

# 11/22/63: A NOVEL BY STEPHEN KING



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# STEPHEN KING

## 11/22/63

A NOVEL

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1963

TEN CENTS

# JFK SLAIN IN DALLAS, LBJ TAKES OATH

First Lady Emerges  
Unharmed; Shooter  
Charged as Killer

By MAX H. LITTELL



President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy pull up the crowd during their motorcade route in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963.

DALLAS, Nov. 22—President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot and killed by a gunman today while riding in a motorcade in downtown Dallas. He was shot at 11:57 AM, and pronounced dead at 1:08 PM. General Hospital where he was taken. Mr. Kennedy died of a fatal bullet wound caused by a bullet fired from the assassin's rifle. He was 45 years old.

Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, who was also traveling in the motorcade, was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States, one hour and thirty-nine minutes after Mr. Kennedy's death. Mr. Johnson is 55.

The alleged sniper, Lee Harvey Oswald, 24, of Dallas, was arrested by the Dallas police and charged with the crime this evening. He has also been charged with the murder of a Dallas policeman who accompanied him. Mr. Oswald was a member of a small group of men known as the "Mafia" who were active in the city. He was born in New Orleans, La., and had been living in Dallas for several years. Mr. Johnson was sworn in at 1:34 PM.

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### Review

The reader feels the benefit of 40 years of narrative craftsmanship and reflection on his nation's history. Going backwards proves to be another step forward for the most remarkable storyteller in modern American literature. Mark Lawson, Guardian The pages of 11.22.63 fly by, filled with immediacy, pathos and suspense. It takes great brazenness to go anywhere near this subject matter. But it takes great skill to make this story even remotely credible. Mr. King makes it all look easy, which is surely his book's fanciest trick. New York Times A wonderful book: page-turningly exciting, witty, wise, melancholic. But also utterly human, profoundly decent Ashley Pharoah, co-writer and co-creator of Life on Mars and Ashes to Ashes Take King's hand and allow him to lead you into a past so vibrant and complete that you can almost taste it. But hold on tight, the Master of Horror has now become the Master of Time ... Utterly enthralling, emotional and magical Matthew Graham, co-writer and co-creator of Life on Mars and Ashes to Ashes Fine stories to take with us into the night. Neil Gaiman on FULL DARK, NO STARS in the Guardian America's greatest living novelist. Lee Child King's gift of storytelling is unrivalled. His ferocious imagination is unlimited. George Pelecanos 'King's most purely entertaining novel in years ... utterly compelling.' John Connolly on UNDER THE DOME 'Staggeringly addictive.' USA Today on UNDER THE DOME 'Tight and energetic from start to finish.' New York Times on UNDER THE DOME 'The pedal is indeed to the metal.' Guardian on UNDER THE DOME Delivers a lot of praise and enjoy. The story comes off the blocks with almost alarming speed ... he tells a story like a pro ... 11.22.63 kept me up all night. Daily Telegraph Stephen King at his epic, pedal-to-metal best Alison Flood, Sunday Times not just an accomplished time-travel yarn but an action-heavy meditation on chance, choice and fate. Independent Books of the Year The details of Fifties America, the cars, the clothes, the food, the televisions with wonky horizontal hold, are so vivid that you begin to wonder whether the author himself hasn't had access to a time machine. ...But as you worry at the paradoxes and the brilliantly explained pseudo science there is no denying that this monster yearn is blindingly impressive. Manly writers run out of steam as they get older. King, though, writes books that are ever longer and more demanding. I can't wait to see what he will tackle next. Daily Express Stephen King's new novel, 11.22.63, combines a variety of genres, being a JFK assassination, a story of time travel, a variation on the grail quest, a novel of voyeurism, a love story, a historical novel, a counter-factual historical novel and the chilling tale of a sinister animate universe, a form which can be traced back to the ghost stories of MR James. London Review of Books The master of the pen has written yet another extraordinary novel. Independent Perhaps only seasoned storyteller Stephen King could accomplish changing the course of history in his vast time-travelling masterpiece whilst effortlessly weaving political and social details with abundant humour. King's intriguing new story structure will surely catapult the author to another best-seller.

