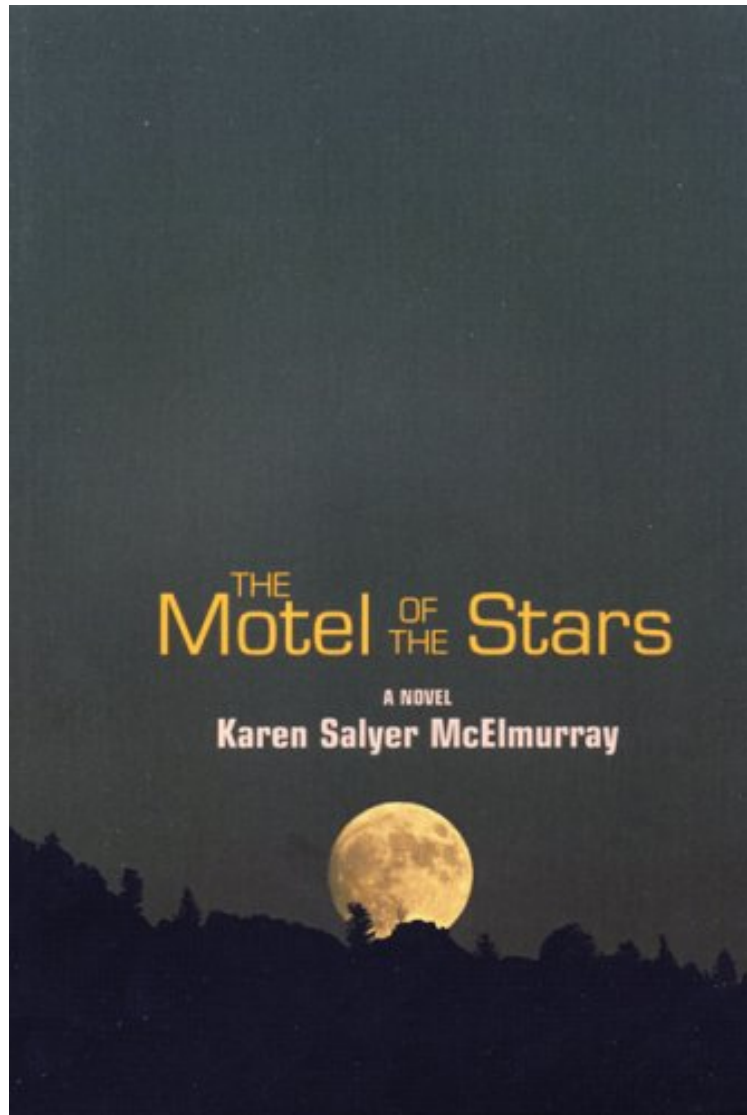


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The Motel of the Stars: A Novel (Linda Bruckheimer Series in Kentucky Literature)

Karen Salyer McElmurray

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Karen Salyer McElmurray : The Motel of the Stars: A Novel (Linda Bruckheimer Series in Kentucky Literature) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Motel of the Stars: A Novel (Linda Bruckheimer Series in Kentucky Literature):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lyrical, Smart AuthenticBy Janice EidusThe Motel of the Stars, Karen McElmurray's new novel, is a lyrical, evocative, non-sensationalized exploration of grief and desire. Her

vividly-portrayed characters, who manifest strengths and weaknesses, are so real and engaging that you'll feel as if you've known them intimately and forever. When healing and redemption do occur for these characters, they do so in ways that are deeply felt, authentic, and genuinely earned. I've read all of Karen McElmurray's books, and I hereby declare her an official literary treasure. -- Janice Eidus, author, *The War of the Rosens*

