

# STEPHEN KING

## 11/22/63

A NOVEL

U. S. Weather  
Cloudy, with  
tonight  
Temp. range 52-

WORLD EXTRA

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 smile at the crowds lining 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 12:30 P.M. and pronounced dead at 1:00 P.M. Central Standard Time at Parkland Hospital where he was taken. Mr. Kennedy died of severe brain trauma caused by a bullet fired from the assassin's rifle. He was 45 years old.

Vice President Lyndon Baines 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 assassin, 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 approached him. Mr. Oswald was apprehended after a second altercation with a policeman in a nearby theater. A former Marine, Lee Harvey Oswald once defected to the Soviet Union. He has since been active in the F&R Play for Cuba Committee.

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**ON NOVEMBER 22, 1963, THREE SHOTS  
RANG OUT IN DALLAS, PRESIDENT  
KENNEDY DIED, AND THE WORLD CHANGED.  
WHAT IF YOU COULD CHANGE IT BACK?**

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In this brilliantly conceived tour de force, Stephen King—who has absorbed the social, political, and popular culture of his generation more imaginatively and thoroughly than any other writer—takes readers on an incredible journey into the past and the possibility of altering it.

It begins with Jake Epping, a thirty-five-year-old English teacher in Lisbon Falls, Maine, who makes extra money teaching GED classes. He asks his students to write about an event that changed their lives, and one essay blows him away—a gruesome, harrowing story about the night more than fifty years ago when Harry Dunning's father came home and killed his mother, his sister, and his brother with a sledgehammer.

Reading the essay is a watershed moment for Jake, his life—like Harry's, like America's in 1963—turning on a dime. Not much later his friend Al, who owns the local diner, divulges a secret: his storeroom is a portal to the past, a particular day in 1958. And Al enlists Jake to take over the mission that has become his obsession—to prevent the Kennedy assassination.

So begins Jake's new life as George Amberson, in a different world of Ike and JFK and Elvis, of big American cars and sock hops and cigarette smoke everywhere. From the dank little city of Derry, Maine (where there's Dunning business to conduct), to the warmhearted small town of Jodie, Texas, where Jake falls dangerously in love, every turn is leading eventually, of course, to a troubled loner named Lee Harvey Oswald and to Dallas, where the past becomes heart-stoppingly suspenseful, and where history might not be history anymore.

Time-travel has never been so believable. Or so terrifying.

PRAISE FOR **UNDER THE DOME**

**“PROPULSIVELY INTRIGUING . . .  
STAGGERINGLY ADDICTIVE.”**

**—USA TODAY**

**“A MASTER STORYTELLER HAVING  
A WHOLE LOT OF FUN.”**

**—LOS ANGELES TIMES**

**“DAUNTING . . .  
HARROWING . . . POWERFUL.”**

**—THE WASHINGTON POST**

**“WILDLY ENTERTAINING.”**

**—PEOPLE**



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**STEPHEN KING** is the author of more than fifty books, all of them worldwide bestsellers. Among his most recent are *Full Dark*, *No Stars*, *Blockade Billy*, *Under the Dome*, *Just After Sunset*; the Dark Tower novels; *Cell*; *From a Buick 8*; *Everything's Eventual*; *Hearts in Atlantis*; *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*; *Lisey's Story*; and *Bag of Bones*. His acclaimed nonfiction book *On Writing* was recently re-released in a tenth-anniversary edition. King was the recipient of the 2003 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, and in 2007 he was inducted as a Grand Master of the Mystery Writers of America. He lives in Maine with his wife, novelist Tabitha King.

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**EVENING EDITION**

U. S. Weather Bureau Report (Page D5) forecast:  
Cloudy, windy, chance of showers today and  
tonight. Cold tomorrow.  
Temp range: 52-48; yesterday: 60-52