Australian Women's Weekly These early sections of the novel are almost irresistible entertaining, enlivened not just by King's supreme control of the form but by his sardonic wit and usual generosity of spirit and expansiveness. Yet as Jack/George moves closer to his goal, other, darker notes intrude, as time itself begins to resist his attempts to change its course, and as he begins to identify with his quarry... Beneath the reassuring glow of King's portrait of an earlier, simpler time moves a darker and less comfortable vision, a glimpse of the terrifying machinery that moves below the surface of human history, and which stands as a stark, chilling rejoinder to the fantasies of escape embodied in so many time travel stories. The Weekend Australia Mammoth but entertaining, this is part sci-fi, part suspense and part travelogue of a long-ago America. Who Weekly Stephen King is a remarkable and wonderful storyteller who never loosens his grip on the reader throughout the 750-page book. Woman's Day The novel is big, ambitious and haunting. King has probably absorbed the social, political, and popular culture of his baby-boom American generation as thoroughly and imaginatively as any other writer. Mildura Midweek King weaves the social, political and popular culture of his baby-boom American generation into a devastating exercise in escalating suspense. Daily Liberal A fascinating journey. Armidale Express Extra A delightful blend of history and fantasy by a man who has always had a soft spot for an America where men wore fedoras, drove big Fords and could do the foxtrot. A thriller by a genius writer. The Courier Mail People often complain there are no writers of the stature of Dickens anymore. I think that for pure energy and invention missed with compassion, King stands in that writer's direct line. Dickens' heir is alive and well and living in Maine. Eureka Street This is Stephen King in top and chilling form. Take 5 You have to take a leap of faith with time-travel novels, but if there's one writer who can pull it off, it's Stephen King. ... Captivating, surprisingly pacy and free from sci-fi cliché, it's no wonder the film version is already being planned. Shortlist a powerful love story Mirror One of the strengths of the book is King's at once nostalgic and honest view of the end of the Eisenhower era. King manages to avoid both sentimentalizing the past and treating it with massive condescension; his role as the poet of American brand-names serves him well here. Independent King swiftly moves beyond vintage Americana to unfold a stunningly panoramic portrait of the era. His [King's] fascination with evil...arranges characters among clear mortal frontiers that fell meaningful rather than simplistic. King commands an inordinately fat space on the bookshelf with 11.22.63 but it's hard to begrudge when his vast imagination is working across such an epic canvas. Seven, The Sunday Telegraph 11.22.63 marks a definite maturing of literary command and ambition. The key to any novel set in an alternate reality is credible world building, the steady accumulation of detail - preferably lightly distributed - that brings the story alive. King succeeds in this, partly drawing from his own memories. Adam LeBor FT Weekend ...This is the American of Stephen King's childhood and it's one that he re-creates in vivid and loving detail... This is a truly compulsive, addictive novel not just about time-travel or the Kennedy assassination but about recent American history and its might-have-beens, about love, and about how life 'turns on a dime'. It's a thumping 700-pager which left me only wanting more. The master storyteller in truly masterful form. Daily Mail Stephen King is up there with the best. It's a thriller, a meditation on late Fifties and early Sixties America and a love story. It creates a world you can lose yourself in. Peter Robinson in the Sunday Express He writes incomparably good stories ... King's mastery of plot and his ability to create characters and situations both homespun and far-fetched means that this is the book you dream of getting stuck on the train home with. Independent on Sunday The story moves seamlessly from detailed reality to elaborate fantasy and back again through a meticulously researched backdrop of late 1950s events, fashion and sentimentality. It is a story of temptation, sacrifice, politics, love and self-interest. It was enthralling and I loved it. Townsville Bulletin (Australia) The fictional offering that engaged me most urgently ... an extraordinarily ambitious tale. Canberra City News A suspenseful drama. New Idea (Australia) Time travel and an incredible talent for storytelling combine to produce a unique tour de force. Sun A book of the year. Sun Cleverly evokes the moral dilemmas of time travel and whether a time traveller could or should prevent the assassination of John F. Kennedy on 11.22.63. King also beautifully and nostalgically evokes the minutiae of American suburban life in the late 1950's. Canberra Times A fondly-felt, wryly funny, subplots-and-tangents-aplenty character study. Rip it Up (Australia) A real page-turner. Woman's Day (Australia) A fascinating read that's like an episode of Dr Who,

the book leaves you with more questions than answers. Sunday Telegraph (Australia) Delivers as an affecting, suspenseful page-turner. Irish Times King has form in rendering plausible the fantastic ... 11.22.63 stakes another claim for its author to be classified as sui generis. Times Literary Supplement King's first effort at melding fact with fiction is as successful as his previous books, and perhaps even more intriguing considering the subject matter: time travel and the implications of change. A contemplative and thoughtful book as filled with heart as it is with intrigue, courtesy of one of our most gifted living writers. Australian Penthouse Legendary writer King has written another magical tome. People (Australia) Stephen King is a writer who can be absolutely confident of the glowing reception he will receive for virtually everything he writes. King readers know that he is an absolute master of the ambitious, imaginative novel - and the proof of that shouts out from every page of 11.22.63. Good Book Guide King adeptly mixes history with fantasy, providing a compelling insight into the life Lee Harvey. King's prose is always engaging and he maintains a constant sense of suspense and mystery throughout. Good Reading (Australia)

#### About the Author

Stephen King is the author of more than fifty books, all of them worldwide bestsellers. His recent work includes the short story collection *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams*, *Finders Keepers*, *Mr. Mercedes* (an Edgar Award winner for Best Novel), *Doctor Sleep*, and *Under the Dome*. His novel *11/22/63*—a recent Hulu original television series event—was named a top ten book of 2011 by *The New York Times Book Review* and won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Mystery/Thriller as well as the Best Hardcover Book Award from the International Thriller Writers. He is the recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts and the 2003 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. He lives in Bangor, Maine, with his wife, novelist Tabitha King.

