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**"KOONTZ SEEMS TO KNOW US, OUR DEEPEST
FOIBLES AND FEARS." —*USA Today***

"Dean Koontz writes page-turners, middle-of-the-night-sneak-up-behind-you suspense thrillers. He touches our hearts and tingles our spines."

—*The Washington Post Book World*

"Dean Koontz almost occupies a genre of his own. He is a master at building suspense and holding the reader spellbound." —*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"Dean Koontz is not just a master of our darkest dreams, but also a literary juggler." —*The Times* (London)

"Demanding much of itself, Koontz's style bleaches out clichés while showing a genius for details. He leaves his competitors buried in the dust." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"The master of the psychological drama."

—Larry King, *USA Today*

"Koontz is a great storyteller." —*Daily News*, New York

"Koontz's prose is clear and clean . . . gripping, fast-paced, and satisfying." —*People*

"Tumbling, hallucinogenic prose. Serious writers might do well to study his technique."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Koontz lights up a dark galaxy." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Inspires both chills and serious thought." —*People*

"Dean Koontz virtually invented the cross-genre novel. . . . He is one of the premier novelists of his generation." —Amazon.com

"Koontz has a seemingly endless array of imaginative plots for his novels." —*The Toronto Sun*

“Dean Koontz creates compelling, almost biblical, stories about good facing evil in the battle for our souls.”
—*Orange Coast*

“Koontz really knows how to keep a story going at a blistering pace. . . . Reading him is an uplifting experience.” —*Fort Wayne News Sentinel*

“The dean of suspense writers.” —*Midwest Book Review*

“One author . . . redefining mainstream fiction . . . is Dean Koontz. [He] continues to explore the larger issues of life—friendship, faith, courage and salvation . . . an astounding mix of suspense, humor, wonder and fear.”
—*South End*

“His style is a model of clarity, his prose so smooth that it goes down like apple juice . . . with the delayed punch of hard cider.” —*The Plain Dealer, Cleveland*

“Koontz has one of the most incredible gifts for the art of language—a master of images and descriptions. His characters are timeless and beautifully constructed. He proves you can be on the bestseller lists and don’t have to be dead or named Hemingway to have the depth and feeling of the classics.” —*Michigan State News*

“Koontz is a literary phenomenon.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“Koontz’s skill at edge-of-the-seat writing has improved with each book. He can scare your socks off.”
—*Boston Herald*

“Powerful emotion tinged with spiritual wonder.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

“Koontz tries to create serious literature. He largely succeeds . . .” —*USA Today*

“While dazzling the reader with magnificent turns of phrase that will evoke simultaneous admiration and envy, [Koontz] alternates the mood between tenderness and suspense.” —*bookreporter.com*

"Koontz has always had near-Dickensian powers of description, and an ability to yank us from one page to the next that few novelists can match."

—*Los Angeles Times*

"We [are] mesmerized by Koontz's gift of words and colorful prose." —*Oakland Press*

"Koontz is famous for the way he falls in love with his characters. They're so richly and compellingly drawn, you can practically hear them breathing from the page. You'll never want to leave the worlds Koontz draws you into. Open your mind and your heart..."

—*Lexington Herald-Leader*

"Koontz builds mansions of place and time... examining the depth of the human spirit, our capacity for good and evil... and the consequences of even the simplest deed."

—*Harrisburg Patriot-News*

"Exceptional writing and storytelling. Year after year, Koontz provides fresh ideas."

—*San Antonio Express-News*

"A lengthy career already filled with triumphs..."

—*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

"[Koontz] proves... that he still has the power to 'scare the daylights out of us,' as *People Magazine* so astutely observes." —*The Ottawa Citizen*

"For some time now, Koontz has been quite ambitious with the themes of his thrillers... joy is definitely in the journey." —*Flint Journal*

"Magic." —*New Orleans Times-Picayune*

"Vintage novel writing." —*The Calgary Sun*

"Dean Koontz is not an author to be taken for granted. Each of his books stands alone; they do not fit a pattern... Well-developed characters [are] a trademark of Koontz's... Highly diverse... marvelous people."

—*Fort Meyers Beach Observer*

"Creative and far-reaching . . . Riveting . . . Koontz is on top of his field." —*Deseret News*

"Dean Koontz achieve[s] a literary miracle . . . A tapestry of intrigue and suspense . . . stunning physical description, unique turns of phrase . . ." —*Boston Globe*

**"Koontz has the power to scare your socks off and the ability to fill your eyes with compassionate tears."
—*Orange Coast***

"[Koontz] breaks new ground in the scope of [his] themes and sheer story-telling prowess . . . Koontz drives you crazy with suspense as he weaves a web of psychological and mystical tension." —*Tulsa World*

"Dean Koontz is a prose stylist whose lyricism heightens malevolence and tension. He creates characters of unusual richness and depth. A level of perception and sensitivity that is not merely convincing—it's astonishing." —*The Seattle Times*

"A master storyteller. Sometimes humorous, sometimes shocking, but always riveting. His characters sparkle with life." —*The San Diego Union*

