

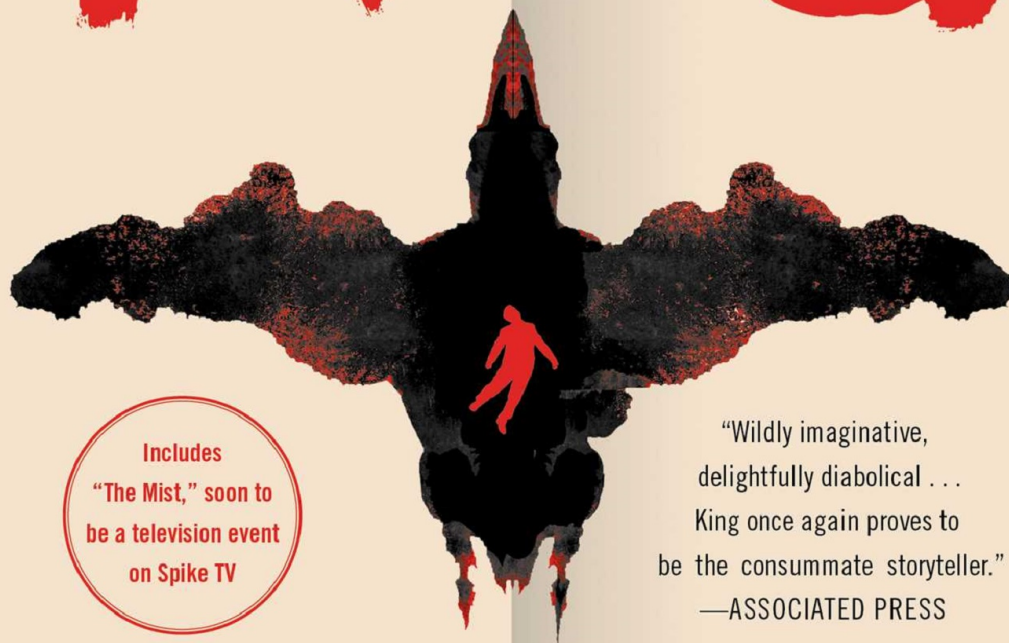
STEPHEN
KING



SKELETON
CREW

THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

STEPHEN KING



Includes
"The Mist," soon to
be a television event
on Spike TV

"Wildly imaginative,
delightfully diabolical . . .
King once again proves to
be the consummate storyteller."
—ASSOCIATED PRESS

SKELETON CREW

STORIES

Praise for *Skeleton Crew*

“Wonderfully gruesome . . . Don’t turn your back on this book!”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Wildly imaginative, delightfully diabolical, a masterful writer . . . King once again proves to be the consummate storyteller.”

—Associated Press

“Stephen King at his best!”

—*The Denver Post*

“Stunning, ingenious . . . Stephen King at the very top of his talent!”

—*New York Sunday News*

“King has the talent to lift adults’ blinders to horror, and that’s why his fans can’t get enough of him. . . . It’s also what makes his stories as deliciously frightening as they are.”

—*The Cincinnati Enquirer*

“Stephen King lands you in a hurry and then leans back, chortling, while you shiver on his hook!”

—*Playboy*

Praise for Stephen King

“King is the prevailing master of horror.”

—*Time*

“King is unstoppable. . . . Fans will sweep down on this book like a swarm of locusts!”

—*The Charlotte Observer*

“King takes the reader by the hand and leads him slowly to the haunted house, then shoves him inside and locks the door.”

—*Playboy*

“King is first-rate. . . . He lifts the reader off the page into a world that only King could have created.”

—*The Memphis Commercial Appeal*

“King is electrifying. . . . He’s sure to scare the socks off every fan!”

—*Reading Eagle*

“King has written a well-crafted book . . . full of marvelously understated fear and horror. . . . King knows how to wring a full measure of suspense out of curious incidents.”

—*The Sacramento Bee*

“King makes your flesh crawl. . . . He’s written an excellent book . . . filled with the kind of imagination and verbal dexterity that enables the reader to re-create the scene and the action vividly enough to feel the twinge of terror that thrills and entertains.”

—*Bestsellers*

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STEPHEN
KING

SKELETON
CREW

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New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

This book is for Arthur and Joyce Greene

I'm your boogie man
that's what I am
and I'm here to do
whatever I can . . .
—K.C. and the Sunshine Band

Do you love?

INTRODUCTION

Wait—just a few minutes. I want to talk to you . . . and then I am going to kiss you. Wait . . .

1

Here's some more short stories, if you want them. They span a long period of my life. The oldest, "The Reaper's Image," was written when I was eighteen, in the summer before I started college. I thought of the idea, as a matter of fact, when I was out in the back yard of our house in West Durham, Maine, shooting baskets with my brother, and reading it over again made me feel a little sad for those old times. The most recent, "The Ballad of the Flexible Bullet," was finished in November of 1983. That is a span of seventeen years, and does not count as much, I suppose, if put in comparison with such long and rich careers as those enjoyed by writers as diverse as Graham Greene, Somerset Maugham, Mark Twain, and Eudora Welty, but it is a longer time than Stephen Crane had, and about the same length as the span of H. P. Lovecraft's career.

A friend of mine asked me a year or two ago why I still bother. My novels, he pointed out, were making very good money, while the short stories were actually losers.

"How do you figure that?" I asked.

He tapped the then-current issue of *Playboy*, which had occasioned this discussion. I had a story in it ("Word Processor of the Gods," which you'll find in here someplace), and had pointed it out to him with what I thought was justifiable pride.

"Well, I'll show you," he said, "if you don't mind telling me how much you got for the piece."

"I don't mind," I said. "I got two thousand dollars. Not exactly chicken-dirt, Wyatt."