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On Monday, March 25, Lee came walking up Neely Street carrying a long package wrapped in brown paper. Peering through a tiny crack in the curtains, I could see the words REGISTERED and INSURED stamped on it in big red letters. For the first time I thought he seemed furtive and nervous, actually looking around at his exterior surroundings instead of at the spooky furniture deep in his head. I knew what was in the package: a 6.5mm Carcano rifle—also known as a Mannlicher-Carcano—complete with scope, purchased from Klein's Sporting Goods in Chicago. Five minutes after he climbed the outside stairs to the second floor, the gun Lee would use to change history was in a closet above my head. Marina took the famous pictures of him holding it just outside my living room window six days later, but I didn't see it. That was a Sunday, and I was in Jodie. As the tenth grew closer, those weekends with Sadie had become the most important, the dearest, things in my life.

9

I came awake with a jerk, hearing someone mutter "Still not too late" under his breath. I realized it was me and shut up.

Sadie murmured some thick protest and turned over in bed. The familiar squeak of the springs locked me in place and time: the Candlewood Bungalows, April 5, 1963. I fumbled my watch from the nightstand and peered at the luminous numbers. It was quarter past two in the morning, which meant it was actually the sixth of April.

Still not too late.

Not too late for what? To back off, to let well enough alone? Or bad enough, come to that? The idea of

backing off was attractive, God knew. If I went ahead and things went wrong, this could be my last night with Sadie. Ever.

Even if you do have to kill him, you don't have to do it right away.

True enough. Oswald was going to relocate to New Orleans for awhile after the attempt on the general's life—another shitty apartment, one I'd already visited—but not for two weeks. That would give me plenty of time to stop his clock. But I sensed it would be a mistake to wait very long. I might find reasons to keep on waiting. The best one was beside me in this bed: long, lovely, and smoothly naked. Maybe she was just another trap laid by the obdurate past, but that didn't matter, because I loved her. And I could envision a scenario—all too clearly—where I'd have to run after killing Oswald. Run where? Back to Maine, of course. Hoping I could stay ahead of the cops just long enough to get to the rabbit-hole and escape into a future where Sadie Dunhill would be . . . well . . . about eighty years old. If she were alive at all. Given her cigarette habit, that would be like rolling six the hard way.

I got up and went to the window. Only a few of the bungalows were occupied on this early-spring weekend. There was a mud- or manure-splattered pickup truck with a trailer full of what looked like farm implements behind it. An Indian motorcycle with a sidecar. A couple of station wagons. And a two-tone Plymouth Fury. The moon was sliding in and out of thin clouds and it wasn't possible to make out the color of the car's lower half by that stuttery light, but I was pretty sure I knew what it was, anyway.

I pulled on my pants, undershirt, and shoes. Then I slipped out of the cabin and walked across the courtyard. The chilly air bit at my bed-warm skin, but I barely felt it. Yes, the car was a Fury, and yes, it was white over red, but this one wasn't from Maine or Arkansas; the plate was Oklahoma, and the decal in the rear window read GO, SOONERS. I peeked in and saw a scatter of textbooks. Some student, maybe headed south to visit his folks on spring break. Or a couple of horny teachers taking advantage of the Candlewood's liberal guest policy.

Just another not-quite-on-key chime as the past harmonized with itself. I touched the trunk, as I had back in Lisbon Falls, then returned to the bungalow. Sadie had pushed the sheet down to her waist, and when I came in, the draft of cool air woke her up. She sat, holding the sheet over her breasts, then let it drop when she saw it was me.

“Can't sleep, honey?”

“I had a bad dream and went out for some air.”

“What was it?”

I unbuttoned my jeans, kicked off my loafers. “Can't remember.”

“Try. My mother always used to say if you tell your dreams, they won't come true.”

I got into bed with her wearing nothing but my undershirt. “My mother used to say if you kiss your honey, they won't come true.”

“Did she actually say that?”

“No.”

“Well,” she said thoughtfully, “it sounds possible. Let’s try it.”

We tried it.

One thing led to another.

10

Afterward, she lit a cigarette. I lay watching the smoke drift up and turn blue in the occasional moonlight coming through the half-drawn curtains. I’d never leave the curtains that way at Neely Street, I thought. At Neely Street, in my other life, I’m always alone but still careful to close them all the way. Except when I’m peeking, that is. Lurking.

Just then I didn’t like myself very much.

“George?”

I sighed. “That’s not my name.”

“I know.”

I looked at her. She inhaled deeply, enjoying her cigarette guiltlessly, as people do in the Land of Ago. “I don’t have any inside information, if that’s what you’re thinking. But it stands to reason. The rest of your past is made up, after all. And I’m glad. I don’t like George all that much. It’s kind of . . . what’s that word you use sometimes? . . . kind of dorky.”

“How does Jake suit you?”

“As in Jacob?”

“Yes.”

“I like it.” She turned to me. “In the Bible, Jacob wrestled an angel. And you’re wrestling, too. Aren’t you?”

“I suppose I am, but not with an angel.” Although Lee Oswald didn’t make much of a devil, either. I liked George de Mohren--schildt better for the devil role. In the Bible, Satan’s a tempter who makes the offer and then stands aside. I hoped de Mohrenschildt was like that.

Sadie snubbed her cigarette. Her voice was calm, but her eyes were dark. “Are you going to be hurt?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you going away? Because if you have to go away, I’m not sure I can stand it. I would have died before I said it when I was there, but Reno was a nightmare. Losing you for good . . .” She shook her head slowly. “No, I’m not sure I could stand that.”

