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By:
Stephen King

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Kemper

You know what's really scary? Getting sick while you're reading the first part of

. Just try running a fever, going through a box of tissues and guzzling the better part of a bottle of NyQuil while Stephen King describes the grisly deaths of almost every one on Earth from a superflu. On top of feeling like crap, you'll be terrified. Bonus!

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After a bio-engineered virus that acts like a revved up cold escapes from a U.S. government lab, it takes only weeks for almost all of humanity to succumb to the disease. A handful of survivors are mysteriously immune and begin having strange dreams, some of which are about a very old woman called Mother Abigail asking them to come see her. More disturbing are nightmares about a mysterious figure named Randall Flagg also known as the Dark Man or the Walkin' Dude.

As they make their way through an America almost entirely devoid of people, the survivors begin to unite and realize that the flu was just the beginning of their problems. While some are drawn to the saintly Mother Abigail in Boulder Colorado who tells them that they have been chosen by God, others have flocked to Flagg in Las Vegas who is determined to annihilate all those who refuse to pledge their allegiance to him.

If King would have just written a book about a world destroyed by plague and a small number of people struggling in the aftermath, it probably would have been a compelling story. What sets this one apart is the supernatural element. Flagg is the embodiment of evil and chaos. He's a mysterious figure who has been giving the wrong people the push needed for them to make things worse for everyone, and he sees the plague as his chance to fulfill his own destiny as a wrecker of humanity.

And on the other side, we have God. Yep, that God. The Big Cheese himself. But this isn't some kindly figure in a white robe with a white beard or George Burns or Morgan Freeman. This is the Old Testament God who demands obedience and worship while usually rewarding his most faithful servants with gruesome deaths.

King calls this a tale of dark Christianity in his forward, and one of the things I love about this book is that it does feel like a Biblical story, complete with contradictions and a moves-in-mysterious-ways

factor. Stories don't get much more epic than this, and King does a great job of depicting the meltdown of the world through the stories of a variety of relateable characters. (Larry Underwood remains among my favorite King creations.)

Carol.

Dear Stephen,

I'm sorry. I just don't like you in that way. I know we've been friends for a long time, but I just never developed those kind of feelings for you, even after eleven hundred pages. I feel like we only moved forward in fits and stops, and we were just never able to sustain a kind of even-handed development of the kind of chills and thrills a person really likes. Shock someone enough times with snot running out of their nose, and it just becomes a little meaningless. And there are only

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I have to confess, I've felt kind of uncomfortable watching you struggle with religion and spirituality. You sparked my interest when you posited that this might be the battle between the age of reason and that of "irrationalism," and the dark man was the last vestige of doomed rationalism. I thought for a few minutes we were headed somewhere really special, but you didn't seem very confident, and the theme fell apart.

I will say there were a few surprises along the way, which I found pleasant. I appreciate you avoiding the obvious character arcs, especially when it comes to redemption. I was glad to meet most of your friends, especially Joe/Leo, Stu and even Kojak. Your military friends bored me out, though, especially Starkey; I don't even get why you like spending any time with those guys. Such a bunch of fossils. I do have to say, I was really impressed with how you must have studied disease modelling and progression--I almost felt like was there.

Sometimes I get the feeling that you don't really see me as a person, just a baby-maker. You even have an extended soliloquy about it, as if I wasn't even here reading your words. It bothers me, because you took the time to develop nuanced male relationships (Larry, Stu, Lloyd), but the women

were about reproducing or were cannon fodder. Since you allowed technology to remain, I'm not going to buy into your lowest most-functional society mentality, no matter how many sociological theories you throw at me. And then there's the elderly black woman as representation of all that's spiritual. Perhaps even Mother Earth? If I'm rolling my eyes, it's because it's another aspect of compartmentalizing women as either maiden, matron or crone, and people of color as closer to God(s)(being savage and all, as you so helpfully illustrate in your "The Circle Closes" afterward). Honestly, it's kind of juvenile, and a little disappointing when I know you are capable of so much more.

It's time for me to move on. I'm sure you'll find someone special eventually, Stephen, because you are such a really great guy. And so unusual, too.

With Three Stars,

Your Friend Always.

Evan

Are 1100 pages enough to stop a bullet? This was the question that came to mind when my roommate asked if I had anything to use as target practice for when we would go shooting. Well, that was not the exact question. More of a theoretical situation, really. Suppose you are being shot at, and you have a paperback copy of the stand in your pocket, and that's where the bullet hit, would Stephen King's really thick novel be enough to stop the bullet and save your life? I was determined to find out.

