



Pet Sematary

Stephen King

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Discover the classic #1 *New York Times* bestseller from master storyteller Stephen King!

When Dr. Louis Creed takes a new job and moves his family to the idyllic and rural town of Ludlow, Maine, this new beginning seems too good to be true. Yet despite Ludlow's tranquility, there's an undercurrent of danger that exists here. Those trucks on the road outside the Creed's beautiful old home travel by just a little too quickly, for one thing...as is evidenced by the makeshift pet cemetery out back in the nearby woods. Then there are the warnings to Louis both real and from the depths of his nightmares that he should not venture beyond the borders of this little graveyard. A blood-chilling truth is hidden there—one more terrifying than death itself, and hideously more powerful. An ominous fate befalls anyone who dares tamper with this forbidden place, as Louis is about to discover for himself...

Pet Sematary Details

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From Reader Review *Pet Sematary* for online ebook

Sr3yas says

*I read **The Shining***, my first Stephen King book back in summer of 2016 and was absolutely blown away by it. Since then I've been reading King's books religiously to find the next masterpiece that could push the limits of a sane mind. Well, It took me two years and eleven more King's books to find it, and on the way, I met many great contenders like Pennywise, Barlow and George Stark. But it was *Pet Sematary* and the horrors that paid a visit to the small family in Ludlow that finally won me over.

*“The soil of a man's heart is stonier, Louis. A man grows what he can, and he tends it.
'Cause what you buy, is what you own. And what you own... always comes home to you.”*

Louis Creed and his family have just moved from Chicago to the small town of Ludlow. They moved because Louis got appointed as Director of University of Maine's health services. They settle in their house quite nicely. The house big and cozy, and Louis quickly becomes friends with Jud and his wife, their elderly neighbors. His wife Rachel, and two young children, Ellie and Gage is happy. Even Ellie's cat Church is happy! The only tiny problem is the highway road dividing Louis's house and Jud's house, where speeding trucks travels relentlessly...

Oh, There is also the matter of Pet Sematary: an old ground where pet owners bury their faithful dead pets.

Also, the old Indian legends...

The mysterious land with a peculiar hold on people....

A secret and forbidden climb...

Don't look back...

Shakes head

Did I space out? I spaced out, didn't I?!

First of all, Mr. King? That man got some serious guts. He based the premise and characters for this novel from his own life while he was teaching at the University of Maine. There are too many parallels between what actually happened in King's life and what he wrote in his novel. I think that's the reason he

calls this book as his scariest book.

It's too damn personal.

Pet Semetary scared me not the way other horror novels or movies scare people. Pet semetary is not about jump scares or other worldly creatures instilling terror upon our sad species (view spoiler) For me, Pet semetary worked because King makes the characters feel like your own family, fill you with care and love for them, and then asks you the question: *What will you do If you were standing where Louis is standing? Will you climb or stand your ground?*

As usual, King characters are well crafted and full of life. The bromance between Jud and Louis is endearing, and Louis's young daughter Elle and toddler Gage are delightful. (view spoiler) The story also boasts a lot of strong secondary characters, and King scores big with a perfect cast.

My favorite part of entire novel is in the first half itself when Louis and Jud take the nocturnal excursion to the woods. That sequence had the right amount of creepiness, mystery and a haunting beauty. I kept on imagining unusually bright stars standing still and looking down at Louis and Jud as a chilly wind blew across the woods; A daunting dreamy quality to the whole affair. Weirdly, I kept on thinking that *Guillermo del Toro* will be able to do great things with this sequence! Later on, I found out that del Toro was actually in talks to make a remake of Pet Semetary, but the project fell through.

I'll be honest here. (view spoiler) I was stuck between not wanting to read the novel because it was too painful and at the same time, I was unable to put it down because the writing was too damn mesmerizing. King once again excels in horror department because of the way he crafts the unfathomable pull of the Pet Semetary. It's the intangibility of the horror that I found beautiful. (view spoiler)

Another reason for my perfect rating is the ending. It was flawless.

(view spoiler)

Overall, Pet Semetary has everything I wanted, and my hunt for next perfect story in Stephen King's shelves continues with renewed energy!