“I want to marry you,” I said.

“My God,” she said softly. “Just when I’m ready to say it’ll never happen, Jake-alias-George says right

now.”

“Not right now, but if the next week goes the way I hope it does . . . will you?”

“Of course. But I do have to ask one teensy question.”

“Am I single? Legally single? Is that what you want to know?”

She nodded.

“I am,” I said.

She let out a comic sigh and grinned like a kid. Then she sobered. “Can I help you? Let me help you.”

The thought turned me cold, and she must have seen it. Her lower lip crept into her mouth. She bit down on it with her teeth. “That bad, then,” she said musingly.

“Let’s put it this way: I’m currently close to a big machine full of sharp teeth, and it’s running full speed. I won’t allow you next to me while I’m monkeying with it.”

“When is it?” she asked. “Your . . . I don’t know . . . your date with destiny?”

“Still to be determined.” I had a feeling that I’d said too much already, but since I’d come this far, I decided to go a little farther. “Something’s going to happen this Wednesday night. Something I have to witness. Then I’ll decide.”

“Is there no way I can help you?”

“I don’t think so, honey.”

“If it turns out I can—”

“Thanks,” I said. “I appreciate that. And you really will marry me?”

“Now that I know your name is Jake? Of course.”



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Now in trade paperback, acclaimed author and Master of Horror Stephen King's #1 bestselling time travel novel, winner of the 2011 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Best Mystery/Thriller and praised by USA TODAY as "extraordinary."

WINNER OF THE 2012 LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK PRIZE

In Stephen King's "most ambitious and accomplished" (NPR) and "extraordinary" (USA TODAY) #1 New York Times bestselling novel, time travel has never been so believable. Or so terrifying.

Dallas, 11/22/63: Three shots ring out.

President John F. Kennedy is dead.

Life can turn on a dime—or stumble into the extraordinary, as it does for Jake Epping, a high school English teacher in a Maine town. While grading essays by his GED students, Jake reads a gruesome, enthralling piece penned by janitor Harry Dunning: fifty years ago, Harry somehow survived his father's sledgehammer slaughter of his entire family. Jake is blown away...but an even more bizarre secret comes to light when Jake's friend Al, owner of the local diner, enlists Jake to take over the mission that has become his obsession—to prevent the Kennedy assassination. How? By stepping through a portal in the diner's storeroom, and into the era of Ike and Elvis, of big American cars, sock hops, and cigarette smoke... Finding himself in warmhearted Jodie, Texas, Jake begins a new life. But all turns in the road lead to a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald. The course of history is about to be rewritten...and become heart-stoppingly suspenseful.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 880 pages

Features

- Used Book in Good Condition

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8

On Monday, March 25, Lee came walking up Neely Street carrying a long package wrapped in brown paper. Peering through a tiny crack in the curtains, I could see the words REGISTERED and INSURED stamped on it in big red letters. For the first time I thought he seemed furtive and nervous, actually looking around at his exterior surroundings instead of at the spooky furniture deep in his head. I knew what was in the package: a 6.5mm Carcano rifle—also known as a Mannlicher-Carcano—complete with scope, purchased from Klein’s Sporting Goods in Chicago. Five minutes after he climbed the outside stairs to the second floor, the gun Lee would use to change history was in a closet above my head. Marina took the famous pictures of him holding it just outside my living room window six days later, but I didn’t see it. That was a Sunday, and I was in Jodie. As the tenth grew closer, those weekends with Sadie had become the most important, the dearest, things in my life.

9

I came awake with a jerk, hearing someone mutter “Still not too late” under his breath. I realized it was me and shut up.

Sadie murmured some thick protest and turned over in bed. The familiar squeak of the springs locked me in place and time: the Candlewood Bungalows, April 5, 1963. I fumbled my watch from the nightstand and peered at the luminous numbers. It was quarter past two in the morning, which meant it was actually the sixth of April.

Still not too late.

Not too late for what? To back off, to let well enough alone? Or bad enough, come to that? The idea of backing off was attractive, God knew. If I went ahead and things went wrong, this could be my last night with Sadie. Ever.

Even if you do have to kill him, you don’t have to do it right away.

True enough. Oswald was going to relocate to New Orleans for awhile after the attempt on the general’s life—another shitty apartment, one I’d already visited—but not for two weeks. That would give me plenty of time to stop his clock. But I sensed it would be a mistake to wait very long. I might find reasons to keep on waiting. The best one was beside me in this bed: long, lovely, and smoothly naked. Maybe she was just another trap laid by the obdurate past, but that didn’t matter, because I loved her. And I could envision a scenario—all too clearly—where I’d have to run after killing Oswald. Run where? Back to Maine, of course. Hoping I could stay ahead of the cops just long enough to get to the rabbit-hole and escape into a future where Sadie Dunhill would be . . . well . . . about eighty years old. If she were alive at all. Given her cigarette habit, that would be like rolling six the hard way.

I got up and went to the window. Only a few of the bungalows were occupied on this early-spring weekend. There was a mud- or manure-splattered pickup truck with a trailer full of what looked like farm implements behind it. An Indian motorcycle with a sidecar. A couple of station wagons. And a two-tone Plymouth Fury. The moon was sliding in and out of thin clouds and it wasn’t possible to make out the color of the car’s lower half by that stuttery light, but I was pretty sure I knew what it was, anyway.

