



Dreamcatcher

By Stephen King

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Once upon a time, in the haunted city of Derry (site of the classics "It" and "Insomnia"), four boys stood together and did a brave thing. Certainly a good thing, perhaps even a great thing. Something that changed them in ways they could never begin to understand. Twenty-five years later, the boys are now men with separate lives and separate troubles. But the ties endure. Each hunting season the foursome reunite in the woods of Maine. This year, a stranger stumbles into their camp, disoriented, mumbling something about lights in the sky. His incoherent ravings prove to be dis-turbingly prescient. Before long, these men will be plunged into a horrifying struggle with a creature from another world. Their only chance of survival is locked in their shared past -- and in the Dreamcatcher. Stephen King's first full-length novel since "Bag of Bones" is, more than anything, a story of how men remember, and how they find their courage. Not since "The Stand" has King crafted a story of such astonishing range -- and never before has he contended so frankly with the heart of darkness.

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Dreamcatcher By Stephen King Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #127190 in Books
- Brand: Scribner
- Published on: 2001-03-20
- Released on: 2001-03-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 2.01" h x 6.51" w x 9.56" l, 5.00 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 624 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Stephen King fans, rejoice! The bodysnatching-aliens tale *Dreamcatcher* is his first book in years that slakes our hunger for horror the way he used to. A throwback to *It*, *The Stand*, and *The Tommyknockers*, *Dreamcatcher* is also an interesting new wrinkle in his fiction.

Four boyhood pals in Derry, Maine, get together for a pilgrimage to their favorite deep-woods cabin, Hole in the Wall. The four have been telepathically linked since childhood, thanks to a searing experience involving a Down syndrome neighbor--a human dreamcatcher. They've all got midlife crises: clownish Beav has love problems; the intellectual shrink, Henry, is slowly succumbing to the siren song of suicide; Pete is losing a war with beer; Jonesy has had weird premonitions ever since he got hit by a car.

Then comes worse trouble: an old man named McCarthy (a nod to the star of the 1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*) turns up at Hole in the Wall. His body is erupting with space aliens resembling furry moray eels: their mouths open to reveal nests of hatpin-like teeth. Poor Pete tries to remove one that just bit his ankle: "Blood flew in splattery fans as Pete tried to shake it off, stippling the snow and the sawdusty tarp and the dead woman's parka. Droplets flew into the fire and hissed like fat in a hot skillet."

For all its nicely described mayhem, *Dreamcatcher* is mostly a psychological drama. Typically, body snatchers turn humans into zombies, but these aliens must share their host's mind, fighting for control. Jonesy is especially vulnerable to invasion, thanks to his hospital bed near-death transformation, but he's also great at messing with the alien's head. While his invading alien, Mr. Gray, is distracted by puppeteering Jonesy's body as he's driving an Arctic Cat through a Maine snowstorm, Jonesy constructs a mental warehouse along the lines of *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*. Jonesy physically feels as if he's inside a warehouse, locked behind a door with the alien rattling the doorknob and trying to trick him into letting him in. It's creepy from the alien's view, too. As he infiltrates Jonesy, experiencing sugar buzz, endorphins, and emotions for the first time, Jonesy's influence is seeping into the alien: "A terrible thought occurred to Mr. Gray: what if it was *his* concepts that had no meaning?"

King renders the mental fight marvelously, and telepathy is a handy way to make cutting back and forth between the campers' various alien battlefronts crisp and cinematic. The physical naturalism of the Maine setting is matched by the psychological realism of the interior struggle. Deftly, King incorporates the real-life mental horrors of his own near-fatal accident and dramatizes the way drugs tug at your consciousness. Like the Tommyknockers, the aliens are partly symbols of King's (vanquished) cocaine and alcohol addiction. Mainly, though, they're just plain scary. *Dreamcatcher* is a comeback and an infusion of rich new blood into King's body of work. --*Tim Appelo*

From Publishers Weekly

In an author's note to this novel, the first he's written since his near-fatal accident, King allows that he wrote the first draft of the book by hand. So much for the theory that it's word-processing alone that leads to logorrhea. Yet despite its excessive length, the novel one of the most complex thematically and structurally in King's vast output dazzles and grips, if fitfully. In its suspenseful depiction of an alien invasion, it superficially harkens back to King's early work (e.g., the 1980 novella "The Mist"), but it also features the psychological penetration, word-magic and ripe imagination of his recent stuff (particularly *Bag of Bones*). The action shuttles between present and past, following primarily the tribulations of a band of five males four regular guys from Derry, Maine (setting of King's *It* and *Insomnia*), and their special friend, Duddits, a

Down's child (then man) with telepathic abilities. The first chunk of the text offers a tour de force of terror bound in darkest humor, depicting the arrival at the four guys' remote hunting cabin of a man who's fatally ill because he harbors in his bowels an alien invader. Yet the ferocious needle-toothed "shit-weasel" that escapes from him is only one of three varieties of invader the protagonists, and eventually a black-ops containment force, face: the others are Grays, classic humanoid aliens, and byrus, a parasitical growth that threatens to overtake life on Earth. The presence of the aliens makes humans telepathic, which leads to various inspired plot complications, but also to an occasional, perhaps necessary, vagueness of narration is there anything more difficult to dramatize than mind-to-mind communication? Numerous flashbacks reveal the roots of the connections among the four guys (one of whom is hit by a car and nearly dies), Duddits and even the aliens, while the last part of the book details a race/chase to save the world a chase that goes on and on and that's further marred by the cartoonlike presence of the head of the black ops force, who's as close to a caricature as King has strayed in several novels. The book has flaws, then, and each of them cries "runaway author." Is anyone editing King these days? But, then, who edited, say, *Mahler* at his most excessive? The genius shines through in any case, in the images and conceits that blind with brilliance, in the magnificent architecture, in the wide swaths of flat-out riveting reading and, most of all, in the wellsprings of emotions King taps as he plumbs the ties that bind his characters and, by extension, all of us to one another. (One-day laydown, Mar. 20) Forecast: As King's first book-length fiction since the accident, this novel originally titled *Cancer* will generate particular interest commercially and critically. It may be nominated for awards; it certainly will top the charts. Film rights optioned by Castle Rock.

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From Library Journal

One November afternoon in the Maine woods, four men, friends since childhood, are on their annual hunting trip that has become as much a time for catching up on one another's lives as it is a time for drinking beer and pursuing game. But this congenial respite ends quickly for Pete, Beaver, Henry, and Jonesy when a dazed and disheveled stranger wanders into their campsite. The hours and days that follow are filled with spaceships, evil gray aliens, a toxic parasite called byrus, and a military search-and-destroy mission. Unarguably, these ingredients belong in the well-stocked cupboard of a pulp fiction writer. But when King stirs them into this hair-raising yarn that forces readers to draw their curtains tightly and sleep with the lights on, he serves up a powerful work that examines the interconnections between memory and imagination and studies the influence of friendship on the human condition. Highly recommended. Nancy McNicol, Hagaman Memorial Lib., East Haven, CT

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Barbara Butler:

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Norma Dickerson:

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Jessica Palmer:

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