Mario says

Once upon a time when I was a child, I remember talking with my family about horror movies. Somebody asked what was the scariest movie you've watched, and my mom without thinking said '*Pet Semetary*'. I remember laughing and saying '*How on earth could a movie named Pet Semetary be scary?*' Fast forward to now, I changed my mind.

This book is scariest and creepiest book I've ever read, and I'm sure it'll stay number 1 for a long time. It made me think about stuff I don't want, or refuse, to think about. One being death. Most of us don't want to think about death, 'cause we think we're invincible... But we're not. Like this book said, Oz the Great and Terrible (or should I say Gweat and Tewwible?) is always close... waiting.

At few parts I even thought about putting the book down, because it was all too much, but I just couldn't. I wasn't even able to stop reading, 'cause I was dying (no pun intended) to know what was going to happen next. I guess horror books do that do you.

In conclusion, amazing book, and I'm definitely gonna re-read it in (very, **very** distant) future.

Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

That ending though...

This ended up being very different than what I expected. The less you know about it, the better!

Johann (jobis89) says

"Cause what you buy, is what you own. And what you own... always comes home to you."

Louis Creed and his family have recently moved to the town of Ludlow, Maine. Behind their house there is a path that leads to a 'Pet Sematary', where the children of surrounding areas have buried their beloved pets in years gone by. Deeper in the woods there lies an ancient Indian burial ground, that Louis discovers has some sinister properties when their family cat dies...

It's no secret that Pet Sematary is my favourite King book, but this is the case for a number of different reasons. When I first started reading horror I couldn't imagine words on a page actually scaring me, I always felt like I needed something visual to keep me up at night. Then I found Pet Sematary... I'd never had an experience before where I actually felt scared to turn the page - this was of course in the climax at the end of the novel. My heart was racing, my palms felt sweaty, I just kept thinking, "There's no way this book is going to go THAT dark" (clearly I didn't really know King yet!!). And then it did. And a King junkie and Constant Reader was born. IT was my first King, but Pet Sematary was where I became hooked.

****NB Plenty of spoilers ahead****

Now it's time to get personal... grief and loss has been a huge part of my life. When I was younger, my dad was diagnosed with MS, a debilitating disease that quite literally drained the life from him in front of our eyes. I guess this is similar in some ways to the Zelda and Rachel storyline, apart from the fact that my dad was never angry or resentful over his illness - or if he was, he never showed it in front of me. He progressively got more and more ill, over time losing his ability to speak, walk, eat. Death was ultimately a relief. But what about those who are left behind? It's strange because even though I was only 10 when he died, which is around 18 years ago, there are still days or times when the unrelenting grief can come out of nowhere and floor me. The loss of a parent is something you never get over, it is simply something you learn to live with. The only thing that can possibly be worse is the loss of a child. King's depiction of the grief and loss that both Louis and Rachel go through is so accurate it hurts. This book really resonated with me on a deep level, as I had never before read such a harrowing and realistic outlook on death and loss. There are so many passages that I've made a note of and will revisit over and over again.

The way King crafted a book that is terrifying and heartbreaking in equal measures will never fail to astound

me. Because this book IS terrifying - to lose someone is terrifying, to have to try to move on is terrifying, for them to come back "different" is also terrifying. Sometimes on instagram I will see people criticising Louis' decisions or making out that he's a bad parent and it makes me want to scream. Grief and loss does not allow for rational thinking. It does not allow for good judgement. It can be all encompassing to the point where you feel like you can't breathe. I defy anyone to tell me that if in a similar position you wouldn't even consider it (not forgetting the fact that there are other forces at work here). I know I would. Couple that with the overwhelming devastation and loss and your decision is pretty made. So to label Louis as a bad parent is absolutely ridiculous to me. Don't get me wrong, there was Ellie to consider, he still had that to live for, but in those heady initial days following such a heartbreaking loss, rational thinking ain't happening.