I pulled on my pants, undershirt, and shoes. Then I slipped out of the cabin and walked across the courtyard. The chilly air bit at my bed-warm skin, but I barely felt it. Yes, the car was a Fury, and yes, it was white over red, but this one wasn't from Maine or Arkansas; the plate was Oklahoma, and the decal in the rear window read GO, SOONERS. I peeked in and saw a scatter of textbooks. Some student, maybe headed south to visit his folks on spring break. Or a couple of horny teachers taking advantage of the Candlewood's liberal guest policy.

Just another not-quite-on-key chime as the past harmonized with itself. I touched the trunk, as I had back in Lisbon Falls, then returned to the bungalow. Sadie had pushed the sheet down to her waist, and when I came in, the draft of cool air woke her up. She sat, holding the sheet over her breasts, then let it drop when she saw it was me.

"Can't sleep, honey?"

"I had a bad dream and went out for some air."

"What was it?"

I unbuttoned my jeans, kicked off my loafers. "Can't remember."

"Try. My mother always used to say if you tell your dreams, they won't come true."

I got into bed with her wearing nothing but my undershirt. "My mother used to say if you kiss your honey, they won't come true."

"Did she actually say that?"

"No."

"Well," she said thoughtfully, "it sounds possible. Let's try it."

We tried it.

One thing led to another.

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Afterward, she lit a cigarette. I lay watching the smoke drift up and turn blue in the occasional moonlight coming through the half-drawn curtains. I'd never leave the curtains that way at Neely Street, I thought. At Neely Street, in my other life, I'm always alone but still careful to close them all the way. Except when I'm peeking, that is. Lurking.

Just then I didn't like myself very much.

"George?"

I sighed. "That's not my name."

"I know."

I looked at her. She inhaled deeply, enjoying her cigarette guiltlessly, as people do in the Land of Ago. “I don’t have any inside information, if that’s what you’re thinking. But it stands to reason. The rest of your past is made up, after all. And I’m glad. I don’t like George all that much. It’s kind of . . . what’s that word you use sometimes? . . . kind of dorky.”

“How does Jake suit you?”

“As in Jacob?”

“Yes.”

“I like it.” She turned to me. “In the Bible, Jacob wrestled an angel. And you’re wrestling, too. Aren’t you?”

“I suppose I am, but not with an angel.” Although Lee Oswald didn’t make much of a devil, either. I liked George de Mohren--schildt better for the devil role. In the Bible, Satan’s a tempter who makes the offer and then stands aside. I hoped de Mohrenschildt was like that.

Sadie snubbed her cigarette. Her voice was calm, but her eyes were dark. “Are you going to be hurt?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you going away? Because if you have to go away, I’m not sure I can stand it. I would have died before I said it when I was there, but Reno was a nightmare. Losing you for good . . .” She shook her head slowly. “No, I’m not sure I could stand that.”

“I want to marry you,” I said.

“My God,” she said softly. “Just when I’m ready to say it’ll never happen, Jake--alias--George says right now.”

“Not right now, but if the next week goes the way I hope it does . . . will you?”

“Of course. But I do have to ask one teensy question.”

“Am I single? Legally single? Is that what you want to know?”

She nodded.

“I am,” I said.

She let out a comic sigh and grinned like a kid. Then she sobered. “Can I help you? Let me help you.”

The thought turned me cold, and she must have seen it. Her lower lip crept into her mouth. She bit down on it with her teeth. “That bad, then,” she said musingly.

“Let’s put it this way: I’m currently close to a big machine full of sharp teeth, and it’s running full speed. I won’t allow you next to me while I’m monkeying with it.”

“When is it?” she asked. “Your . . . I don’t know . . . your date with destiny?”

“Still to be determined.” I had a feeling that I’d said too much already, but since I’d come this far, I decided to go a little farther. “Something’s going to happen this Wednesday night. Something I have to witness. Then I’ll decide.”

“Is there no way I can help you?”

“I don’t think so, honey.”

“If it turns out I can—”

“Thanks,” I said. “I appreciate that. And you really will marry me?”

“Now that I know your name is Jake? Of course.”

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1156 of 1202 people found the following review helpful.

Through the past darkly - a no spoilers review

By James Tepper

"11/22/63", Stephen King's latest, might just be his greatest. Seriously. At least as far as "mainstream" fiction or "literature" goes. Yes, it is built around a well-used SF trope, time travel, but really, the portal to the past that Jake Epping is shown in the back of an aluminum diner is only the launch mechanism for this fantastic journey. There are no monsters here, at least none that aren't human, and little or no horror in the supernatural sense that King's constant readers have come to know, love and expect. Even SK's other "straight" fiction, "Misery", "Dolores Claiborne" and "The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon" come to mind, had elements of the supernatural and/or flat-out horror. Not this time.

But that doesn't mean that 11/22/63 is boring. Quite the contrary. Although it might seem that it would be tough to build suspense around a conclusion that seems to be inevitable, this turns out not to be the case. Big time. I just finished playing hooky from work for a day when I read the last 400 pages non-stop (except for a couple of bathroom breaks), because I just couldn't stop. I just kept pressing the advance button on my Kindle.

