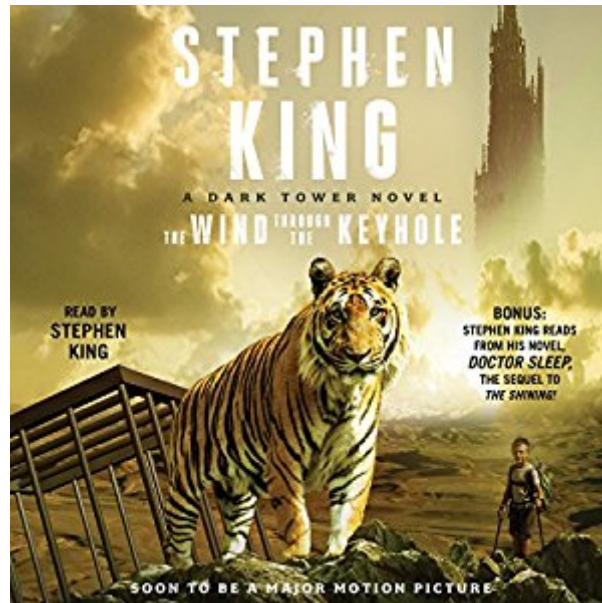


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The Wind Through The Keyhole: The Dark Tower



Synopsis

For those discovering the epic best-selling Dark Tower series for the first time-and for its legions of dedicated fans-here is an immensely satisfying stand-alone novel and perfect introduction to the series. Beginning in 1974, gaining momentum in the 1980s and coming to a thrilling conclusion when the last three novels were published in 2003 and 2004, the Dark Tower epic fantasy saga stands as Stephen King's most beguiling achievement. It has been the basis for a long-running Marvel comic series. Now, with *The Wind Through the Keyhole*, King has returned to the rich landscape of Mid-World. This story within a story within a story finds Roland Deschain, Mid-World's last gunslinger, in his early days during the guilt-ridden year following his mother's death. Sent by his father to investigate evidence of a murderous shape-shifter, a "skin-man", Roland takes charge of Bill Streeter, a brave but terrified boy who is the sole surviving witness to the beast's most recent slaughter. Roland, himself only a teenager, calms the boy by reciting a story from the Book of Eld that his mother used to read to him at bedtime. "A person's never too old for stories," he says to Bill. "Man and boy, girl and woman, we live for them." Sure to captivate the avid fans of the Dark Tower epic, this is an enchanting introduction to Roland's world and the power of Stephen King's storytelling magic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a longtime fan of King, I've not always agreed with every decision he's made, while respecting his right to do whatever he wants with his own writing. For example, there are things I like and don't like about the revised edition of *The Gunslinger*, in which he made several changes to the book's tone and some aspects of the characters' personalities, as well as to much of the dialogue. I appreciate any and all Mid-World fiction King wants to treat us with, but I'm not wild about changes being made to beloved material. That brings us to *The Wind through the Keyhole*, King's latest re-entry into the Dark Tower universe. Noting the five-star rating I've given it, you can safely assume I'm pleased with this addition to the canon. Here's why. When I first heard about this project, I thought it made good sense. King mentioned that after some reflection, he realized there was a gap between *Wizard and Glass* and *Wolves of the Calla*, and has referred to this novel as "Dark Tower 4 1/2." Let's go back in time a bit. Years before King was hit by a van and nearly killed, he always said that *The Dark Tower* would be a series of about seven or eight novels. After the accident, King attacked the story like a man possessed, determined, as he also mentioned several times, not to end up like Geoffrey Chaucer with a hugely ambitious literary work that didn't get finished. He steamrolled through writing three final novels, ensuring that his story's fate wouldn't end up the same as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Now, after several healthy years recovering from the accident and resuming his career, he seems less pressured and more interested in enriching the story. And like King, I also sensed a gap between DT 4 and 5, one that didn't exist between the other novels.

For Stephen King's coterie of Constant Readers, *Gunslinger Roland Deschain* and his ka-tet are more than just characters. For better or for worse, they have become part of us; their stories have become *our* stories. But don't let that scare you off if you've never read the *Dark Tower* books, for above all else, "*The Wind Through the Keyhole*" is about the power of stories ~ how the stories of our childhoods, the stories of our pasts, affect the stories of our lives. The three tales-within-tales King tells in "*The Wind Through the Keyhole*" weave together seamlessly and with bittersweet resonance, each illuminating both Roland's character and the quest to come in small but powerful ways, while being worthy and exciting tales on their own merits. The tales begin amidst the roaring wind of a deadly storm called a starkblast, where the winds remind Roland of the stories his mother told him in his childhood bedroom atop his own tower ~ a place where he was both safe and innocent, where the *Dark Tower* was only a footnote in someone else's story. When he is asked for a story as his ka-tet waits out the storm, Roland obliges with a story from his own life as a young gunslinger, after the events in *Mejis* ~ the story of young Bill Streeter and the *Skin-Changer*, and how Roland comforts this frightened young boy with a story his mother told him in that round tower

room ~ the tale of young Tim Stoutheart, a character you will also come to love very quickly. For those who have not read the Dark Tower series, you probably will not find the same emotional resonance that those who "know" Roland are bound to find, but don't let that frighten you off.

Stephen King begins *The Wind Through the Keyhole* with a nod to Robin Furth and the gang at Marvel Comics. It's a fitting dedication since, with the exception of a narrative framing piece, this really could have (perhaps even should have) been a story arc in the comic series. That's not to say I disliked it, just that it really adds nothing of value or context to the overall Dark Tower saga. It's nice to revisit friends, and immeasurably comforting to fall back into the language of Mid-World (say thankee-sai), but it lacks the epic feel of the rest of the series. There's no advancement of the greater plot and, rather surprisingly, hardly anything in the way of meta-references or pop-culture trivia. It also suffers, of course, from being an after-the-fact addition to an already finished storyline - no matter how fantastic the Starkblast was, there was never any real sense of danger, since we know the characters all live through to the next book. Having said that, it's still Stephen King, it's still *The Dark Tower*, and it's still an enjoyable read - regardless of how it's told. Let's start with the framing narrative of Roland, Jake, Susannah, Eddie, and Oy. It's definitely nice to revisit the ka-tet in the days when it was whole and healthy, and comforting to spend some quality time alongside them. As for the Starkblast, it may have just been a convenient plot device to gather them together long enough for Roland to tell a story, but it's a force of nature worthy of Stephen King. The first story-within-the-story is that of Roland as a youth, sent by his father to investigate the murderous rampage of a skin-man.

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