It's a bit of a slow-build this book, but the pay-off is worth it. I enjoyed getting to know the Creeds, watching them form friendships with the Crandalls across the road. All the good stuff, you know, before shit hits the fan. And when shit hits the fan, it is almost too much to take. Gage's little Star Wars shoe in the middle of the road... the cap full of blood. Images that send chills down my spine. Then the unbearable dread as Louis digs up that coffin, not knowing what exactly he is going to be presented with. The way Louis initially thinks that Gage has no head as there is a dark moss covering his face... THIS IS THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES. The little figure appearing in Louis' room as he sleeps, the child's laughter that Jud can hear... Ellie having these vivid dreams and knowing that her family is in danger. This is really a masterclass in how to craft well-written, piss-your-pants horror. I bow to you, Sai King.

Some of King's best writing in here and one of his best endings too. There's also some unforgettable characters in Louis Creed, Jud Crandall, Victor Pascow and Zelda. PUH-LEASE can I find a Jud Crandall that can act as a father figure to me?? The adaptation for this book is also pretty decent: Louis is a hot dad, Fred Gwynne was born to play the role of Jud, Zelda will trigger a cold sweat to run down your back...

I could quite honestly write an entire thesis on Pet Sematary, so I'll end it here. All I'll say is this: if you didn't feel something when reading this book..... you need to check yourself *insert sassy emoji* Always my number 1 King book. 5 stars from me - obviously.

Update: listened to audiobook in April/May 2018. Incredible narration by Michael C Hall. Still 5 stars. Obviously.

Justin Tate says

Stephen King's legacy will be vast, I have no doubt. We'll still read him hundreds of years from now, just as we have with Poe and Dickens and many others. Of all his master works, however, I take the somewhat unpopular stance that Pet Sematary is his magnum opus. Re-reading it now only confirms this opinion.

When I first read Pet Sematary (I couldn't have been older than 13) I knew right away that it was more than a typical scary story. For one, it made me feel decades older. Wiser. More attuned to human nature. King never shies away from character, but he really digs deep with Louis Creed. There are numerous novels that portray death well (James Agee's A Death in the Family is superb) but fittingly enough, it's this gothic horror novel that illustrates it best. Death isn't pretty and surviving it can be just as grotesque. Pet Sematary gives all of this to us, and more. Much more than we want to see. But maybe we need to see it to understand.

We often scream at characters in horror movies for doing stupid things (WHY WOULD YOU LEAVE THE HOUSE YOU IDIOT!?) and arguably Louis Creed does some stupid things in this book. King adds

supernatural influence as justification, but let's be honest - no justification is needed. Creed and his decisions are as relatable as they are tragic, which is something never quite accomplished--not on the same level at least--with Jack Torrance or Annie Wilkes or Carrie White. Not dissing those other books, I'm a fan boy for them too, but it's why I think *Pet Sematary* is King's greatest achievement.

For those interested in reading this one, for the first time or 20th, I highly recommend the new audio version narrated by Michael C. Hall. His outstanding performance enriches the novel in ways I hadn't noticed before.

AMEERA says

Stephen King : king of horror stories ??'

Carol says

"Sometimes dead is better"

KING calls **Pet Sematary** his scariest book, and I can understand why. It is super creepy and super "shocking" where he takes the reader, and his interesting prologue explaining how he came to write this unsettling tale brings a bit of truth to the story.

While truly a horror of a read, it is excellent in respect to its genre, but just **awful** too if that makes any sense. PS is not particularly gory, but definitely sad, sick, dark, and disgusting with more than one horribly "shocking" event that will blow your mind.

Take heed if you're new to reading horror as this one will make your skin crawl and keep you from taking a walk in the woods anytime soon.....especially if your cat is nearby.

"**IT**" is still my favorite scary **KING** thriller (*especially the movie*) but **Pet Sematary** (*did I say it was "shocking"*) is a close second, and....."sometimes dead is better."

UPDATE: October 16, 2015

WARNING: DO NOT WATCH THE MOVIE UNLESS YOU WANT TO BE TOTALLY CREEPED OUT! THE VISUAL OF THE "SISTER" FLASHBACK SCENE ALONE IS MORE HORRIFYING THAN THE ENTIRE BOOK!!!