The adjective that first comes to mind in describing 11/22/63 among SK's oeuvre is, oddly enough, "mature". I have read every novel and anthology that King has published, plus a large number of single short stories, starting with "Carrie" in a borrowed paperback back in the late 1970s. I have never before thought of describing his work in any of them, many good, some great and a few clunkers (some of which I have reviewed as such), as mature. But that is the first, best word that comes to mind in describing 11/22/63. There were others too; exciting, romantic, bittersweet and, as with all SK's stuff, well-written.

Lee Harvey Oswald and the Kennedy assassination were obviously very well-researched, clear from the details in the text even before one gets to the afterword that describes some of the sources and methods used. The lead-up to the day of the assassination is described in great detail, along with Oswald's relationship to his family and associates, all matters of historical record (at least according to the sources cited by SK, with which most of the readers who did not like the novel disagreed emphatically). But I should point out that the facts concerning the Kennedy assassination are actually not the main focus of the novel.

The world of 1958-1963 is described in wonderful detail, through the eyes of Jake as he gradually sheds his early 21st century armored shell and falls in love with a small Texas town and Sadie, its new young librarian. Their love story is the centerpiece of the novel and is told with great depth, sensitivity and believability. I'm



old enough to have experienced lots of the stuff that Jake encounters in 1958 (albeit as a child) and it jives with and jogs my recollections and induces a feeling of longing for older, simpler times. For King's "Constant Readers", there are easter egg cameos from "It" and "The Langoliers" that I recognized. Knowing SK, there may well be others.

The ending is not predictable (if you say you saw it all coming you are either lying or should be a best-selling novelist) and is surprisingly satisfying. To those who say King doesn't know how to end his novels, I say, read this one.

Very Highly Recommended for all (even those who think they know but don't "like" Stephen King).

J.M. Tepper

1676 of 1799 people found the following review helpful.

The past is obdurate

By Susan Tunis

Stephen King started publishing books around roughly the same time I started reading them. It was the mid 70s, and I was a precocious young thing. I was fearless, and man I loved what he was writing! I haven't read nearly all of his novels in the decades since, but enough to have a pretty good familiarity with the universe that his works share. Now entering my more fearful middle age, I can tell you there is, oddly, something deeply comforting about submerging myself again in his rich, folksy world where heroes ARE heroic, all stories come full circle, and pretty much all nagging questions are eventually put to rest.

The hero of 11/22/63 is Jake Epping, and early on in this novel he is presented with something inconceivable, a sort of wormhole in time. It leads from 2011 Maine to September 9, 1958. You can visit the past for as long as you like--years even--but when you return to the present it's always exactly two minutes later. Every subsequent visit is a "reset." You can change the past (and consequently the present), but as Jake learns, "the past is obdurate." It resists.

There's more to the set-up, of course, but that's all you really need to know. Because with this portal to the past, Jake is set on a mission that would probably be the goal of most every person of a certain age--to stop the Kennedy assassination. I don't think it resonates quite so strongly with those of us who weren't around to remember Camelot, but, sure, 11/22/63 was one of the most pivotal days in this nation's history. It's a day that surely scarred the psyche of every American who remembers it.

For long-time readers like myself, there are some wonderful Easter eggs to be found in 11/22/63, tying back to past novels, and probably to future ones as well. It's amazing how King does that. Characters I haven't seen for decades make cameo appearances and gosh it's great to see them. If Mr. King has one skill above all, it's the ability to breathe life into his characters. No wonder they live on long after their stories end. And it's not just the characters that feel like old friends, it's merely inhabiting the King-verse with its familiar town names, attitudes, and themes. Like I said, comforting.

So, if it's not obvious already, I loved this novel from start to finish! Heck, I read 849 pages in less than 48 hours. But Mr. King might have written this one just for me. I have a thing for time travel stories. In fact, 11/22/63 has several similarities with an old favorite I recently re-read: Replay, by Ken Grimwood. The ideas of this novel are pretty compelling, and it's not surprising that others have explored them. Reading the two so close together made for an interesting counterpoint, and did disservice to neither.

Thirty-seven years and several dozen novels after his first, Stephen King is still finding new stories to tell in

inventive ways. Yes, those familiar echoes are there, but somehow Mr. King is keeping his prolific output fresh. 11/22/63 is a blast from the past. I'm glad I got to travel there with this dear old friend.

837 of 910 people found the following review helpful.

Not disappointed

By William E. Liberatore

I first read about this book a few months ago. While I am a fan of Stephen King, I'm not a huge fan. I don't typically buy his books the day they are released, but when I read the premise for this one I just thought that it was a really neat idea and I couldn't wait for it to be released so that I could read it. Then I got a little nervous about it. From the time I read the teaser I thought that there were so many interesting directions that someone could take this story, but what if it tanks? That's always the pitfall of a really neat idea... what if it fails to really bloom like you think it could? But this is Stephen King. For my review, I'd like to establish that I was born almost 7 years after JFK died. I am not a JFK scholar and I did not read this book trying to hyper-analyze the historical accuracy of the book. I took it as a fictional exploration of a historical event produced not to answer any historical questions but just to entertain and provoke thought. I feel it was very successful on both points. My fears that Stephen King was going to take a great idea and go nowhere with it were definitely unfounded. He also works in all his usual Stephen King "givens"... the story starts in Maine. We even get to "visit" a couple of characters from other Stephen King books and the town of Derry, though the majority of the book is set in Texas of course. On the whole I usually review books based on how well spent I feel my time was in reading it and I am in no way disappointed in this one. If you buy the book I hope you enjoy it as much as I did and thank you for taking the time to read my review.

