



Mammoth Books presents Lethal Legends: Four short stories by Michael Kelly, Simon Kurt Unsworth, Mark Valentine and Terry Dowling

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THE WOODS - Michael Kelly

Michael Kelly reveals "The Woods' was written for an anthology seeking regional horror and ghost stories. I'd just read Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephant's'. Now, in no way am I comparing myself to Hemingway but I wanted to write a similarly brief tale, with only two main characters, and where the horror was off-stage. As well, the setting had to be distinctly Canadian. What, I thought, could be more Canadian than the frozen north and allusions to mythical beasts?"

MAMI WATA - Simon Kurt Unsworth

Unsworth reveals, "When I was first asked to contribute to *Exotic Gothic 3* (which was to feature Gothic-influenced stories in non-Gothic environments), I agreed without really thinking about it, and then spent a long time struggling, trying to work out how, precisely, I was going to manage it or quite how to make a start.

"I knew what I wanted to do, sort of, but not exactly how to do it, so one day alarmingly close to the deadline I did a fun thing: I freewheeled through Google. Using a small document about Zambian myths and cultures I found online (I set the story in Zambia for no reason other than an old family friend lives there and it seemed exotic in Gothic terms), I used one Zambian word from it as a search term and read what came up, took one intriguing Zambian term from the search results and searched for that, etc, and disappeared into Google's merry depths.

"I ended up with an academic paper about a particular myth, a travel blog about a sort of beer made from corn and a weird little 'my God's better than your God' blog by a kid in Africa, and somewhere in the middle of that, the story appeared."

THE AXHOLME TOLL - Mark Valentine

"In the following story, the book called *The MS. in a Red Box* really exists," the author reveals. "All of the legends about the Isle, and about Beckett's assassins, are also genuine, except (so far) that of the Toll, and their final place of rest - or unrest."

TWO STEPS ALONG THE ROAD - Terry Dowling

"Two Steps Along the Road' came out of a conversation with US editor Danel Olson," Dowling explains, "where we discussed me doing a ghost story set in Vietnam for *Exotic Gothic 3*, and the interesting possibilities it might provide for delivering atmosphere and an interesting perspective on familiar things.

"Before I knew it, I was blending two separate elements that were demanding attention: the notion of a root-form behind all hauntings, regardless of what form they took, and the unnerving realization that the eyes of a quite attractive teaching colleague would be truly terrifying to behold if they were set just a tad closer together.

"The ideas were intended for very different stories but, as so often happens, *they* decided they were meant for each other."

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