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

While reading this book, all I that runs through my head is the song the Ramones made for the movie.

So, I'm going to link the video so all of you can have it running through your head as well! Kickin' it old school =)

Pet Sematary - The Ramones

Okay, let me just go ahead and say there will be ****SPOILERS**** for those that haven't read the book or seen the movie.

I have seen the movie about 6 million 5 hundred and 8 times. And I love it! **THIS** is the first time I have read the book, and as there are a few differences in the book and movie, they both rock monkey butt! The book didn't scare me at all for some reason. I think because of the said 6 million 5 hundred and 8 times that I have seen it that maybe it acclimated me to the book. Although, the movie is still creepy as hell.

I totally freaked at the introduction to the book. Mr. King tells about moving to said place, teaching at the school, they had a cat named Smucky, their son was running to the road chasing the kite string like in the movie, but uh, didn't get killed! And some other things. It was like a whole new little world right there for me that he actually wrote this based on some home stuff!

Remember in the book where Jud (the wonderful neighbor) takes them out to the Pet Sematary?

SMUCKY THE CAT, one crate-board marker proclaimed. The hand was childish but careful. HE WAS OBEDIANT.

Okay, so there was a real (I wonder if it's still there?) Pet Sematary and their cat Smucky is buried there and that is what Mr. King's daughter wrote! I mean, I can't even. I want to go visit there now and see if the place is still there!

So wonderful Jud from across the road has a great friendship with Louis and the kids, a little iffy with Rachel.

Anyway, Jud is the one that has Louis bury Church (the cat) when he gets hit on that damn road all of those crazy trucks would fly down. But little did Louis know that Church was going to come back, even when the poor boy from the school (Pascow) who got hit by a car and killed, came back as a ghost to warn Louis. Why don't people just listen?

So now Church is back home and he isn't the same any more. But the family didn't find out anything happened to him while they were out of town. They just think he's weird and stinks when they get home. Uh, yeah!

So then, it all goes to hell in a hand basket.

Gage is killed on the road.

and in the movie you get to see who presides over the funeral.

Yup, the King =)

and then. . . don't do it . . . don't to it.

He does it, Louis takes Gage to the Pet Sematary and yeah. . . Gage isn't the same when he comes back! He kills Jud! Damn it all! and Ellie had been having bad dreams about her daddy so Rachel comes home and goes to Jud's house and she gets killed because Gage isn't Gage any more.

And Louis finally takes out Church and Gage, but does he learn from his lesson? Noooooooooooooooooo, he takes and buries Rachel in the Sematary. Well, you can use your imagination for the rest of that one. . .

This was an awesome book to read for Halloween time or any time really but it's extra special at Halloween!



MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

It's probably wrong to believe there can be any limit to the horror which the human mind can experience. On the contrary, it seems that some exponential effect begins to obtain as deeper and deeper darkness falls—as little as one may like to admit it, human experience tends, in a good many ways, to support the idea that when the nightmare grows black enough, horror spawns horror, one coincidental evil begets other, often more deliberate evils, until finally blackness seems to cover everything. And the most terrifying question of all may be just how much horror the human mind can stand and still maintain a wakeful, staring, unrelenting sanity.

In my teens, Stephen King has crafted my nightmares. I am masochistically glad to say that in my adulthood, that has not changed.

He had been responsible for my bedtime routine. Close all doors, bathroom, closet. Check under bed, a terrifying prospect as it stands. Make sure blanket is firmly tucked in at the feet - who knows what creatures might reach up to grab or nibble on them. Make sure blanket is firmly tucked in on all sides, so that only the head is exposed. And still, all that preparation for the battle that is bedtime is nigh useless as the nightlights cast shadows that turn into shadowy creatures in the depths of night. Glints of light cast upon objects are spun by a restless mind into monsters.

It has been years since I've read a Stephen King book. That's because my attention span is much shorter now. It craves the quick denouement, a fast-paced plot. Action action action. I confess that this book did plod along in some parts for me, but despite all that, there is no doubt in my mind that King is a master at building atmosphere. He is tremendously skilled at crafting characters, at making them human, at making them relatable in their poignancy, with moments like a father explaining the inevitability of death to his young child. I think we can all relate to that moment.

