out loud at how dated some of this comes across. Geis is repeatedly described as a good and honorable man, yet it's known to most of the characters that he once had a relationship with his nurse that started with an act that was borderline date rape. He also had an illegitimate daughter that he deliberately never met, even when he was dying, but everyone still thinks he was a swell guy because he set up a small trust fund for her and had private detectives check up on her regularly.

The most cringe inducing parts involve a woman who is known by all the characters to be 'frigid'. Of course, McGee can help her solve that problem, and you can imagine what kind of therapy he plans to use.

But for all the flaws, these books still hold a kind of charm for me. The mystery of why Geis gave up all his money is intriguing, and McGee's brooding commentary about modern life circa 1966 still made this an good crime novel. Plus, when MacDonald isn't sharing his views on women, he regularly delivers writing gold. Check out this sample when McGee is flying into Chicago and bad weather is making the landing tricky:

Even with the buffeting, there is an impression of silence inside the aircraft at such times. People stare outward, but they are looking inward, tasting of themselves and thinking of promises and defeats.

Anyone who has ever white knuckled an armrest during a bad flight should be able to relate to that, and it's these moments that'll keep me going through this series.

Carla Remy says

I loved the first two in the series, but since then, I haven't been able to get interested in the plots. It's confusing, because the writing is great and there are always very interesting sections. I just don't love series in general. In this case, McGee, I find the books sprawling and uneven. I adored MacDonald's one off *A Bullet For Cinderella* (1955) - it was tighter, contained, very full but also shorter.

Ed says

Marvelous Travis McGee, modern knight errant, here. Trav flies north to Chicago to help out an old friend who turns out to be a rich widow. The only trouble is nobody knows where all of her late husband's dough has gone. The brutal Chicago winter doesn't appeal to McGee, but he doesn't slow down to get to the bottom of things. This title reminds me why I like the series. Lee Child offers an insightful introduction to this reissue.

Greg says

There is, I thought, almost no useful thing the human animal will not in his eternal perversity misuse, whether it be alcohol, gasoline, gunpowder, aspirin, chocolate fudge, mescaline, or LSD

I'm not sure what happened here.

I've really enjoyed all of the Travis McGee books up to here. One of them I think I thought slogged a little bit, but it was able to recover in its own way. This one just never seemed to really get going, until maybe the last 20 pages, but then it felt more like MacDonald felt like he should actually put some action into the novel. (view spoiler)

Lately, I've been in a 'reading' mood, so I don't think the way I was trudging through the book and not being able to get really into it was just because of my own shitty attention span.

One of McGee's women 'friends' who he had helped out (Kempers review of this book where he said the portrayal of women makes *Mad Men* look like Feminist Propaganda made me laugh, and it's sort of accurate,

although women are very weirdly portrayed in MacDonald's novels, it's sort of a bizarre mix of sexual liberation and deep down women want to be a no-strings attached fuck buddy with hulking / morse beach bums (let's include Meyer in this, too. It's not just McGee. But what's weird about the whole thing are the 'political' asides or musings that go on in McGee's head, he knows he's a shit, he knows the world is shit, he knows women get the short end of the stick and that everything is becoming bland and homogenized through consumerism, blah blah blah... but still a few weeks on a boat off the Florida Coast with McGee is a fairly standard treatment in these novels for anything that ails a broken female character....

I think this quote kind of gives a feeling of the weird spot women occupy in these novels...

I think my shtick, Heidi, is that I enjoy all aspects of a woman. I like the way their minds work. I like the sometimes wonderful and sometimes nutty ways they figure things out and relate themselves to reality. I like the arguments, the laughs, the quarrels, the competitions, the making up. A nearby girl makes the sky bluer, the drinks better, the food tastier. She gives the days more texture, and you know it is happening to her in the same way.

How this relates to Heidi Geis Trumbill is that I have the feeling it is a damned shame you stand outside the gates with a kind of wistful curiosity about what it's like inside. I want to be sort of a guide, showing off new and pretty country to the tourist. Life is so damned valuable and so totally miraculous, and they give you such a stingy little hunk of it from womb to tomb, you out to use all the parts of it there are. I guess I would say that I want to be friends. A friend wants to help a friend. I want to peel away that suspicious and contention because I don't think it's really what you're like. If we can get friendship going, then maybe we can get a good physical intimacy going, and from that we can fall into a kind of love, or fall into an affection close to love. If it happens, it adds up to more than the sum of the two people, and it is that extra part out of nowhere that has made all the songs and the poetry and the art.

I'm still in my parenthetical aside.... what I realized while typing out that kind of long passage (which is kind of beautiful and creepy since it's basically him rationalizing to a woman who doesn't like physical intimacy how he wants to fix her, is that noble to want to help someone in this way, can a life not be happily lived with almost no physical interaction with other human beings?)... yep still in my aside... but what I realized is that this isn't a crime novel. But a crime had to be added, this is MacDonald's own weird attempt at writing a love story for McGee (actually his second, one of the first novels had the element included, but it ended so badly). The crime just had to be sort of tacked around McGee falling for a woman unlike most of the broken 'birds' (as they are called sometimes) and beach hounds that normally show up in the novels. (view spoiler).

I've let this whole thing get away from me....)... right so one of his friends he helped out, her husband dies. He was well off but now the money is gone. She calls McGee to come up from Sunny Florida to Wintery Chicago to help find out what happens. And that is what he does.

That's my book report and rambling aside. Off to the next McGee novel soon, and hopefully I'll be back to enjoying them again!

Jim says

When I was thinking about tackling the Travis McGee series, I consulted my mom on this. She was a major

mystery reader. (MMR) To qualify for this designation start with all of Agatha Christie (88 books) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (4 novels 200+ stories).

