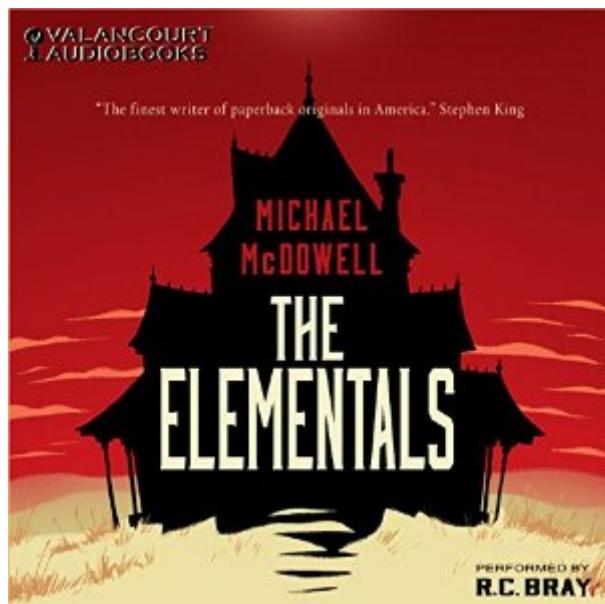


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# The Elementals



## Synopsis

After a bizarre and disturbing incident at the funeral of matriarch Marian Savage, the McCray and Savage families look forward to a restful and relaxing summer at Beldame, on Alabama's Gulf Coast, where three Victorian houses loom over the shimmering beach. Two of the houses are habitable, while the third is slowly and mysteriously being buried beneath an enormous dune of blindingly white sand. But though long uninhabited, the third house is not empty. Inside, something deadly lies in wait. Something that has terrified Dauphin Savage and Luker McCray since they were boys and which still haunts their nightmares. Something horrific that may be responsible for several terrible and unexplained deaths years earlier - and is now ready to kill again.... A haunted house story unlike any other, Michael McDowell's *The Elementals* (1981) was one of the finest novels to come out of the horror publishing explosion of the 1970s and '80s. Though best known for his screenplays for Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, McDowell is now being rediscovered as one of the best modern horror writers and a master of Southern Gothic literature. This edition of McDowell's masterpiece of terror features a new introduction by award-winning horror author Michael Rowe. McDowell's first novel, the grisly and darkly comic *The Amulet* (1979), is also available from Valancourt Books.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Marian Savage has died. Her son Dauphin and his wife Leigh attend the strange funeral and afterward decide the family needs a vacation at the isolated family property of Beldame. Taking

vacation with them are Leigh's mother Big Barbara McCray, Leigh's brother Luker McCray and his thirteen-year-old daughter India, and family servant Odessa Red. While the characters are richly portrayed and fully fleshed out, the story is actually about a place: Beldame. Beldame is three Victorian style houses at the end of a sand spit near Gulf Shores, a place that can only be reached at low tide because of a channel that runs between the gulf and St. Elmo's Lagoon. The McCray's stay in one house and the Savages in the other, while the third house has remained empty for years. Empty of people, perhaps, but there's something inside that third house, something that's malevolent and dangerous. Time stands still at Beldame, where the temperature is suffocatingly hot and there's no electronic distractions such as phones or tv's or radios. As the family lounges in hammocks and works jigsaw puzzles, India becomes intrigued by the third house and the rest of her family's fear of it. But under Odessa's rather unwanted guidance, India discovers that the third house is far from benign. This story is much more than a simple tale of a haunted house. It's creepy and deadly, and made all the more horrific from the folksy southern charm of McDowell's prose and dialogue. As the power of the third house rises, its presence becomes dangerous for the family. There's something inside that wants all of them dead, and only Odessa holds the clues to what's inside. 'The Elementals' is a languidly rich tale of horror, sinister and frightening, and occasionally gory.

I will admit, I think this is the kind of book either you love or you hate. I, obviously, loved it, but I can understand why it would drive people away. This book starts us off at Marian Savage's sparsely attended funeral (and it is so for a reason) and bounds off from there. I enjoyed the relationship between the Savages and the McCrays, these two Southern genteel families that happened to find themselves together in a summer and drew closer from there. It's the Savages that are the stranger (and more interesting) of the two clans, although the McCrays aren't without their own peculiarities. I will note that the relationships, particularly the one between Lukar McCray and his daughter, India, can turn some people off. It's definitely not a normal father-daughter bond (India acts more like a 16 - 18 year old the majority of the time rather than the 13 year old we're told she is), but as the book went on I found myself just accepting it to enjoy the storyline more. Yes, it's weird - they curse at each other, she calls him by his first name, there is a part where he sunbathes naked on the beach and India just acts like it's some crazy thing her father does - but I found it more quirky than anything else. I liked the way it let you focus on the characters and their issues before the supernatural crawls in. Once we start getting more pieces to the puzzle, the book ramps up the pace and bad goes to worse real quick. I loved the house and the way it was haunted - not by

spirits, per say, but by something deeper and darker that doesn't care about rhyme or reason, it just wants. I agree that there aren't complete answers to some of the questions I had, particularly about the Savage family, but it didn't bother me enough to take away from the book.

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