He held her and rocked her, believing, rightly or wrongly, that Ellie wept for the very intractability of death, its imperviousness to argument or to a little girl's tears; that she wept over its cruel unpredictability; and that she wept because of the human being's wonderful, deadly ability to translate symbols into conclusions that were either fine and noble or blackly terrifying. If all those animals had died and been buried, then Church could die (any time!) and be-buried; and if that could happen to Church, it could happen to her mother, her father, her baby brother. To herself. Death was a vague idea; the Pet Sematary was real.

In the texture of those rude markers were truths which even a child's hands could feel.

I would say half the book isn't a horror in a traditional sense, but **an exploration of human grief and behavior, and human nature itself can be quite terrifying.**

That isn't to say that this book isn't filled with moments that makes a chill run down your spine.

The wind pushed and pulled its fingers through his hair, and for a moment the old, childlike fear of the dark rushed through him, making him feel weak and small and terrorized. Was he really going into the woods with this corpse in his arms, passing under the trees where the wind walked, from darkness into darkness? And alone this time?

I've long since outgrown my nightly monster-prepping ritual, but I know tonight I won't be sleeping easily.

"I brought you something, Mommy!" he screamed. "I brought you something, Mommy! I brought you something, I brought you something!"

Nikki says

The painful, hard thing about Stephen King's writing is that so often, he takes something real, something that people can experience in the real world, and builds the supernatural stuff onto that. In *The Shining*, there's Jack's alcoholism; in *The Talisman*, there's Jack/Jason's mother's cancer; *The Stand* plays on our fears of something, somewhere, in one of those labs, getting out of control; in *Pet Sematary*, it's the death of a child. So much of the book is completely real and believable: the arguments between Louis and his wife's parents, Gage running out onto the road and getting himself killed, Louis being willing to do anything to resurrect his son, anything. It's gruesome, because anyone with an ounce of imagination can put themselves in that situation, imagine the horrible choice: do I try this and possibly get my son back or possibly create a monster, or do I pass this chance by and never find out whether it could have worked?

Stephen King is definitely not "just" a horror writer. His horror becomes much more "real" because he is also writing about real things.

This book hurt the most of the ones of his that he's read, and so it took me longer to get through it. I don't regret it, even if it grossed me out a bit. I think it's pretty brilliant, the ideas and the plot at least. Stephen King is not the most fancy writer in the world, but his prose works and goes down easy, and that makes it good, as far as I'm concerned.

Vincent Kaprat says

This may be King's darkest book. If you're goth, read this and you'll be 5% goth'er.

Ginger says

[I almost couldn't get through this book because of the grief *Stephen King* puts the readers through. It overwhelmed me since it felt similar to what I went through in regards to the deaths of my father and brother. (hide spoiler)]

Chelsea Humphrey says

Wow. Just wow. I've put off reading this one for years because, well.... I'm a wimp. *There, I said it.* When one of the most well-known names in the contemporary era of the horror genre says something is his scariest book, I take note. It seems bizarre that I finally chose to tackle this one while having children the same age as Louis Creed's, it was **precisely** the perfect time to pick this up. I listened to almost the entire book over a 24-hour period while road-tripping, and the experience was unparalleled to any I've had in the scope of reading thus far. *Side note, Michael C. Hall was the most excellent narrator for this. What likely was a 4 star read initially became a 5 star with no second thought. If you haven't experienced this version I cannot recommend it highly enough.*

Rather than a gory, blood and guts type of horror, this is a slow burning, queasy unease that explodes in the final chapters. The suspense nearly did kill me; by the final 25% I found myself wringing my hands and grinding my teeth, preparing myself for the inevitable that I knew was coming, deep down, ever since the beginning. I don't think I could have fully appreciated what King intended to accomplish with this novel if I'd read it before having children of my own. That's not to say that people without kids won't appreciate this as highly, just as statement in my own personal journey. Only King can accomplish so much horror with so little bloodshed.