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Some reading this may be more horrified by the fact that I would be willing to even think of shooting such a beloved book. And I agree, based on seeing it's affect, that shooting a book is a very violent act. Yet I didn't feel any remorse in shooting it. I do admire Stephen King as a writer, though. I read several books of his (before and after reading the Stand) that I did enjoy a great deal, and hope he keeps writing more books. I like King's style, and something tells me that he would be amused to know that I shot his book. But I didn't like the Stand because I felt that it failed to deliver on it's promise of an "apocayptic confrontation between Good and Evil." I was waiting for our heroes to make the stand, which is a very powerful phrase and title for a book. *** vague spoilers follow ***

Well, the heroes stood, and that's pretty much all they did, just in time for the most shameless deus ex machina ending I've ever come across. All the bad guys died in a way that wouldn't have made any difference if the good guys had been there to make their stand or not. I read about three hundred pages of tedious ad hoc committee meetings to get to that? Disappointing. I expected so much more. *** end of vague spoilers ***

But perhaps the book had other virtues. Maybe, just maybe, this 1,168 page book could save someone's life if they were being shot at. Just to make one thing clear: I, in no way, advocate the use of fire arms to maliciously deface intellectual property. I wouldn't have tried this on the Scarlet Letter which is 272 pages and which I equally disliked. I was going to shoot the Stand in the name of Science and public safety.

My roommate and I took it to an outdoor shooting range to test such a possibility. I mounted it up on a dirt berm, and used my roommate's .45 rifle to shoot it. No wimpy guns here, could this book stop a bullet or couldn't it?

Four bullets hit the Stand. Two bullets grazed the side. One went through the "h" in "Stephen" and curved up through the top before reaching page 450. The last bullet hit just below center, making a perfectly shaped O. What took me two months to get through, that bullet blew through in a tiny fraction of second. The bullet exploded out the back, ripping a two inch hole through the back cover, and finally ending in a puff of dirt behind it.

So the answer is no, my friends. 1,168 pages are not enough to save your life from a .45 slug. I wish I could say otherwise. If they had I would have given this book a higher rating.

Delee

M-O-O-N spells spectacular!

I first read THE STAND in the early 80's. It was during the Christmas break- I lived out in the boonies with my family, and after the holiday hoopla was over -I planted myself in my favorite chair and sat there for 4 days devouring every page-(only leaving for bathroom breaks, meals and sleep).

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30+ years later my reading experience was a little different. I read it with my Goodreads friend Lisa- who had the uncut version, while I had the original- I stopped and started as she caught up- there were huge amounts of messages back and forth- on the characters, the differences in editions, who we loved- who we hated, and everything and anything we could think of to discuss. It was a month long read...

...but the one thing both experiences did have in common was- I LOVED IT each time!!

At a remote U.S. Army base, a strain of influenza is accidentally released. Despite a lock down- soldier Charles Campion is able to escape with his wife and child. By the time the military is able to track his whereabouts- Campion has spread the disease around parts of Texas- triggering a pandemic which kills off 99 percent of the population.

The one percent are left in survival mode- spread out over the entire country and plagued by strange dreams about two individuals which eventually draw some to Nebraska and some to Las Vegas.

Hemingford Home, Nebraska- Is the home of Abigail Freemantleâ€™ "Mother Abigail" a 108 year-old woman who receives visions from God. She is the embodiment of good.

Alex is The Romance Fox

I never get tired of reading this book. It's my absolute all time favorite reads. Every once in a while I have to go back and read it again and again....and it's just as good as the first time I read it those many years ago.

The end of the world where humanity takes a stand between good and evil.

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I am a Stephen King fan and whilst I have read most of his books, The Stand has remained my all-time favorite. I read it when it was first published in 1978 and I was really happy when a longer and uncut version came out in 1990 and have since read it many times. It remains an incredible, riveting and unforgettable story. The ultimate post-apocalyptic/horror/fantasy and thought provoking novel.

This is the way the world ends: with a nanosecond of computer error in a Defense Department laboratory and a million casual contacts that form the links in a chain letter of death.

And here is the bleak new world of the day after: a world stripped of its institutions and emptied of 99 percent of its people. A world in which a handful of panicky survivors choose sides -- or are chosen. A world in which good rides on the frail shoulders of the 108-year-old Mother Abigail -- and the worst nightmares of evil are embodied in a man with a lethal smile and unspeakable powers: Randall Flagg, the dark man.

In 1978 Stephen King published "The Stand, the novel that is now considered to be one of his finest works. But as it was first published, "The Stand was incomplete, since more than 150,000 words had been cut from the original manuscript.

Now Stephen King's apocalyptic vision of a world blasted by plague and embroiled in an elemental struggle between good and evil has been restored to its entirety. "The Stand: "The Complete And Uncut Edition includes more than five hundred pages of material previously deleted, along with new material that King added as he reworked the manuscript for a new generation. It gives us new characters and endows familiar ones with new depths. It has a new beginning and a new ending.