

DEAL OF THE CENTURY  
By Dave McClain

A 100-year-old man gets the opportunity to live well beyond his years, but at a terrible cost.

FADE IN:

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

COL. JOHNATHAN STEVENS (100, gaunt, with a long white beard and a long jagged scar on his left forearm) is sleeping in his white, metal-framed bed in his small private room. A wall calendar bears the photograph of a large, stately house underneath a banner that reads "Peachtree Manor, Atlanta, Georgia". The calendar indicates that the year is 1916.

Suddenly, COL STEVENS sits up gasping for air. A young NURSE quickly enters the room to help. COL STEVENS is disoriented. He struggles with the NURSE and falls to the floor, hitting his head. When he looks back up toward the nurse, in her place he sees an ugly, imposing male figure glowing red. COL STEVENS assumes the figure to be SATAN but speaks defiantly.

COL STEVENS

I knew you'd come for me by and by,  
Old Scratch, but I ain't ready to go  
just yet.

SATAN pauses briefly, surprised by COL STEVENS' attitude.

SATAN

Are you not afraid of me?

COL STEVENS

No, I ain't! I fought in the War  
Between the States - from beginning  
to end! I already seen hell! They  
ain't nothin' you got can scare me!

SATAN

Well is that so? Hmmm. Perhaps you  
are right. Maybe you're not ready.

COL STEVENS

What're you sayin'?

SATAN

I am offering you a deal - the deal  
of the century, you might say. I will  
make you as young as you were during  
the war. You will not age.

COL STEVENS

What would I have to do for you?

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SATAN

Gather souls...from places like this.

COL STEVENS

You can do that your damn self!

SATAN

Ah, but I have to wait until they die. Unfortunately, as people feel death approach, they often make peace with their creator and I lose them. You can help me hasten their demise.

COL STEVENS

How in tarnation would I do that?

SATAN

I shall give you the power to stop a human heart simply by placing your hand on the chest of some poor soul who isn't much longer for this world anyway. I take care of the rest. Send me one soul per week, and you shall go through life at half your present age. You shall begin immediately. But if you step outside the terms of our agreement... I will return for you.

COL STEVENS

What's the catch?

SATAN

Catch? As I told you before, this IS the deal of the century... provided you agree to all of these terms.

COL STEVENS pauses briefly to consider the offer.

COL STEVENS

Yeah, I agree. Now, how you gonna...

SATAN waves his hand in a circular motion. COL STEVENS' vision blurs and the scene goes black.

INT. THE SAME ROOM, THE NEXT MORNING

COL STEVENS opens his eyes and sees that he has been covered with a white sheet. He hears two NURSES talking in hushed tones outside his room. Their voices fade as they walk away.

COL STEVENS pushes back the sheet, gets out of bed, crosses the room and looks at his reflection in the mirror.

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At first he is startled at the 50-year-old face he sees, but then he takes a better look and a sly grin spreads across his face.

COL STEVENS looks down the hall toward the nurses' station. He sees no one. One resident's door is open. He enters the room. There sleeps an old MAN whom he doesn't recognize.

COL STEVENS slowly approaches the bed. He notices a framed photo of a young woman holding a baby girl in a white dress. COL STEVENS gently places his hand in the center of the MAN'S chest. The MAN'S eyes pop open and he gasps for air. He slowly exhales one last time and his eyes close. He dies.

COL STEVENS holds his hand in front of his face. He looks at it and makes a fist. He looks at the fist briefly and then over at his reflection in the mirror behind him. He smiles.

COL STEVENS walks confidently down the hall, towards the front door. When he gets there, he stops to hold it open for a nicely-dressed WOMAN (early-20s) who is coming inside pushing a stroller carrying a small GIRL (about 1 y.o.) in a white dress, with a shiny black brooch below the neckline.

When the GIRL looks up and sees COL STEVENS, she stares at him, wide-eyed. COL STEVENS bends over to speak to the girl.

COL STEVENS

Awww. What's your name little one?

The GIRL suddenly begins to scream and cry.

WOMAN

Her name is Pamela. I do apologize, good sir. She never acts like this.

COL STEVENS

Ain't no big...

COL STEVENS clears his throat and stands up, but a little taller and straighter than he had been standing earlier.

COL STEVENS (cont'd)

Think nothing of it, ma'am. Your girl's got spunk. It'll do 'er... It will serve her well in life. She'll probably live to be 100.

WOMAN

Sir, you are very kind. Thank you.

COL STEVENS

My pleasure, ma'am. Good day to you.

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WOMAN

And to you as well, sir.

COL STEVENS exits the building and struts down the street.

INT. NURSING HOME - AFTERNOON

STEVEN JOHNS (about 50, stocky, clean-shaven) walks through a doorway, under a sign that reads "Peachtree Manor 2" and into the lobby of a modern assisted living facility. He's carrying a tool kit and wearing a laminated badge with his name and picture on it. He approaches the receptionist (early 70s, thin, polite). Her name badge says Marlene.

STEVEN

Excuse me, ma'am. I'm Steven Johns.  
I've come to troubleshoot your new  
heart monitoring system.

MARLENE

Oh, yes, of course. Right this way.

MARLENE leads STEVEN to a nearby door, which she unlocks. The small, nondescript room has a tall computer server and an old desk with a calendar displaying the year - 2016.

STEVEN sets his tools on the desk and rolls up his sleeves.

STEVEN

Alright then, I'll get to work.

MARLENE notices the long, jagged scar on his left forearm.

MARLENE

Ouch! How did THAT happen?