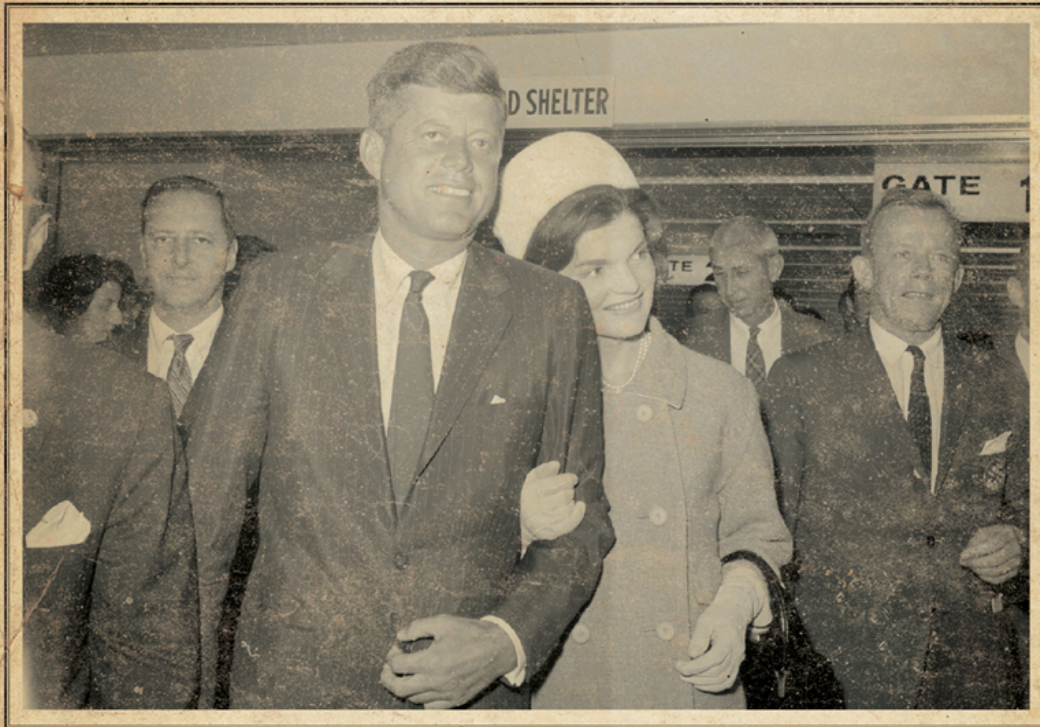
# Daily News EXTRA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1963

TEN CENTS

## JFK ESCAPES ASSASSINATION, FIRST LADY ALSO OK!

Panic Strikes  
During Drive  
Through Dallas  
STORY PAGE 3



John Kennedy walking with wife, Jacqueline, on November 22, 1963.

## AMERICANS BREATHE SIGH OF RELIEF



by PHILIP SCUDDER

DALLAS (Special) Rarely has this city seen a day in which emotions have swung so wildly. From the joy of Kennedy supporters and admirers of the First Lady when Air Force One landed at Love Field, to the cacophonous approval of the thousands who lined Main Street to see the motorcade pass, to the confusion, panic, and terror when the shots rang out, and finally to the unbridled joy that

audible prayer, some of them weeping. "When I think of what might have happened," said City Councilman Louis Sweetwater, "my blood runs cold. If Kennedy had been wounded—or, God forbid, killed—on the streets of Dallas, this city would have borne a black mark of shame forever."

As the sun went down, at the intersection of Houston and Elm



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**S T E P H E N  
K I N G**

**11/22/63**

**A NOVEL**

**SCRIBNER**

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For Zelda

Hey, honey, welcome to the party.

It is virtually not assimilable to our reason that a small lonely man felled a giant in the midst of his limousines, his legions, his throng, and his security. If such a nonentity destroyed the leader of the most powerful nation on earth, then a world of disproportion engulfs us, and we live in a universe that is absurd.

—Norman Mailer

If there is love, smallpox scars are as pretty as dimples.

—Japanese proverb

Dancing is life.

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11/22/63





I have never been what you'd call a crying man.

My ex-wife said that my “nonexistent emotional gradient” was the main reason she was leaving me (as if the guy she met in her AA meetings was beside the point). Christy said she supposed she could forgive me not crying at her father's funeral; I had only known him for six years and couldn't understand what a wonderful, giving man he had been (a Mustang convertible as a high school graduation present, for instance). But then, when I didn't cry at my own parents' funerals—they died just two years apart, Dad of stomach cancer and Mom of a thunderclap heart attack while walking on a Florida beach—she began to understand the nonexistent gradient thing. I was “unable to feel my feelings,” in AA-speak.

“I have *never* seen you shed tears,” she said, speaking in the flat tones people use when they are expressing the absolute final deal-breaker in a relationship. “Even when you told me I had to go to rehab or you were leaving.” This conversation happened about six weeks before she packed her things, drove them across town, and moved in with Mel Thompson. “Boy meets girl on the AA campus”—that's another saying they have in those meetings.

I didn't cry when I saw her off. I didn't cry when I went back inside the little house with the great big mortgage, either. The house where no baby had come, or now ever would. I just lay down on the bed that now belonged to me alone, and put my arm over my eyes, and mourned.

Tearlessly.

