



## Lost Man's River: Shadow Country Trilogy (2)

*Peter Matthiessen*

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When his novel **Killing Mister Watson** was published in 1990, the reviews were extraordinary. It was heralded as "a marvel of invention . . . a virtuoso performance" (**The New York Times Book Review**) and a "novel [that] stands with the best that our nation has produced as literature" (**Los Angeles Times Book Review**). Now Peter Matthiessen brings us the second novel in his Watson trilogy, a project that has been nearly twenty years in the writing. A story of epic scope and ambition, **Lost Man's River** confronts the primal relationship between a dangerous father and his desperate sons and the ways in which his death has shaped their lives.

Lucius Watson is obsessed with learning the truth about his father. Who was E. J. Watson? Was he a devoted family man, an inspired farmer, a man of progress and vision? Or was he a cold-blooded murderer and amoral opportunist? Were his neighbors driven to kill him out of fear? Or was it envy? And if Watson was a killer, should the neighbors fear the obsessed Lucius when he returns to live among them and ask questions?

The characters in this tale are men and women molded by the harsh elements of the Florida Everglades--an isolated breed, descendants of renegades and pioneers, who have only their grit, instinct, and tradition to wield against the obliterating forces of twentieth-century progress: Speck Daniels, moonshiner and alligator poacher turned gunrunner; Sally Brown, who struggles to escape the racism and shame of her local family; R. B. Collins, known as Chicken, crippled by drink and rage, who is the custodian of Watson secrets; Watson Dyer, the unacknowledged namesake with designs on the remote Watson homestead hidden in the wild rivers; and Henry Short, a black man and unwilling member of the group of armed island men who awaited E. J. Watson in the silent twilight. Only a storyteller of Peter Matthiessen's dazzling artistry could capture the beauty and strangeness of life on this lawless frontier while probing deeply into its underlying tragedy: the brutal destruction of the land in the name of progress, and the racism that infects the heart of New World history.

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