STEVEN

Oh, that. I, uh, got that in the war.

MARLENE

Well, thank you for your service.  
Ummm, I have to get back to my desk.  
Do you need anything before I go?

STEVEN

No, ma'am. I have it all right here.

STEVEN pats his tool kit and smiles.

MARLENE

Ma'am! You don't hear that much  
anymore, even here in Atlanta.

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STEVEN

Yeah, I'm kind of old fashioned.

MARLENE

Well, I appreciate ya. I'll be around the corner if you need anything.

STEVEN

Thank you... ma'am.

MARLENE flashes an appreciative smile and closes the door.

INT. NURSING HOME - EARLY EVENING

STEVEN approaches the reception office. MARLENE gathers her things to leave for the day when she sees him at the door.

MARLENE

All finished?

STEVEN

I'm afraid not, ma'am. I ran into some problems. Do you know if anyone tried to fix the system before me?

MARLENE

I can't be sure but I think I saw our IT guy in there a couple days ago.

STEVEN

I thought as much. Well, I'm going to need a couple more hours to finish.

MARLENE

Why not just come back tomorrow?

STEVEN

I wish I could, but I know how badly you folks need this system back up and I have to be in Birmingham by noon tomorrow for another call.

MARLENE

Birmingham?!

STEVEN

Yes, ma'am. My territory is Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina.

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MARLENE

Oooh. South Carolina. Did you hear about the three residents that died in that one facility in Greenville?

STEVEN

Yes, I did. Sad. Very sad indeed.

MARLENE

They say it's because the nurse fell asleep on duty. All three of their heart monitors were going off, but by the time someone heard them, it was too late. What a tragedy that was.

STEVEN

Yes, ma'am. It really was. A tragedy.

STEVEN pauses just long enough for MARLENE to appreciate his best attempt at feigned empathy. He slowly resumes speaking.

STEVEN (cont'd)

So, would it be a problem for me to stay here until about 9 or 10?

MARLENE

No, I think that'll be fine. Let me just introduce you to the night nurse. I think I saw her a few... oh, there she is. Tammie! Tammie!

TAMMIE (kind, but tough, late-40s, thin) walks by the receptionist's office, then hears her name and enters.

MARLENE (cont'd)

Tammie, this is Steven Johns, the tech guy who's fixing our heart monitoring equipment. He needs a couple more hours to finish up. Okay?

TAMMIE

That's fine. Nice to meet you.

TAMMIE shakes STEVEN'S hand.

INT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

STEVEN flips a switch in the server room and everything seems to be working. He hears a noise and opens the door. He pokes his head out and looks left and right.

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He sees TAMMIE walking away from the nurse's station, towards the employee's lounge, while jiggling coins in her hand.

When TAMMIE turns the corner, STEVEN walks a little farther down the hall and enters the closest room. One bed is empty. An elderly WOMAN is asleep in the other. STEVEN approaches.

As STEVEN begins to stretch out his hand in the direction of the WOMAN, her eyes suddenly flash open. Her hand shoots towards him grabbing his wrist. His body stiffens in terror.

STEVEN

Who the hell...

PAMELA

My name is Pamela. Don't you remember me, Colonel Stevens? Well it has been quite a long time. 100 years to be precise. We last met when I was just a year old. Of course, that's only how you perceived me. You only see what you want to see - and hear what you want to hear. Bad deal for you.

STEVEN'S gaze falls upon a very old-looking framed photo of a young woman holding a baby in a white dress. A shiny black brooch is sitting on the night table in front of the photo.

STEVEN'S eyes grow large. He looks back towards the bed where Pamela had been, only to see the bed is now empty.

SATAN is standing next to the bed holding STEVEN'S wrist.

STEVEN

Now, wait one minute!

SATAN

Actually, a minute is all you have left, Colonel.

STEVEN

What are you talking about? I've done everything you asked.

STEVEN briefly struggles to free his arm, but to no avail.

STEVEN (cont'd)

I've sent you at least one soul every week - sometimes two or three - for over 100 years!!

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SATAN

For EXACTLY 100 years, Steven. Deal of the century is what I said. YOUR century is up - and now you're mine!

SATAN yanks on STEVEN'S arm, flips him in the air and throws him onto Pamela's bed. STEVEN blacks out.

INT. NURSING HOME - MORNING

A nurse wearing a badge that says ELIZABETH enters the room. She immediately turns around towards the doorway and presses a button on the wall-mounted intercom to call the nurses' station. TAMMIE'S voice answers and ELIZABETH speaks.

ELIZABETH

Tammie! Before you go home, you better come down to Room 166 and tell me where Miss Pamela is and who the devil this is in her bed!

TAMMIE

What?! What are... Who's in there?

ELIZABETH

How the hell do I know? That's why I'm asking you!

ELIZABETH glances over at PAMELA'S bed and slyly smiles.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

It's some guy with a long white beard. He looks like he's over 100... and I don't see him breathing.

ELIZABETH releases the button on the intercom and finishes her sentence in a quieter voice as she walks to the bed.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)

Nope. I really don't see him breathing... for much longer.

TAMMIE

Well, check him! I'll be right there.

ELIZABETH approaches COL STEVENS. He's still disoriented, but looks in the direction of the approaching nurse.

ELIZABETH

I've been told you're to be my first.

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COL STEVENS weakly raises his arms to protect himself.  
ELIZABETH easily holds down both his arms with one hand. She reaches out her other hand toward the center of his chest.

COL STEVENS abruptly sits up in bed, gasping for air.

CUT TO BLACK