But I'm not emotionally blocked. Christy was wrong about that. One day when I was nine, my mother met me at the door when I came home from school. She told me my collie, Rags, had been struck and killed by a truck that hadn't even bothered to stop. I didn't cry when we buried him, although my dad told me nobody would think less of me if I did, but I cried when she told me. Partly because it was my first experience of death; mostly because it had been my responsibility to make sure he was safely penned up in our backyard.

And I cried when Mom's doctor called me and told me what had happened that day on the beach. “I'm sorry, but there was no chance,” he said. “Sometimes it's very sudden, and doctors tend to see that as a blessing.”

Christy wasn't there—she had to stay late at school that day and meet with a mother who had questions about her son's last report card—but I

cried, all right. I went into our little laundry room and took a dirty sheet out of the basket and cried into that. Not for long, but the tears came. I could have told her about them later, but I didn't see the point, partly because she would have thought I was pity-fishing (that's not an AA term, but maybe it should be), and partly because I don't think the ability to bust out bawling pretty much on cue should be a requirement for successful marriage.

I never saw my dad cry at all, now that I think about it; at his most emotional, he might fetch a heavy sigh or grunt out a few reluctant chuckles—no breast-beating or belly-laughs for William Epping. He was the strong silent type, and for the most part, my mother was the same. So maybe the not-crying-easily thing is genetic. But blocked? Unable to feel my feelings? No, I have never been those things.

Other than when I got the news about Mom, I can only remember one other time when I cried as an adult, and that was when I read the story of the janitor's father. I was sitting alone in the teachers' room at Lisbon High School, working my way through a stack of themes that my Adult English class had written. Down the hall I could hear the thud of basketballs, the blare of the time-out horn, and the shouts of the crowd as the sports-beasts fought: Lisbon Greyhounds versus Jay Tigers.

Who can know when life hangs in the balance, or why?

The subject I'd assigned was "The Day That Changed My Life." Most of the responses were heartfelt but awful: sentimental tales of a kindly aunt who'd taken in a pregnant teenager, an Army buddy who had demonstrated the true meaning of bravery, a chance meeting with a celebrity (*Jeopardy!* host Alex Trebek, I think it was, but maybe it was Karl Malden). The teachers among you who have picked up an extra three or four thousand a year by taking on a class of adults studying for their General Equivalency Diploma will know what a dispiriting job reading such themes can be. The grading process hardly figures into it, or at least it didn't for me; I passed everybody, because I never had an adult student who did less than try his or her ass off. If you turned in a paper with writing on it, you were guaranteed a hook from Jake Epping of the LHS English Department, and if the writing was organized into actual paragraphs, you got at least a B-minus.

What made the job hard was that the red pen became my primary teaching tool instead of my mouth, and I practically wore it out. What made the job dispiriting was that you knew that very little of that red-pen teaching was apt to stick; if you reach the age of twenty-five or thirty without

knowing how to spell (*totally*, not *todilly*), or capitalize in the proper places (*White House*, not *white-house*), or write a sentence containing both a noun *and* a verb, you're probably never going to know. Yet we soldier on, gamely circling the misused word in sentences like *My husband was to quick to judge me* or crossing out *swum* and replacing it with *swam* in the sentence *I swum out to the float often after that*.

It was such hopeless, trudging work I was doing that night, while not far away another high school basketball game wound down toward another final buzzer, world without end, amen. It was not long after Christy got out of rehab, and I suppose if I was thinking anything, it was to hope that I'd come home and find her sober (which I did; she's held onto her sobriety better than she held onto her husband). I remember I had a little headache and was rubbing my temples the way you do when you're trying to keep a little nagger from turning into a big thumper. I remember thinking, *Three more of these, just three, and I can get out of here. I can go home, fix myself a big cup of instant cocoa, and dive into the new John Irving novel without these sincere but poorly made things hanging over my head*.

There were no violins or warning bells when I pulled the janitor's theme off the top of the stack and set it before me, no sense that my little life was about to change. But we never know, do we? Life turns on a dime.

He had written in cheap ballpoint ink that had blotted the five pages in many places. His handwriting was a looping but legible scrawl, and he must have been bearing down hard, because the words were actually engraved into the cheap notebook pages; if I'd closed my eyes and run my fingertips over the backs of those torn-out sheets, it would have been like reading Braille. There was a little squiggle, like a flourish, at the end of every lower-case *y*. I remember that with particular clarity.

I remember how his theme started, too. I remember it word for word.

