



Coronado

By Dennis Lehane
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Introduction

In this new collection, Dennis Lehane has compiled the best of his previously published short stories, as well as one completely new tale.

"Running Out of Dog"

Elgin Bern has two women—both representing different parts of his life. Jewel Lut and Shelley Briggs. Compare and contrast these women, what each offers Elgin, what each asks of him in return. Jewel, a woman "that sank into a man's flesh the way the heat did . . . gobbled up life, dove into it like it was a cool pond cut in the shade of a mountain on the hottest day of the year" and Shelley, who "was what you aspired to. A good woman who'd be a good mother, who'd stick by you when times got tough."

What reasons can you see for Jewel's turn toward Blue? Was it friendship on her part that Blue misinterprets or did she have an agenda set when they began to be seen in public together?

For most of their lives, Elgin has been Blue's protector. Do you believe Elgin ever saw Blue as a friend or was he more of someone who Elgin believe needed saving? How do you believe this relates to the final outcome of this story? Was it rage that caused Elgin to do what he did—or was it a reluctant acceptance that Blue had finally been pushed beyond salvation?

"ICU"

What does the reader know about Daniel? What can one conclude about this man based on what those around him—his employer, the bar tenders, the bar patrons, his ex-wife—say to him before he enters the hospital.

In the end, Daniel has performed a service to those he encounters in the ICUs. He's a friend, a confidant, a supporter of those people in need. Could someone who helps others this way be the type of person being hunted by Troy?

Where else—besides a hospital—could Daniel have hidden for so long? Would he have had the same contact with others had he been hiding in a different location?

"Gone Down To Corpus"

The narrator of "Gone Down to Corpus" explains his destructiveness as "something . . . I'm mad at, something I can't put a name to." In your opinion what could this *something* be? Why do you believe Lurlene wants to destroy her own home?

Why do you think the footballer players back down from destroying the second house they go to? What makes Lurlene want to come to this house to begin with?

"Mushrooms"

"Mushrooms" is about how other people's chain of events can influence and change one's life. Rory steals someone's sneakers; Lorraine, his girlfriend turns him in; Rory kills Lorraine; Lorraine's half-brother, Sylvester, kills Rory—and in the process an innocent child; the child's sister and KL then kill Sylvester. In your opinion, does this chain end with Sylvester's murder?

Sonya's sister knows she would disapprove of killing Sylvester. Yet she does nothing to stop KL from killing him. If not to avenge her sisters' death, why else do you think she helps with the murder?

"Until Gwen"

Use the title "Until Gwen" in a sentence about the main character of this story: "Until Gwen, he _____. During Gwen, he _____. After Gwen, he _____." Do the same with the main character's father: "Until Gwen, his father _____. During Gwen, his father _____. After Gwen, his father _____." Describe the lasting impact Gwen had on these two men. Are there similarities?

At the story's end, the main character has all the means to completely re-invent himself. Financially he is secure. On paper he has no past. He is able to completely start somewhere new where no one knows him. If you could write an epilogue to this story, one year later, where would he be?

Questions for Discussion

1. "A small town is a hard place to keep a secret, and a small southern town with all that heat and all those open windows is an

even harder place than most," Lehane writes in "Running Out of Dog." The small town setting is present in various stories in *Coronado*. How does this setting influence the characters in each story? Could any of these stories have taken place in a city rather than a small town? How are these characters different from those who appear in "Mushrooms," the only story in the collection that takes place in a city?

2. The depth to which desperate people will go is a common thread through each of the stories in *Coronado*. How are these characters desperate?

About the Author

Though best known for his hugely successful novels such as *Mystic River* and *Shutter Island*, Dennis Lehane has been publishing his short stories in a wide variety of publications for years. Other books include *A Drink Before the War*, which won the Shamus Award for Best First Novel; *Darkness*, *Take My Hand*; *Sacred*; *Gone, Baby, Gone*; and *Prayers for Rain*. A native of Dorchester, Mass., he lives in the Boston area.