She was woman of few words and her respond was pursed lips and a few knowing nods. This expression had only been observed for Les Miserables and Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor" (best opera of all time).

So, Travis McGee is was. I have to say I have enjoyed them all, except this one. It had an implausible plot about Nazis in Chicago blackmailing Fortner Geis who slept with a 17 year-old girl and produced a love child. The book had torture, LSD, rampant philosophizing and Nazis in a Florida condo.

It was bad.

Jim says

MacDonald always delivers great characters and good plots plus language always seems real with overtones about life in modern times

Greg says

McGee travels to Chicago and there it's cold and it's dark, much too dark for me, in more ways than one. (I lived in Chicago one winter, that's all I could take, and was never so happy to see a city in the rear view mirror of my car as it was just so painfully cold, but I do hear the city is great in the summer months.) This is the darkest (to me) of McGee's adventures so far, and the plot consists of a mess of relatives whose connections were, well, just too messy for much contemplation. I prefer MacDonald/McGee to be more on the warm (literally and figuratively) side and this one hurt, the bad guy is truly horrific. I prefer mystery/crime novels on the Christie/Cozy side and this one is way, way, way on the other side of the tracks. If you're like me, and you do like McGee in the hot Florida sun, you might want to skip this one. Two stars, only because of so much contemporary trash.

Mark says

This one was a little tedious for the first two-thirds of the novel. In terms of formula, author MacDonald makes a big deviation in setting, as much of the story takes place outside McGee's Florida habitat and places him on the streets of Chicago, a few northern suburbs, and the desolate rural towns west of the city, in the onset of winter. McGee is asked for help by an old friend (yet another 'lost lamb' of a woman he saved from despair and death several years prior). After her fling with McGee, Glory Doyle married a rich brain surgeon who succumbed to cancer and died tragically. Shortly before his death, he secretly liquidated his assets, and dumped the cash in unknown accounts and locations. Blackmail is the obvious reason, and MacDonald/McGee spends a great deal of time inquiring many possible suspects and motives. The story builds to a satisfying conclusion, but it takes a while to get there.

The story was of interest to me, since I'm very familiar with the setting. What would MacDonald, in all his typical cynicism and disdain for modern life, have to say about the Windy City? Not surprisingly, MacDonald is quite critical, commenting on the "nine bridges crossing the central sewer," slums south and

west that 'make Harlem look like Scarsdale', etc. Plenty of jibes on the weather, air quality, and lack of culture etc.

As always, remind yourself that this was written in 1966 for a male audience, and as such is typically misogynistic. There is also some unsavory sexual content here that is intended to titillate the target audience. Deep down though, McGee has a heart, and MacDonald makes him vulnerable. For the first time in the series, we see McGee questioning his skills and instincts, and twice he's sandbagged from behind. At his core, he's just a salvage expert, not an invincible secret agent or private eye.

Despite the tedium as McGee unravels the mystery, there is always the author's imitable writing style, which set this series part in the genre. Some wry humor, philosophizing and a few curve balls thrown in for fun. There's a plot point that seems to come out of left field at the end, but I should have seen it coming. (I'm no spoiler, but hopefully that piques your interest). But overall, after reading the previous seven, this one was a bit of a misfire.

Benjamin Thomas says

The eighth novel in the Travis McGee series finds Travis far from his sunny home aboard *The Busted Flush* in southern Florida. In fact, the story starts with Travis descending into Chicago O'Hare Airport in wintertime, responding to a distress phone call from Glory Geiss, an old flame who has recently become a widow. Seems her rich doctor husband had been dispersing his fortune over the past several months to the point where most of it is now gone. Dr. Geiss's son and daughter are convinced Glory has absconded with it so Glory would like Travis to track down what happened and clear her name.

This was another enjoyable entry in the series. McGee's best friend Meyer, unfortunately, doesn't have a real role in this one, but does put in an off-screen cameo. Travis, indeed, is on his own...and not at all in his element. Nevertheless, he doggedly pursues the mission, makes some creative paths to solutions and...in true McGee fashion, makes a couple of critical mistakes, imperiling not only himself but others. I like that about these novels. Our hero is not perfect, even when he is in top form.

As always, looking forward to the next one.

JoAnna Spring says

Meh. A fine book, but not spectacular. Trav goes to Chicago to help a friend whose rich, older husband died and apparently had been blackmailed out of all funds. Nefariousness and intrigue occur with lots of beautiful social commentary that always feels current despite being written over 40 years ago.

I miss the biting banter when Trav is working with/for women who are friends. Because he likes these women, they are usually implausibly perfect and bland. Give me a flawed, self-absorbed, psycho bitch any day over the giving, elegant career woman. Snooze.

Fav quotes:

- "Every day, no matter how much you fight it, you learn a little more about yourself, and all most of it does is teach humility."

- "So in the endless twilight of noonday I went northward, locked into the traffic flow, listening to ghastly news from all over. Premier assassinated tax boost seen Wings lose again bombs deemed defective three coeds raped teenage riot in Galveston cost of living index up again market sags Senator sues bowl game canceled wife trading ring broken mobster takes Fifth bad weather blankets nation...

The announcer was beginning to choke up. I turned him off. I couldn't stand it."

- "Snow was bounding like wedding rice off the pavements. It stung my tropical nose, and the wind yanked at my topcoat, congealed my blood, and made my bones feel like old icicles wrapped in freezer bags. Santas dingle-jangled their street-corner appeals, hopping from foot to foot, changing the bell from hand to hand, saying than you sir with a huff of frosty breath, and the department stores sang "Ave Maria" in stereo high-fidelity while stocky ladies whomped each other with purses and elbows as they competed for Bargain Gifts Galore, and the stone-face virgins who staff the toy areas drove away the urchins who had come to play with the trains."