*It wasnt a day but a night. The night that change my life was the night my father murdirt my mother and two brothers and hurt me bad. He hurt my sister too, so bad she went into a comah. In three years she died without waking up. Her name was Ellen and I loved her very much. She love to pick flouers and put them in vayses.*

Halfway down the first page, my eyes began to sting and I put my trusty red pen down. It was when I got to the part about him crawling under the bed with the blood running in his eyes (*it also run down my throat and tasted horrible*) that I began to cry—Christy would have been so proud. I

read all the way to the end without making a single mark, wiping my eyes so the tears wouldn't fall on the pages that had obviously cost him so much effort. Had I thought he was slower than the rest, maybe only half a step above what used to be called "educable retarded"? Well, by God, there was a reason for that, wasn't there? And a reason for the limp, too. It was a miracle that he was alive at all. But he was. A nice man who always had a smile and never raised his voice to the kids. A nice man who had been through hell and was working—humbly and hopefully, as most of them do—to get a high school diploma. Although he would be a janitor for the rest of his life, just a guy in green or brown khakis, either pushing a broom or scraping gum up off the floor with the putty knife he always kept in his back pocket. Maybe once he could have been something different, but one night his life turned on a dime and now he was just a guy in Carhartts that the kids called Hoptoad Harry because of the way he walked.

So I cried. Those were real tears, the kind that come from deep inside. Down the hall, I could hear the Lisbon band strike up their victory song—so the home team had won, and good for them. Later, perhaps, Harry and a couple of his colleagues would roll up the bleachers and sweep away the crap that had been dropped beneath them.

I stroked a big red A on top of his paper. Looked at it for a moment or two, then added a big red +. Because it was good, and because his pain had evoked an emotional reaction in me, his reader. And isn't that what A+ writing is supposed to do? Evoke a response?

As for me, I only wish the former Christy Epping had been correct. I wish I had been emotionally blocked, after all. Because everything that followed—every terrible thing—flowed from those tears.

**PART 1**

**WATERSHED MOMENT**



# CHAPTER 1

## 1

Harry Dunning graduated with flying colors. I went to the little GED ceremony in the LHS gym, at his invitation. He really had no one else, and I was happy to do it.

After the benediction (spoken by Father Bandy, who rarely missed an LHS function), I made my way through the milling friends and relatives to where Harry was standing alone in his billowy black gown, holding his diploma in one hand and his rented mortarboard in the other. I took his hat so I could shake his hand. He grinned, exposing a set of teeth with many gaps and several leaners. But a sunny and engaging grin, for all that.

“Thanks for coming, Mr. Epping. Thanks so much.”

“It was my pleasure. And you can call me Jake. It’s a little perk I accord to students who are old enough to be my father.”

He looked puzzled for a minute, then laughed. “I guess I am, ain’t I? Sheesh!” I laughed, too. Lots of people were laughing all around us. And there were tears, of course. What’s hard for me comes easily to a great many people.

“And that A-plus! Sheesh! I never got an A-plus in my whole life! Never expected one, either!”

“You deserved it, Harry. So what’s the first thing you’re going to do as a high school graduate?”

His smile dimmed for a second—this was a prospect he hadn’t considered. “I guess I’ll go back home. I got a little house I rent on Goddard Street, you know.” He raised the diploma, holding it carefully by the fingertips, as if the ink might smear. “I’ll frame this and hang it on the wall. Then I guess I’ll pour myself a glass of wine and sit on the couch and just admire it until bedtime.”

“Sounds like a plan,” I said, “but would you like to have a burger and some fries with me first? We could go down to Al’s.”

I expected a wince at that, but of course I was judging Harry by my colleagues. Not to mention most of the kids we taught; they avoided Al’s like the plague and tended to patronize either the Dairy Queen across from

the school or the Hi-Hat out on 196, near where the old Lisbon Drive-In used to be.

“That’d be great, Mr. Epping. Thanks!”

“Jake, remember?”

“Jake, you bet.”

So I took Harry to Al’s, where I was the only faculty regular, and although he actually had a waitress that summer, Al served us himself. As usual, a cigarette (illegal in public eating establishments, but that never stopped Al) smoldered in one corner of his mouth and the eye on that side squinted against the smoke. When he saw the folded-up graduation robe and realized what the occasion was, he insisted on picking up the check (what check there was; the meals at Al’s were always remarkably cheap, which had given rise to rumors about the fate of certain stray animals in the vicinity). He also took a picture of us, which he later hung on what he called the Town Wall of Celebrity. Other “celebrities” represented included the late Albert Dunton, founder of Dunton Jewelry; Earl Higgins, a former LHS principal; John Crafts, founder of John Crafts Auto Sales; and, of course, Father Bandy of St. Cyril’s. (The Father was paired with Pope John XXIII—the latter not local, but revered by Al Templeton, who called himself “a good Catlick.”) The picture Al took that day showed Harry Dunning with a big smile on his face. I was standing next to him, and we were both holding his diploma. His tie was pulled slightly askew. I remember that because it made me think of those little squiggles he put on the ends of his lower-case y’s. I remember it all. I remember it very well.

