



## Cut Me In

*Hunt Collins , Ed McBain*

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\*CONTAINS THE BONUS STORY, "NOW DIE IN IT".

WHEN A MAN'S PARTNER IS KILLED  
HE'S SUPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Maybe no one liked Del Gilbert a whole lot, not the men he ruthlessly did business with, not the women who discovered they weren't his only lover, not even his partner in the Gilbert and Blake literary agency—me. But when I found him shot to death on the floor of his office, I had no choice. I had to track down the person responsible. And not just to lay Del to rest, either. Next to his body, the office safe was wide open, and a contract worth millions was missing...

From the pen of MWA Grand Master Ed McBain comes this unforgettable story of warring agents and Hollywood dealmaking, murder and scandal—and passions igniting in the dark of night.

First publication in nearly 60 years!

Features a brand new cover painting by legendary illustrator Robert McGinnis

Also featuring Now Die In It, a bonus McBain novelette from the pulps, starring private eye Matt Cordell from THE GUTTER AND THE GRAVE

Cover art by Robert McGinnis

### Cut Me In Details

Date : Published January 2016 by Hard Case Crime (first published 1954)

ISBN :

Author : Hunt Collins , Ed McBain

Format :

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Hard Boiled, Noir, Pulp

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## From Reader Review Cut Me In for online ebook

### Tim Schneider says

This is the first thing I've read by McBain (or Evan Hunter for that matter). I'm very familiar with his reputation, but police procedurals are not my bag and I've not yet gotten around to reading anything he wrote under the Hunter name. And Holy Crap...I wasn't expecting this. This book made me lose sleep. It hit me in the way the best of Stark's Parker books and the best of Fair's Cool & Lam books did...I just had to keep reading. Which is not to say that it's as good as Parker or as fun as Cool & Lam at their best. But it's damn compelling. And it was a chore to put it down. That's significant praise.

Josh Blake's partner has been murdered. Blake is convinced it is because of television rights acquired by his office that could queer a huge movie deal. The police detective in charge of the investigation disagrees and is looking for a less arcane motive. Blake gets pulled into his own investigation while trying to save the deal that will make the firm a lot of money. Along the way there are a number of beautiful femme's fatale, tough-guy goons, a few more murders and a number of twists and turns.

The book straddles the line between hard-boiled detective (Blake isn't a detective and isn't actively investigating the death, but gets pulled in) and the literary noir of the Gold Medal stripe that was prevalent in the early 50s. It also teeters on the edge of the more exploitative paperback originals of the time. Blake isn't particularly likeable. But then none of the characters are terribly likeable. That doesn't really matter because the book moves along at a compelling pace and is just a fun read. It's definitely helped by the setting...the world of book and story publishing that is certainly unusual in a book of this type. And the ending while a bit silly is saved by the fact that the identity and motive of the killer are pitch perfect.

A really solid read that makes it a pretty sound bet I'll be reading McBain's other Hard Case books sooner rather than later.

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### Craig Childs says

Literary agent Josh Blake finds his partner Del dead in his office one morning, three bullet holes in his head. Josh never much liked Del, but an important contract worth thousands of dollars is also missing from the office safe, and Josh must solve the murder if he wants to get it back.

This book suffers from uninteresting characters, unbelievable situations, and lack of consistent tone. It cannot decide if it wants to be a hardboiled noir murder mystery or a social satire.

Nobody seems to really care much about the murder... not even when more bodies begin to pile up. Instead, there is a lot of farce about the publishing industry. For example, there is a desperate young writer character who keeps coming to blows with Josh in every groan-inducing scene in which they meet because the agency will not publish his bloated first novel.

Even the missing contract is a sort of slap in the face to agents. Josh is trying to use the contract to essentially blackmail a Hollywood producer. He is threatening to cheapen a valuable literary property by turning it into a low-budget tv series if he does not get a 25% cut of a movie deal. In other words, Josh is willing to scuttle a lucrative deal for his client—the writer—for his own financial gain.