**"Koontz's prose is at times lyrical without ever being naïve or romantic. This is a grotesque world, much like that of Flannery O'Connor or Walker Percy. Scary, worthwhile reading."
—*The Times-Picayune*, New Orleans**

**"Koontz raises intriguing questions about life, death, evil, and faith that are worthy of C. S. Lewis."
—*The Flint Journal***

"Lean prose and rich characterizations. Playing on every emotion and keeping the story racing along, Koontz masterfully builds tension." —*Publishers Weekly*

**"Koontz's prose is as smooth as a knife through butter, and his storytelling ability never wavers."
—*The Calgary Sun***

"Koontz is a master at constructing vivid, eerily realistic worlds that hold readers spellbound." —*Booklist*

"His prose mesmerizes . . . Gut-wrenching clarity. It's in the description of emotional states—from love to despair—that Koontz has consistently hit bull's-eyes, evoking reactions of 'Yes, I know *exactly* how that feels!' "
—*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*

"Koontz is more imaginative than most writers, and he has a knack for vitalizing his characters."
—*The New York Times*

"Koontz writes first-rate suspense, scary and stylish."
—*Los Angeles Times*

"Koontz is brilliant in the creation of his characters and in building tension." —*Chicago Sun-Times*

"His prose is rich and evocative. His characters are among the warmest—and most despicable—in modern fiction." —*The Ottawa Citizen*

"Koontz is one our finest and most versatile suspense writers." —*Macon Telegraph and News*

"An extraordinarily conscientious writer. Koontz's craftsmanship is increasingly impressive."
—*The Trenton Times*

"Koontz is writing right where popular culture swells into something larger, just as it did for Homer, Shakespeare, and Dickens. He's got the gift."
—*The Australian*

"After three dozen novels and more than 200 million copies sold, Dean Koontz can still reach out and pull the reader into terror." —*San Antonio Express-News*

Koontz's plots and characters are always compelling, absorbing, and beautifully drawn with a deep respect for the redemptive power of love." —*Orange Coast*

“Dean Koontz . . . has the power to scare the daylights out of us.” —*People*

“Koontz’s superlative ability to balance sensationalism with psychological, emotional, and physical realism keeps readers riveted to the page.” —*Mystery Scene*

**“A master of the [suspense] genre.”
—*Richmond Times-Dispatch***

**“Koontz is a master at creating believable characters and realistic dialogue . . . he has few peers when it comes to snappy one-liners and irreverent humor.”
—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette***

**“Koontz knows how to turn the screws, and dealing with internal terrors, really takes the reader for a ride.”
—*The Globe and Mail*, Toronto**

A L S O B Y D E A N K O O N T Z

*One Door Away
From Heaven
From the Corner of
His Eye
False Memory
Seize the Night
Fear Nothing
Mr. Murder
Dragon Tears
Hideaway
Cold Fire
The Bad Place
Midnight
Lightning
Watchers
Strangers
Twilight Eyes
Darkfall
Phantoms
Whispers
The Mask*

*The Vision
The Face of Fear
Night Chills
Shattered
The Voice of the Night
The Servants
of Twilight
The House of Thunder
The Key to Midnight
The Eyes of Darkness
Shadowfires
Winter Moon
The Door to December
Dark Rivers of the
Heart
Icebound
Strange Highways
Intensity
Sole Survivor
Ticktock
The Funhouse
Demon Seed*

This book is dedicated to Linda Morris and Elaine Peterson for their hard work, their kindnesses, and their reliability.

And, of course, for catching me in that once-a-year mistake that, if not drawn to my attention, would mar my record of perfection. And for discreetly concealing from me that the real reason they stay around is to ensure that Ms. Trixie receives all the belly rubs that she deserves.

*And at his prow the pilot held
within his hands his freight of lives,
eyes wide open, full of moonlight.*

—*Night Flight*,
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



*Life has no meaning except in terms
of responsibility.*

—*Faith and History*,
Reinhold Niebuhr



*Now take my hand and hold it tight.
I will not fail you here tonight,
For failing you, I fail myself
And place my soul upon a shelf
In Hell's library without light.
I will not fail you here tonight.*

—*The Book of Counted Sorrows*

BY THE
LIGHT OF
THE MOON



Chapter One

SHORTLY BEFORE BEING KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS and bound to a chair, before being injected with an unknown substance against his will, and before discovering that the world was *deeply* mysterious in ways he'd never before imagined, Dylan O'Conner left his motel room and walked across the highway to a brightly lighted fast-food franchise to buy cheeseburgers, French fries, pocket pies with apple filling, and a vanilla milkshake.

The expired day lay buried in the earth, in the asphalt. Unseen but felt, its ghost haunted the Arizona night: a hot spirit rising lazily from every inch of ground that Dylan crossed.

Here at the end of town that served travelers from the nearby interstate, formidable batteries of colorful electric signs warred for customers. In spite of this bright battle, however, an impressive sea of stars gleamed from horizon to horizon, for the air was clear and dry. A westbound moon, as round as a ship's wheel, plied the starry ocean.

