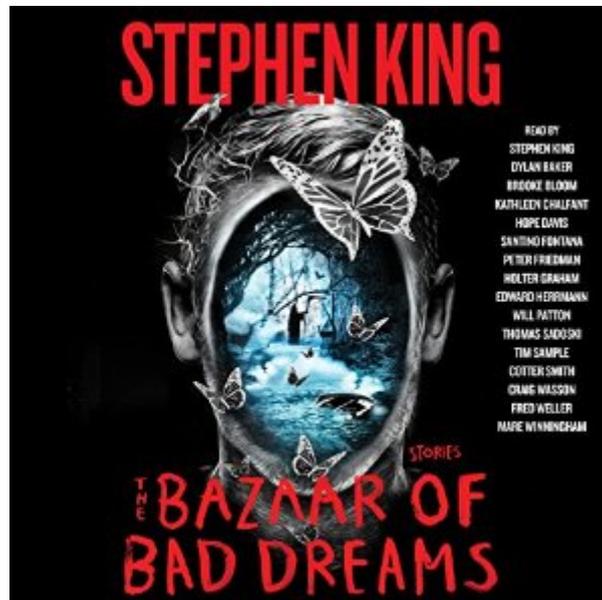


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The Bazaar Of Bad Dreams: Stories



Synopsis

Other narrators include: Cotter Smith, Will Patton, Edward Herrmann, Holter Graham, Frederick Weller, Mare Winningham, Craig Wasson, Thomas Sadoski, and Tim Sample. A master storyteller at his best - the O. Henry Prize winner Stephen King delivers a generous collection of stories, several of them brand new, featuring revelatory autobiographical comments on when, why, and how he came to write (or rewrite) each story. Since his first collection, *Nightshift*, published 35 years ago, Stephen King has dazzled listeners with his genius as a writer of short fiction. In this new collection he assembles, for the first time, recent stories that have never been published in a book. He introduces each with a passage about its origins or his motivations for writing it. There are thrilling connections between stories, including themes of morality, the afterlife, guilt, and what we would do differently if we could see into the future or correct the mistakes of the past. "Afterlife" is about a man who died of colon cancer and keeps reliving the same life, repeating his mistakes over and over again. Several stories feature characters at the end of life, revisiting their crimes and misdemeanors. Other stories address what happens when someone discovers he has supernatural powers: the columnist who kills people by writing their obituaries in "Obits"; the old judge in "The Dune", who, as a boy, canoed to a deserted island and saw written in the sand the names of people who then died in freak accidents. In "Morality", King looks at how a marriage and two lives fall apart after the wife and husband enter into what seems, at first, a devil's pact they can win. Magnificent, eerie, utterly compelling, these stories comprise one of King's finest gifts to his constant fan. "I made them especially for you," says King. "Feel free to examine them, but please be careful. The best of them have teeth."

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Customer Reviews

In recent years, many devoted readers of Stephen King have made the complaint that his novels have declined in quality. While that might be true, I always reply that his short stories are (and always have been) his best works. This new collection shows that Mr. King has not lost his talent at building up terror in readers of the span over forty or fifty pages. Unlike past collections, though, these stories more often reveal the monstrosity within the human soul, rather than any outside ghoul. In total, there are twenty stories in this collection, with only three or four I have not recognized from prior publication either in magazines or on Kindle. A few, like "Blockade Billy," even made it into a hardback format. Despite this, however, there are a few of his recent efforts (like "Into the Tall Grass") that have been regrettably omitted. That does not detract from the overall quality of this work. One of his stories, "Ur" contemplates the possibility of alternate realities in a vein similar to his novel 11/22/63, and also throws in a few allusions to his Dark Tower series, which personally thrilled me. Another story, "Afterlife," features a man who suffers a slow, painful death from cancer, but finds himself in a vicious ouroboros, repeating the mistakes of the past in slightly new ways, but with the same ultimate result. Although Mr. King has delved into Holmesian detective fiction before, his story "Batman and Robin Have an Altercation" unfortunately does not actually involve the masked detective. It does, though, grimly describe the visit of a middle-aged man to his Alzheimer's-stricken father in a nursing home and what that leads to.

A new short story collection by Stephen King is one of the few literary events I truly look forward to, and I was glad to get an early look at this new book. While I like some of his recent novels, King's last couple collections ('Full Dark, No Stars,' 'Just After Sunset') have been more my preference. This collection is aptly titled - a lot of the stories end in gruesome and bitter ways. In recent years, King's style has long since changed from the rural characterizations of his 1970s early work to a more grand guignol approach. Some will like that, and I can enjoy it in small doses. The most positive aspect of King's short stories are the tight, controlled, on-point writing within the confined space. Personally, I think his longer novels could stand some more aggressive editing. His short stories - especially this collection - seem to have gone through a round or two of outside influence, and I think that helped a lot. In a story like "Herman Wouk is Still Alive," the bitter ending needs to get wrapped up with a punch, and that happens here. I think that impact would have been

lost in an extra 10 pages, for instance (I also read this story in its original magazine appearance, and something about it being in a book gives the narrative more weight...I was not as unsettled by the ending in the magazine, as I was here. Strange...)."A Death," I think will appeal to King's longest-running fans. It's the story that captures the rural-speak "Night Shift" vibe the closest. "That Bus is Another World" is close to the grim view a lot of the stories in "Skeleton Crew" had - it's not supernatural, not even horrible in a direct, specific, "it's happening to me" way - it's the 'distance' from the horror that makes it terrible.

It is much easier to write a review of THE BAZAAR OF BAD DREAMS than it is to assign it a numerical ranking. This is because several of the short stories in this anthology have already been released, not only in whatever periodicals they originally appeared, but also as Kindle singles, and three of them (MILE 81, UR, and DRUNKEN FIREWORKS) are (arguably, I suppose) among the best of the lot. Another couple of the stories (BLOCKADE BILLY [truly forgettable] and MORALITY, were previously released (2010) in an inexpensive hardcover print and/or other editions, and one, DRUNKEN FIREWORKS, a typically wonderful, straight-up no horror or supernatural rural SK tale was released last year as in audible only format) and another, THE LITTLE GREEN GOD OF AGONY, a great King horror short, was published in a 2011 anthology by several horror writers (A BOOK OF HORRORS). That leaves 13 other entries, two of which were poems. Of the remaining 11 (and I am pretty sure that most of them were also previously published in periodicals and possibly other multi-author anthologies that I have not seen), my favorite was OBITS (that reminded me a lot of, and used the same Maguffin as in King's THE WORD PROCESSOR). If you have never read any of these stories before, then MILE 81, UR, LITTLE GREEN GOD OF AGONY and DRUNKEN FIREWORKS alone are, I am confident to say, worth the price of admission, and this anthology deserves an rating of 4 or 5. But if you have already read only 2 or 3 of them, as most die hard SK fans like myself have, then the rating drops markedly, based only on what's left after all the winners have been discounted.

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