Women keep throwing themselves at Josh in the most preposterous come-on sequences, but he ignores most

of them because he is so intent on finding his missing contract. Yet, apparently no one thought to make multiple copies of it when it was first written. (I could go more into this glaring plot hole, but to do so would actually spoil one of few good twists, so I will leave it at that).

The final resolution of the mystery is transparent and flimsy.

Included at the end of this book is the short story "Now Die In It", featuring Matt Cordell from The Gutter and the Grave. It is much better than this novel, and it made me wish Hard Case Crime had brought out all the Cordell stories in a single volume rather than republish this dud.

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### **Paul says**

It's amazing how much more sophisticated Ed McBain's writing became in the two years between So Nude, So Dead and Cut Me In (and still two years before his first 87th Precinct novel, Cop Hater).

This is a mystery of the highest caliber with two marvellous red herrings that make this story great. And the final scene knocks'em dead.

Sure, it's rife with 50's misogyny, and suffers from the early hardboiled genre stereotype that all women are fast, beautiful, and conniving. But it was a sign of the times.

McBain will always be one of the writing gods I will admire. Kudos to you, Mr. Salvatore Albert Lombino.

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### **Woody Chandler says**

I am attempting to bring my Goodreads account current. I read this over a year ago (!) & simply let it sit in my "Currently Reading" queue. I apologize.

I have been a long-time Ed McBain fan & I read the entire 87th Precinct series back in 1986/'87, so I am VERY familiar with his work & his writing. This felt like an early attempt on his part, lacking the polish that would come over years of exemplary writing. Still, it was a nice period piece with many allusions to mid-20th century U.S. that seem outdated in today's world.

What I truly enjoyed was the bonus novella, featuring the alcoholic detective from "The Gutter to the Grave". He is a fascinating character & I wish that McBain had explored him in greater volume.

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### **Oliver Clarke says**

You actually get two books in this volume, short novel 'Cut Me In' and novella 'Now Die In It'. Both are of their time, hard boiled and lots of fun. 'Cut Me In' has an interesting backdrop (publishing), a likeable somewhat hapless hero, lots of murders and almost as many dames. 'Now Die In It' has hard drinking down on his luck PI and a suitably depressing denouement. Two winners from the master, McBain and an enjoyable alternative to the 87th Precinct books.

## **Kemper says**

Literary agent Josh Blake is having a bad day at the office. He's hungover, one of his secretaries is late, and a very pushy aspiring writer won't take no for an answer. Oh, and he also finds his partner murdered in his office and their most valuable contract that's about to be worth a fortune in movie rights is missing.

Sounds like somebody has a case of the Mondays!

This is a hard boiled mystery novel that has everything you'd expect from this kind of thing written in the '50s. Ed McBain created a solid noir character in the jerkish Blake who is more concerned with the missing contract than the dead partner. There's a suspicious cop, some surprisingly polite thugs, and several gorgeous dames thrown into the mix, and it works well enough as an entertaining story. Good, but not inspired would be my usual judgement on it.

Yet there's a surprising little bit right at the end that puts a whole new light on everything, and lifts it up a notch. I won't quite go 4 stars on it, but it'd be an easy 3.5 if Goodreads would let us do that.

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## **Erin says**

Originally published in 1954 under the name Hunt Collins and later reissued as *The Proposition*, the book is slightly cheesy, of course, but since it's Ed McBain, it's still an incredibly well written, interesting page turner--all the best aspects of McBain's style to come are here in this early novel. I would recommend it to any McBain fan and to any fan of light, slightly sordid, 1950s-style hardboiled mysteries.

The main character is not a detective but he nevertheless solves a mystery, with(out) the help of the police. Josh Blake is a literary agent bent on solving the murder of his partner, Del Gilbert. Not surprisingly, Blake is forced to deal with a few gorgeous femme fatales in the process. This is the book that spurred the editor-in-chief of Pocket Books to ask McBain to write a series of police detective novels and thus, the 87th Precinct series was born.