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Book to Make You Soar By Lara Beth This is one of the best books I have read in a long time, and I read a lot. McElmurray has crafted a beautiful story of complex, realistic characters but more than that, it exposes the frustration and inadequacy we all feel when seeking closure or connection or higher meaning. At one point, I realized that I didn't even care how it ended because it was so good and I felt so enriched by reading it. Of course, once I got to the ending it was just as good as I had hoped. By the end of the book I had that soaring feeling I haven't experienced from a book in I don't know how long. Every page was worth reading —every word moved the story forward.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A haunting portrait of loss and the ways it unites us By Kori Frazier Morgan I was first introduced to Karen McElmurray almost three years ago at a writers' conference in West Virginia, during which she was promoting her memoir, *Surrendered Child*. The excerpt she read described her honeymoon at Mammoth Cave soon after her marriage to a teen sweetheart, a meditation on her coming motherhood within the chilled bowels of the ground. I was struck by the cold, stark quality of the scene I imagined as she read, the watershed moments of adulthood compressed into months. When she finished reading, the room was silent, and I went home with the image of the wedding photo she described in my head, the Cat Stevens record that dropped and broke. The rest of McElmurray's work is filled with the same stark quality that made this scene, and the rest of the memoir, stick with me long after I read it, and this latest book is no exception. The late '90s new age culture that serves as its backdrop is a far cry from the small Kentucky community of *Strange Birds in the Tree of Heaven*, but the characters, each tormented and isolated by his or her own grief, are vividly rendered and memorable. As Jason continues his odyssey toward reclaiming his lost son Sam, amidst the apocalyptic clamor of the *Harmonic Convergence* and Lory toward a reclamation of herself after a troubled childhood that becomes a troubled adulthood, McElmurray demonstrates powerfully the ways the mutual ache over the loss of a person can bind two people, how finding Jason's son's lover allows him to get back a part of the boy he lost. The way McElmurray carefully weaves together the characters' memories, moving deftly from past to the present of the narrative, allows us to see the scope of their lives, the ways Sam's choices in life continue to haunt his loved ones long after his death. This is a beautiful book. Those who enjoyed *Surrendered Child* and *Strange Birds* will find it among the finest writing of her three books; those who have yet to discover her writing will find themselves seeking out the rest of her body of work. Highly recommended!

The Motel of the Stars is a novel set in Kentucky and North Carolina on the eve of the 1997 anniversary of the *Harmonic Convergence*, a mystical alignment of planets and a portending of universal peace first celebrated in 1987. Part satire of New Age philosophy and part commentary on a modern, fear-based era, the novel is the story of Jason Sanderson and Lory Llewellyn, who travel to the 1997 Anniversary Gathering at the foot of Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina. Both characters have for ten years mourned the loss of Sam Sanderson, Jason's son and Lory's lover, and both must emerge from grief into a new age of possibility and hope. Karen Salyer McElmurray is the author of *Surrendered Child: A Birth Mother's Journey*, described by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* as "a moving meditation on loss and memory and the rendering of truth and story." The book was the recipient of the 2003 AWP Award for Creative Nonfiction and a National Book Critics Circle Notable Book. McElmurray's debut novel, *Strange Birds in the Tree of Heaven*, was winner of the 2001 Thomas and Lillie D. Chaffin Award for Appalachian Writing. Her work has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Kentucky Foundation for Women, and the North Carolina Arts Council. She lives in Milledgeville, Georgia, where she is an assistant professor in creative writing at Georgia College and State University; she is also the creative nonfiction editor for *Arts and Letters*.

From Publishers Weekly McElmurray's evocative second novel journeys into the New Age subculture, beginning with Kentucky repo man Jason Sanderson, still grieving for Sam, the son he lost 10 years ago. Desperate, Sanderson leaves his concerned wife to find his son's former lover, Lory Llewellyn, who he believes can help him understand his loss. His search is short—serendipitously, Lory shows up at a repo job—and it's her globe-trotting account of discovery with Sam that provides most of the narrative. McElmurray traces Lory's life from troubled girlhood to courtship to treks across Asia and the American Southwest seeking enlightenment; readers will soon suspect that Sam is looking not for answers, but for a way to avoid them. Sanderson himself tells a story filled with questions, passion and despair, and as the intertwining flashbacks roll out, the two characters move ever closer to the 26,000-year cycle-ending *Harmonic Convergence* of December 24, 2012—after which, Mayan prophecy suggests, the world will be changed unalterably. Though eventually McElmurray's world begins to glow with magic possibilities, the novel closes on a rather foregone conclusion, a letdown for her intriguing ideas and her genuine characters. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Karen Salyer McElmurray is the author of *Surrendered Child*, winner of the 2003 AWP CNF Award and a National Book Critics Circle Notable

Book. McElmurray's debut novel, *Strange Birds in the Tree of Heaven*, was winner of the 2001 Thomas and Lillie D. Chaffin Award for Appalachian Writing. She currently teaches at Georgia College and State University.