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## 11/22/63: A NOVEL BY STEPHEN KING PDF

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### Review

The reader feels the benefit of 40 years of narrative craftsmanship and reflection on his nation's history. Going backwards proves to be another step forward for the most remarkable storyteller in modern American literature. Mark Lawson, Guardian The pages of 11.22.63 fly by, filled with immediacy, pathos and suspense. It takes great brazenness to go anywhere near this subject matter. But it takes great skill to make this story even remotely credible. Mr. King makes it all look easy, which is surely his book's fanciest trick. New York Times A wonderful book: page-turningly exciting, witty, wise, melancholic. But also utterly human, profoundly decent Ashley Pharoah, co-writer and co-creator of Life on Mars and Ashes to Ashes Take King's hand and allow him to lead you into a past so vibrant and complete that you can almost taste it. But hold on tight, the Master of Horror has now become the Master of Time ... Utterly enthralling, emotional and magical Matthew Graham, co-writer and co-creator of Life on Mars and Ashes to Ashes Fine stories to take with us into the night. Neil Gaiman on FULL DARK, NO STARS in the Guardian America's greatest living novelist. Lee Child King's gift of storytelling is unrivalled. His ferocious imagination is unlimited. George Pelecanos 'King's most purely entertaining novel in years ... utterly compelling.' John Connolly on UNDER THE DOME 'Staggeringly addictive.' USA Today on UNDER THE DOME 'Tight and energetic from start to finish.' New York Times on UNDER THE DOME 'The pedal is indeed to the metal.' Guardian on UNDER THE DOME Delivers a lot of praise and enjoy. The story comes off the blocks with almost alarming speed ... he tells a story like a pro ... 11.22.63 kept me up all night. Daily Telegraph Stephen King at his epic, pedal-to-metal best Alison Flood, Sunday Times not just an accomplished time-travel yarn but an action-heavy meditation on chance, choice and fate. Independent Books of the Year The details of Fifties America, the cars, the clothes, the food, the televisions with wonky horizontal hold, are so vivid that you begin to wonder whether the author himself hasn't had access to a time machine. ...But as you worry at the paradoxes and the brilliantly explained pseudo science there is no denying that this monster yarn is blindingly impressive. Manly writers run out of steam as they get older. King, though, writes books that are ever longer and more demanding. I can't wait to see what he will tackle next. Daily Express Stephen King's new novel, 11.22.63, combines a variety of genres, being a JFK assassination, a story of time travel, a variation on the grail quest, a novel of voyeurism, a love story, a historical novel, a counter-factual historical novel and the chilling tale of a sinister animate universe, a form which can be traced back to the ghost stories of MR James. London Review of Books The master of the pen has written yet another extraordinary novel. Independent Perhaps only seasoned storyteller Stephen King could accomplish changing the course of history in his vast time-travelling masterpiece whilst effortlessly weaving political and social details with abundant humour. King's intriguing new story structure will surely catapult the author to another best-seller. Australian Women's Weekly These early sections of the novel are almost irresistible entertaining, enlivened not just by King's supreme control of the form but by his sardonic wit and usual generosity of spirit and expansiveness. Yet as Jack/George moves closer to his goal, other, darker notes intrude, as time itself begins

to resist his attempts to change its course, and as he begins to identify with his quarry... Beneath the reassuring glow of King's portrait of an earlier, simpler time moves a darker and less comfortable vision, a glimpse of the terrifying machinery that moves below the surface of human history, and which stands as a stark, chilling rejoinder to the fantasies of escape embodied in so many time travel stories. The Weekend Australia Mammoth but entertaining, this is part sci-fi, part suspense and part travelogue of a long-ago America. Who Weekly Stephen King is a remarkable and wonderful storyteller who never loosens his grip on the reader throughout the 750-page book. Woman's Day The novel is big, ambitious and haunting. King has probably absorbed the social, political, and popular culture of his baby-boom American generation as thoroughly and imaginatively as any other writer. 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9

I came awake with a jerk, hearing someone mutter "Still not too late" under his breath. I realized it was me and shut up.

Sadie murmured some thick protest and turned over in bed. The familiar squeak of the springs locked me in place and time: the Candlewood Bungalows, April 5, 1963. I fumbled my watch from the nightstand and peered at the luminous numbers. It was quarter past two in the morning, which meant it was actually the sixth of April.

Still not too late.

Not too late for what? To back off, to let well enough alone? Or bad enough, come to that? The idea of backing off was attractive, God knew. If I went ahead and things went wrong, this could be my last night with Sadie. Ever.

Even if you do have to kill him, you don't have to do it right away.