The vastness above appeared clean and full of promise, but the world at ground level looked dusty, weary. Rather than being combed by a single wind, the night was

plaited with many breezes, each with an individual quality of whispery speech and a unique scent. Redolent of desert grit, of cactus pollen, of diesel fumes, of hot blacktop, the air curdled as Dylan drew near to the restaurant, thickened with the aroma of long-used deep-fryer oil, with hamburger grease smoking on a griddle, with fried-onion vapors nearly as thick as blackdamp.

If he hadn't been in a town unfamiliar to him, if he hadn't been tired after a day on the road, and if his younger brother, Shepherd, hadn't been in a puzzling mood, Dylan would have sought a restaurant with healthier fare. Shep wasn't currently able to cope in public, however, and when in this condition, he refused to eat anything but comfort food with a high fat content.

The restaurant was brighter inside than out. Most surfaces were white, and in spite of the well-greased air, the establishment looked antiseptic.

Contemporary culture fit Dylan O'Conner only about as well as a three-fingered glove, and here was one more place where the tailoring pinched: He believed that a burger joint ought to look like a *joint*, not like a surgery, not like a nursery with pictures of clowns and funny animals on the walls, not like a bamboo pavilion on a tropical island, not like a glossy plastic replica of a 1950s diner that never actually existed. If you were going to eat charred cow smothered in cheese, with a side order of potato strips made as crisp as ancient papyrus by immersion in boiling oil, and if you were going to wash it all down with either satisfying quantities of icy beer or a milkshake containing the caloric equivalent of an entire roasted pig, then this fabulous consumption ought to occur in an ambience that virtually screamed *guilty pleasure*, if not *sin*. The lighting should be low and warm. Surfaces should be dark—preferably old mahogany, tarnished brass, wine-colored upholstery. Music should be provided to soothe the carnivore: not the music that

made your gorge rise in an elevator because it was played by musicians steeped in Prozac, but tunes that were as sensuous as the food—perhaps early rock and roll or big-band swing, or good country music about temptation and remorse and beloved dogs.

Nevertheless, he crossed the ceramic-tile floor to a stainless-steel counter, where he placed his takeout order with a plump woman whose white hair, well-scrubbed look, and candy-striped uniform made her a dead ringer for Mrs. Santa Claus. He half expected to see an elf peek out of her shirt pocket.

In distant days, counters in fast-food outlets had been manned largely by teenagers. In recent years, however, a significant number of teens considered such work to be beneath them, which opened the door to retirees looking to supplement their social-security checks.

Mrs. Santa Claus called Dylan “dear,” delivered his order in two white paper bags, and reached across the counter to pin a promotional button to his shirt. The button featured the slogan FRIES NOT FLIES and the grinning green face of a cartoon toad whose conversion from the traditional diet of his warty species to such taste treats as half-pound bacon cheeseburgers was chronicled in the company’s current advertising campaign.

Here was that three-fingered glove again: Dylan didn’t understand why he should be expected to weigh the endorsement of a cartoon toad or a sports star—or a Nobel laureate, for that matter—when deciding what to eat for dinner. Furthermore, he didn’t understand why an advertisement assuring him that the restaurant’s French fries were tastier than house flies should charm him. Their fries *better* have a superior flavor to a bagful of insects.

He withheld his antitoad opinion also because lately he had begun to realize that he was allowing himself to be annoyed by too many inconsequential things. If he didn’t mellow out, he would sour into a world-class

curmudgeon by the age of thirty-five. He smiled at Mrs. Claus and thanked her, lest otherwise he ensure an anthracite Christmas.

Outside, under the fat moon, crossing the three-lane highway to the motel, carrying paper bags full of fragrant cholesterol in a variety of formats, Dylan reminded himself of some of the many things for which he should be thankful. Good health. Nice teeth. Great hair. Youth. He was twenty-nine. He possessed a measure of artistic talent and had work that he found both meaningful and enjoyable. Although he was in no danger of getting rich, he sold his paintings often enough to cover expenses and to bank a little money every month. He had no disfiguring facial scars, no persistent fungus problem, no troublesome evil twin, no spells of amnesia from which he awoke with bloody hands, no inflamed hangnails.

And he had Shepherd. Simultaneously a blessing and a curse, Shep in his best moments made Dylan glad to be alive and happy to be his brother.

Under a red neon MOTEL sign where Dylan's traveling shadow painted a purer black upon the neon-rouged blacktop, and then when he passed squat sago palms and spiky cactuses and other hardy desert landscaping, and also while he followed the concrete walkways that served the motel, and certainly when he passed the humming and softly clinking soda-vending machines, lost in thought, brooding about the soft chains of family commitment—he was stalked. So stealthy was the approach that the stalker must have matched him step for step, breath for breath. At the door to his room, clutching bags of food, fumbling with his key, he heard too late a betraying scrape of shoe leather. Dylan turned his head, rolled his eyes, glimpsed a looming moon-pale face, and sensed as much as saw the dark blur of something arcing down toward his skull.

Strangely, he didn't feel the blow and wasn't aware of