If you enjoy this one, you'll also like *The Spiked Heel*, a Richard Marsten (Evan Hunter/Ed McBain) novel about a manufacturing executive who has to deal with some similarly unpleasant characters. In both, the tension of the protagonist attempting to maintain some morality in the face of underhanded business practices makes for a great mid-century internal struggle. For more on this book or Ed McBain in general, see *Ed McBain/Evan Hunter: A Literary Companion*.

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## **Dave says**

The publisher's blurb for *Cut Me In* talks about having to find a killer because that's what you do when your partner, Del Gilbert, is murdered. For many of us, that brings back memories of Spade and Archer, particularly when you find out that the partners didn't particularly like each other and the surviving one had scandalous thoughts about the dead one's wife. And, to top it off, the police detective is suspicious. But, McBain did not give us a remake of any Maltese Falcon novel. Indeed, Josh Blake and Del Gilbert are not detectives at all, but literary agents. Kind of a different twist for a hardboiled pulpy crime novel. This

novel works really well, starting with Robert McGinnis's excellent understated cover art. What really makes it though more than anything else is the top-notch pulpy writing. I never realized how good McBain really was.

There is something about the way he writes in this novel that makes you see, feel, and hear the descriptions, beginning with the girl sitting at the kitchen table with the steam rising from the coffee cup, her legs crossed, the ankle straps, the nylon stockings stretched taut against the curve of her leg, the pale orange lipstick that accentuated her blondness and added just a touch of color to her full lips. Then there's the description of how Blake feels with the buzz saw inside his skull and the decaying caterpillar in his mouth. Then, Blake talks about the top of his skull blowing off when he sees the safe open in his office. And, all throughout the novel McBain throws in these terrific pulpy phrases so, as the reader, we can feel the tension in the room, the distraction, the eyes roaming, the sounds coming through the windows. You can feel the shock when someone hears news and it is almost as if she were hit in the stomach and she holds onto her glass as if she were holding a life preserver. There's other sounds too – like the shrill clamor of the telephone slicing into the air, shredding the silence, leaving nothing but the heat. What's amazing though is that the novel written and first published over sixty years ago feels fresh and new today. It's not stuck in a time warp as so many old-time novels feel. There's nothing necessarily that places this in the fifties except when you realize no one has cell phones. It is an easy book to read and the pages just fly off your hands as you thumb through it. This is precisely the kind of book I look to find in Hard Case Crime's catalog. There might at times be a bit more dialogue and a bit less action than one would want, but not enough to detract from the read. Plot-wise, it gives you some themes that you will find in other crime novels from that era, the partner murdered, the widow, the mistress, the cynical homicide detective, the innocent man who unfortunately finds the body and has a motive for murder, but the writing and the feel are what puts this novel on the top shelf for me.

As an added bonus, at the end of the novel, Hard Case Crime also gives us a short novella) featuring Matt Cordell (The Gutter and The Grave). This is a classic 1950s hardboiled detective story with teenagers hanging out at the ice cream parlor. It's definitely worth reading.

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### **Fredrick Danysh says**

Literary agent Josh Blake finds his partner murdered in his office and a million dollar contract missing. As a suspect he tries to find the contract and discovers more bodies as the police make him a suspect. Also in the book is a short story Now Die In It in which a Private investigator who lost his license before diving into a bottle is hired to locate the man that got his client's seventeen year old niece pregnant. Both stories are without the author's usual political agenda that he displays in his 87th Precinct novels.

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### **Fiona MacDonald says**

Like Raymond Chandler, but on a sexier, seedier level. After having read and adored Lawrence Sanders, I realised I had to read a book by the very guy who's name pretty much established the 'hard boiled' genre. Here we have Josh Blake, a literary agent trying to work out why the people closest to him are winding up dead, and drinking copious amounts of scotch at the same time. There is such a sleazy style to these pulp fiction books which I adore and will continue to devour them.