I finished this days ago but have held off on reviewing until now because I feel like I'm still processing and I can't stop thinking about everything that occurred to this family. I had spent so much time prior to reading this book in preparing myself for the big "things" that I was completely taken aback by how connected I became to the Creed family. This is why the detailed, slow burn; if I didn't care about this family, their neighbors, and the town in general, why would what happens at the end stick with me for the long haul? Oh sure, I would have gasped and guffawed at the disturbing nature of the plot, but I wouldn't have been emotionally invested.

If you've been hiding under my big rock for the past few decades and are just catching up on your Stephen King backlog, like me, I highly recommend picking this up. It's not just about the scares with this one, but the contemplation on how grief can turn any of us into a monster. By far the best audible book I've chosen yet.

Matt says

Every Halloween, I like to do a little season's readings. For most of the year, I generally avoid scary books and movies. Life is scary enough without looking for extra frights. But there's something about the Fall. Once the wind gets sharp, the days get short, and the leaves start to drop, I inevitably find myself within a small window of time in which horror is appealing. This window closes abruptly at midnight on November 1. Before that time, though, I'm relatively open to the idea of being terrified by something other than my student loan debt.

In the past, my choices have bounced between classics (*Dracula*; *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*; *The Haunting of Hill House*) and Stephen King (last year I finally finished *It*). This year, I relied on the water cooler to help me make my pick. As in, I literally asked people at my office's water cooler for ideas. After awhile, people started avoiding the water cooler, but by that time I had enough anecdotal evidence to choose King's *Pet Semetary*.

Before I actually opened the cover, I knew very little about *Pet Semetary*. What I did know kind of bored me. Pets coming back to life? That's not scary. My taxes? Now there's the terror!

Yet *Pet Semetary* is King's choice for his scariest novel. In his Introduction, he claims that when he finished the book, even he thought he had gone too far. He thought it would never be published. I chuckled a bit when I read this. King is the consummate entertainer, so of course he'd tell that story. His Introduction reminded me of a carnival barker. By the end, though, I sort of agreed with him. This pushes up against the boundaries of what most readers are willing to tolerate in their amusements.

At 395 pages (in my paperback edition), this is a relatively thin Stephen King book. I don't think he'd even finished introducing all the characters in *The Stand* in 395 pages. (Of course, King reads incredibly fast, so 400 pages feels like half that). Accordingly, this is one of King's tighter, more efficient stories. There are only a handful of characters, and just a few big set pieces. King only throws a couple punches, but they all land squarely in the groin.

Things kick off with the Creed family (Louis and Rachel, and their two young kids, Eileen and Gage) arriving at their new home in Maine, after relocating from Chicago. Louis is a doctor who has taken a job with the University of Maine. Their new house is a big and beautiful New England colonial. Its only detriment is its location, right next to a busy road well-traveled by recklessly speeding semi trucks.

The Creed's new neighbor is the benignly intrusive Jud Crandall, an old man who steps in to fill the paternal role that Louis missed due to his own father's premature death. It doesn't take long for Jud to show Louis some of their new home's features. Prominent among them is a pet cemetery (the sign reads *Pet Semetary*). We later learn – again through Jud, who is always there, watching, like Wilson from *Home Improvement* – that beyond the pet cemetery is a Micmac burial ground. Jud tells Louis that his childhood dog was killed in the road. Jud buried the dog in the Micmac burial ground and it came back to life like a canine Lazarus. It was good as new, except it was mean as hell and smelled like death. Did I mention that the Creeds also have

a pet?

Pet Sematary is long on setup. It takes its time building to the inevitable consequences of living next to a place that cheats Death. For the first 200 or so pages, not a lot happens, though King generously foreshadows much of what is to follow. At the halfway point, he delivers a shot to the solar plexus with a major twist – followed by two cheap writer’s tricks – all in succession. Starting with this breathless succession, things race straight downhill to the chilling finale.