True enough. Oswald was going to relocate to New Orleans for awhile after the attempt on the general's life—another shitty apartment, one I'd already visited—but not for two weeks. That would give me plenty of time to stop his clock. But I sensed it would be a mistake to wait very long. I might find reasons to keep on waiting. The best one was beside me in this bed: long, lovely, and smoothly naked. Maybe she was just another trap laid by the obdurate past, but that didn't matter, because I loved her. And I could envision a scenario—all too clearly—where I'd have to run after killing Oswald. Run where? Back to Maine, of course. Hoping I could stay ahead of the cops just long enough to get to the rabbit-hole and escape into a future where Sadie Dunhill would be . . . well . . . about eighty years old. If she were alive at all. Given her cigarette habit, that would be like rolling six the hard way.

I got up and went to the window. Only a few of the bungalows were occupied on this early-spring weekend. There was a mud- or manure-splattered pickup truck with a trailer full of what looked like farm implements behind it. An Indian motorcycle with a sidecar. A couple of station wagons. And a two-tone Plymouth Fury. The moon was sliding in and out of thin clouds and it wasn't possible to make out the color of the car's lower half by that stuttery light, but I was pretty sure I knew what it was, anyway.

I pulled on my pants, undershirt, and shoes. Then I slipped out of the cabin and walked across the courtyard. The chilly air bit at my bed-warm skin, but I barely felt it. Yes, the car was a Fury, and yes, it was white over red, but this one wasn't from Maine or Arkansas; the plate was Oklahoma, and the decal in the rear window read GO, SOONERS. I peeked in and saw a scatter of textbooks. Some student, maybe headed south to visit his folks on spring break. Or a couple of horny teachers taking advantage of the Candlewood's liberal guest policy.

Just another not-quite-on-key chime as the past harmonized with itself. I touched the trunk, as I had back in Lisbon Falls, then returned to the bungalow. Sadie had pushed the sheet down to her waist, and when I came in, the draft of cool air woke her up. She sat, holding the sheet over her breasts, then let it drop when she saw it was me.

"Can't sleep, honey?"

"I had a bad dream and went out for some air."

"What was it?"

I unbuttoned my jeans, kicked off my loafers. "Can't remember."

"Try. My mother always used to say if you tell your dreams, they won't come true."

I got into bed with her wearing nothing but my undershirt. "My mother used to say if you kiss your honey, they won't come true."

"Did she actually say that?"

"No."

"Well," she said thoughtfully, "it sounds possible. Let's try it."

We tried it.

One thing led to another.

10

Afterward, she lit a cigarette. I lay watching the smoke drift up and turn blue in the occasional moonlight coming through the half-drawn curtains. I'd never leave the curtains that way at Neely Street, I thought. At Neely Street, in my other life, I'm always alone but still careful to close them all the way. Except when I'm peeking, that is. Lurking.

Just then I didn't like myself very much.

"George?"

I sighed. "That's not my name."

"I know."

I looked at her. She inhaled deeply, enjoying her cigarette guiltlessly, as people do in the Land of Ago. "I don't have any inside information, if that's what you're thinking. But it stands to reason. The rest of your past is made up, after all. And I'm glad. I don't like George all that much. It's kind of . . . what's that word you use sometimes? . . . kind of dorky."

"How does Jake suit you?"

"As in Jacob?"

"Yes."

"I like it." She turned to me. "In the Bible, Jacob wrestled an angel. And you're wrestling, too. Aren't you?"

"I suppose I am, but not with an angel." Although Lee Oswald didn't make much of a devil, either. I liked George de Mohren--schildt better for the devil role. In the Bible, Satan's a tempter who makes the offer and then stands aside. I hoped de Mohrenschildt was like that.

Sadie snubbed her cigarette. Her voice was calm, but her eyes were dark. "Are you going to be hurt?"

"I don't know."

"Are you going away? Because if you have to go away, I'm not sure I can stand it. I would have died before I said it when I was there, but Reno was a nightmare. Losing you for good . . ." She shook her head slowly. "No, I'm not sure I could stand that."

"I want to marry you," I said.

"My God," she said softly. "Just when I'm ready to say it'll never happen, Jake-alias-George says right now."

“Not right now, but if the next week goes the way I hope it does . . . will you?”

“Of course. But I do have to ask one teensy question.”

“Am I single? Legally single? Is that what you want to know?”

She nodded.

“I am,” I said.

She let out a comic sigh and grinned like a kid. Then she sobered. “Can I help you? Let me help you.”

The thought turned me cold, and she must have seen it. Her lower lip crept into her mouth. She bit down on it with her teeth. “That bad, then,” she said musingly.

“Let’s put it this way: I’m currently close to a big machine full of sharp teeth, and it’s running full speed. I won’t allow you next to me while I’m monkeying with it.”

“When is it?” she asked. “Your . . . I don’t know . . . your date with destiny?”

“Still to be determined.” I had a feeling that I’d said too much already, but since I’d come this far, I decided to go a little farther. “Something’s going to happen this Wednesday night. Something I have to witness. Then I’ll decide.”

“Is there no way I can help you?”

“I don’t think so, honey.”

“If it turns out I can—”

“Thanks,” I said. “I appreciate that. And you really will marry me?”

“Now that I know your name is Jake? Of course.”

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