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## Josh says

Ed McBain is best known for his long running 87th Precinct series, however, some of his best work includes So Nude So Dead (writing as Evan Hunter) and The Gutter and The Grave (writing as Curt Cannon), both pulp era crime reads re-printed as part of the Hard Case Crime stable.

Originally published in 1954 under the pen-name Hunt Collins, Cut Me In is pure pulp; the protagonist is a masochist, the dames are wanton, and the murders plentiful. Throw in healthy doses of sexual innuendo more akin to pulp pushers like Carter Brown than McBain, and you've got a sleazy murder mystery full of buttery popcorn pulp.

Josh Blake, a partner in a literary agency arrives in the office expecting to bleed for his clients and make some nice commission for the agency finds his partner, Del, murdered and the safe containing important and contentious contracts wide open. With a deal in the balance and the cops fingering him as a suspect, Blake turns into a semi-sleuth to help catch the killer.

Cut Me In is a hell of a fun book to read. The plot is simple yet the characters not without their complexities while the pace is pulse pounding. I didn't pick the perp until the last few pages.

The 2016 Hard Case Crime reprint also includes a novelette by McBain, featuring his under appreciated, PI Matt Cordell titled Now Die In It. Cordell also appears in the aforementioned The Gutter and The Grave. This novelette is a nice taster and teaser which has me wanting more Matt Cordell stories.

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## David Highton says

A decent enough murder thriller, but really not as good as his 87th Precinct books

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## Elizabeth Jones says

A mid-century noir thriller - a bit dated, a little corny, a lot sexist, but still fun to read.

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## Karl says

The novel was originally published in 1955 by Pyramid #151 as "The Proposition" by Hunt Collins selling today for \$45 - \$50 dollars.

The book also contains an extra story "Now Die In It".

Cover by Robert McGinnis.

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## Greg says

BOOK TWO: Mid-20th Century Crime Readathon

I'm moving 14 years forward from 1939's "The Big Sleep" with this Ed McBain 1953 publication.

Hook=4 Stars: A double hook on page one gets this one moving fast: Josh Blake awakes with a semi-naked beauty he doesn't recognize. But unfortunately, he has a [Publishing] deal that day which had forced a vacation cancelation, so he can't stay in bed with his beautiful stranger.

Pace=3: And extended poker game about halfway through the story is much too long and rather confusing.

Add that to a meticulous description of Blake getting dressed in formal wear and other issues and you get the feeling you're reading filler material. But the opening and closing scenes move very quickly.

Plot=4: I like books about books and the publishing world. Here, we have a missing contract worth millions for film rights, plus a some great red herrings and the twists keeps coming.

Characters=3: Josh Blake may be a one-off for McBain, his actions are interesting as he pursues a lost contract. A western novel author, Cam Stewart, is fascinating on several different levels. I can't remember a single other character once I closed the book, though, but the Josh/Cam clash for film rights is a good test of the strength of both characters..

Place=4: We know exactly how steamy hot summer in NY must have felt when men wore suits all day without air-conditioned cars, etc. And Cam Stewart's "Gunsmoke Acres" allows for several visits, and it is a writer's paradise: isolated with lots of privacy but not too far from downtown NY. There is a pool with shrubbery for nude swimming, and so much more. The kind of place most of us would love to live.

SUMMARY: I particularly enjoyed all the talk about book publications, TV and Film rights, the struggles writers face, the demands editors place upon them. It's true: there is an almost naked woman on the cover of this reproduction of the original edition in which Ed McBain used a pseudonym, Hunt Collins. You might suspect misogyny, but no, Josh certainly loves the ladies but he treats them with respect, unlike some other books in this genre. Interesting to note the word count is 78,208, a little low for what's normally required of a mystery(80K minimum), so there is a "long, lost novelette featuring Matt Cordell, the disgraced detective from [McBain's] 'The Gutter and The Grave.'" My ratings average out to 3.6, rounded up to a 4-star goodreads rating. I enjoyed this one very much, and I already know which McBain I'm reading next!

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