The twist itself – which hides in plain sight – is King’s crowning achievement. It is not a scene of supernatural horror or apocalyptic fireworks. Instead, it is an immensely powerful evocation of realistic grief that is closer to Agee’s *A Death in the Family* than anything from the master of pop horror. (For the record, I spent a day in a closet nursing a bottle of Fireball after I finished *A Death in the Family*).

More than most authors, Stephen King has always worked at both the textual and subtextual level. He places a premium on his stories, to be sure, but always gives over space to meditate on his themes. At his worst (the simplistic, condescending parable of *The Green Mile*), King wields his motifs with all the subtlety of Jack Nicholson putting an axe into Scatman Crothers. At his best (the portrait of an abusive, alcoholic father in *The Shining*), however, King’s subtext enriches and deepens what might otherwise be a forgettable spook-story.

Pet Sematary is, in some respects, vintage horror. But it worked for me – unpleasantly – on its second level. This is King’s meditation on the enormity of loss and the devastation of grief. All his books are filled with death, but this is the rare book – not just in the King canon, but in general – that deals squarely with dying. It realizes the uncomfortable truth that our own deaths, while frightening, do not come close to the unspeakable prospect of losing the people we love. This reality – and it is very real – is so powerful that it has to be diluted lest the message become unpalatable. That is King’s genius. He is able to riff on ideas of life, death, and the afterlife in the guise of a horror story. His story is almost good enough to keep you from crawling into a corner and curling into the fetal position.

Almost.

It seems like a lot of people first read Stephen King in their late-teens. Maybe a King novel was the first big “adult” book they ever read. I talked this book over with my Two-Person Russian Book Club partner Jamie, who read it in high school. Her memories of *Pet Sematary* were images from her mind’s eye: the spookiness of the Micmac burial ground; the grim story that Rachel tells about her sister Zelda; the bloody and macabre endgame. Her experience of the book was therefore totally different than mine.

With an exception or two, all the King novels I’ve read I read in my 30s. Thus, the BOO! moments don’t make a terribly profound impression on me. It’s the other stuff that gets under my skin. *Pet Sematary*’s evocation of death (view spoiler) is heavy. Horror is generally seen as cathartic, a way to healthily channel our fears. For me, there was no catharsis. It gave me nightmares – not of monsters or ghosts, but of busy roads and the hidden clock that starts ticking away the moment we’re born.

This is all a way of saying that I was psychologically damaged by this book for entirely unexpected reasons.

Pet Sematary might be King’s best novel. As I noted above, it is devastatingly effective on a couple levels. But it is also really well written. King is a natural storyteller. Everything he writes seems to have its own propulsion system. This is sometimes marred by his propensity towards cultural spew. King is a pop cultural maven, and he tends to strew the ephemera of that culture throughout his stories. His novels are oft populated

by characters who think and speak in various sound bites: snatches of musical lyrics; jingles from commercials; one-liners from films.

For whatever reason (probably a forceful editor), that distracting aspect of King's writing is kept to a minimum here. This is a story that is honed like a blade, and shorn of gristle. I'm not going to pretend I don't like the gratuitous digressions of King's big opuses. But the pared down storytelling in *Pet Sematary* adds to its overall impact.

Confronting fear can be incredibly cleansing. That didn't happen for me here. Yet the miserable mood *Pet Sematary* foisted upon me is testament to its qualities. It is a transcendent masterpiece of the horror genre.

Edward Lorn says

Pet Sematary Review (Kinda) I know this review is long, but I have a personal story to tell. Read it if you want to, but the simple fact of the matter is that this book is awesome. If you haven't read it, stop fucking about.

When I was ten years old, my mother and her best friend Andrita took a trip to the local drive-in to catch a showing of *Pet Sematary*. My father was out with his own buddies, so guess who got to tag along? Yup, me. My mother told me to go to sleep in the back seat, and then proceeded to forget all about me. Little E. was very excited by the prospect of watching a real grown-up's film, so Little E. did not follow his mother's orders. Little E. soon regretted his excitement.

Let me reiterate, I was ten. The scariest things I had seen up to that point were the old Universal horror films. But Drac, Wolfie, and that stumbling behemoth Franky didn't hold a candle to Zelda, Rachael Creed's invalid sister (who, interestingly enough, was played by a man in the film). I did fine up until the camera drifted down the hallway of the Goldman house to enter a room wherein Zelda lay on the bed, choking. When that actor rolled over and faced the celluloid, I pissed myself. I'm not ashamed of that fact. Once again, I was only ten. I had been laying curled up in the middle of the back seat of my mother's car, but once I laid eyes on Zelda, I crawled my pee-soaked ass down to the foot well behind the driver's seat. And there I stayed. Every time I tried to close my eyes, I saw that face. I missed the rest of the movie, but Zelda stayed with me. It would be another seven years before I found out *Pet Sematary* was written by Stephen King.

My mother has been a die-hard King fan since she first read *The Stand* the week it was released. But she kept his scariest novels in her room. It, *Pet Sematary*, *'Salem's Lot*, and *The Shining* did not enter what she called The Great Book Closet (which was a walk-in number filled completely with stacks of hardcover horror novels, which I would inherit upon turning 21; she didn't die, she just kinda handed them over) until 1997. I'd read Dolores Claiborne and *Misery*, but had no idea that such terrifying treasures awaited me. When the hidden novels were introduced back into her massive collection of Dean R. Koontz, Peter Straub, John Saul (which is why I have such an affection for that old hack and continue to collect his books to this day), James Herbert, L. Ron Hubbard, and, of course, King, I snatched up the shortest of the four. I was seventeen by this time, but I still wasn't prepared for the story. After I finished the novel, I had mom rent the movie because I didn't think anything could be worse than the book, and I wanted to prove to myself that Zelda really wasn't that scary. Well, I was right. Zelda wasn't nearly as scary as she had been to Little E., but Grossly-Larger E found Gage nightmare inducing. You see, Gage isn't as menacing in the book. He's rather over the top, and cusses like Regan does in *The Exorcist* after being possessed by Honey Boo Boo... I mean Pazuzu. Yeah, after being returned from the dead, he's a murderous little fucker, but, all in all, he's kinda silly. The movie

version is much worse, because it supposes that Gage is still Gage somewhere deep inside. His utterances of "I have something to show you, Mommy" and "No fair," are both sad and terrifying. Oh, and in both the book and the novel - fuck Church. Fuck Church right in its nutless, glowing-eyed corpse. I love cats, but that one can die in a fire.

Another odd difference between the film and the novel is that Jud's wife Norma and the Creed's nanny Missy are kinda smashed together in the movie. The young women and the old one are morphed into a middle-aged housekeeper with arthritis who winds up hanging herself. Never did like that bit. I suppose this is because I really liked Norma, and cry every time I read about her death in the book. The housekeeper in the movie was just there. I had no reason to care about her, so I didn't give a shit whether she lived or died.

I've told you about my experiences with this book when I was ten and seventeen. I read it once again in my twenties, before my daughter was born, and didn't care much for the plodding beginning and thought the rest of it was simply okay. (I know, I was a dumb bastard back then). Now I'm in my thirties and I have two kids. Two kids that closely resemble Ellie and Gage in this book. Needless to say, this reread was a powerful one, and I almost couldn't finish it because of the feelings I experienced. I soldiered on, though, and made it out the other end. If you are a parent, this novel will affect you in some way. It may not be pretty, but it's striking work of fiction that should not be missed.

Finally (yes, this kinda/sorta review is almost over) this is the first King novel in which King didn't drone on and on after the final horrific scene (if you read them chronologically, all of his other novels up until this one are tied up in one way or another). There's no wrap up. No "This is where they are now" mumbo jumbo. It just ends. As it should. It kicks you squarely in the genitals and fucks off. I dig that. I dig that very much.

Notable names:

Haven (The Tommyknockers and The Colorado Kid)

Jerusalem's Lot (Obvious)

Derry (any King fan knows this little town intimately)

In summation: This is the second best Stephen King novel in my opinion. You may disagree, but it's my party and I'll do what I want. The only book in his catalog better than this one is coming up next on my massive reread. But first, it's time for some silliness. BRING ON HARRY POTTER!