## 2

Two years later, on the last day of the school year, I was sitting in that very same teachers’ room and reading my way through a batch of final essays my American Poetry honors seminar had written. The kids themselves had already left, turned loose for another summer, and soon I would do the same. But for the time being I was happy enough where I was, enjoying the unaccustomed quiet. I thought I might even clean out the snack cupboard before I left. *Someone* ought to do it, I thought.

Earlier that day, Harry Dunning had limped up to me after homeroom period (which had been particularly screechy, as all homerooms and study halls tend to be on the last day of school) and offered me his hand.

“I just want to thank you for everything,” he said.

I grinned. “You already did that, as I remember.”

“Yeah, but this is my last day. I’m retiring. So I wanted to make sure and thank you again.”

As I shook his hand, a kid cruising by—no more than a sophomore, judging by the fresh crop of pimples and the serio-comic straggle on his chin that aspired to goateehood—muttered, “Hoptoad Harry, hoppin down the av-a-new.”

I grabbed for him, my intention to make him apologize, but Harry stopped me. His smile was easy and unoffended. “Nah, don’t bother. I’m used to it. They’re just kids.”

“That’s right,” I said. “And it’s our job to teach them.”

“I know, and you’re good at it. But it’s not my job to be anybody’s whatchacallit—teachable moment. Especially not today. I hope you’ll take care of yourself, Mr. Epping.” He might be old enough to be my father, but *Jake* was apparently always going to be beyond him.

“You too, Harry.”

“I’ll never forget that A-plus. I framed that, too. Got it right up beside my diploma.”

“Good for you.”

And it was. It was all good. His essay had been primitive art, but every bit as powerful and true as any painting by Grandma Moses. It was certainly better than the stuff I was currently reading. The spelling in the honors essays was mostly correct, and the diction was clear (although my cautious college-bound don’t-take-a-chancers had an irritating tendency to fall back on the passive voice), but the writing was pallid. Boring. My honors kids were juniors—Mac Steadman, the department head, awarded the seniors to himself—but they wrote like little old men and little old ladies, all purse-mouthed and *ooo, don’t slip on that icy patch, Mildred*. In spite of his grammatical lapses and painstaking cursive, Harry Dunning had written like a hero. On one occasion, at least.

As I was musing on the difference between offensive and defensive writing, the intercom on the wall cleared its throat. “Is Mr. Epping in the west wing teachers’ room? You by any chance still there, Jake?”

I got up, thumbed the button, and said: “Still here, Gloria. For my sins. Can I help you?”



“You have a phone call. Guy named Al Templeton? I can transfer it, if you want. Or I can tell him you left for the day.”

Al Templeton, owner and operator of Al’s Diner, where all LHS faculty save for yours truly refused to go. Even my esteemed department head—who tried to talk like a Cambridge don and was approaching retirement age himself—had been known to refer to the specialty of the house as Al’s Famous Catburger instead of Al’s Famous Fatburger.

*Well of course it’s not really cat, people would say, or probably not cat, but it can’t be beef, not at a dollar-nineteen.*

“Jake? Did you fall asleep on me?”

“Nope, wide awake.” Also curious as to why Al would call me at school. Why he’d call me at all, for that matter. Ours had always been strictly a cook-and-client relationship. I appreciated his chow, and he appreciated my patronage. “Go on and put him through.”

“Why are you still here, anyway?”

“I’m flagellating myself.”

“Ooo!” Gloria said, and I could imagine her fluttering her long lashes. “I love it when you talk dirty. Hold on and wait for the ringy-dingy.”

She clicked off. The extension rang and I picked it up.

“Jake? You on there, buddy?”

At first I thought Gloria must have gotten the name wrong. That voice couldn’t belong to Al. Not even the world’s worst cold could have produced such a croak.

“Who is this?”

“Al Templeton, didn’t she tellya? Christ, that hold music really sucks. Whatever happened to Connie Francis?” He began to ratchet coughs loud enough to make me hold the phone away from my ear a little.

“You sound like you got the flu.”

He laughed. He also kept coughing. The combination was fairly gruesome. “I got something, all right.”

“It must have hit you fast.” I had been in just yesterday, to grab an early supper. A Fatburger, fries, and a strawberry milkshake. I believe it’s important for a guy living on his own to hit all the major food groups.

“You could say that. Or you could say it took awhile. Either one would be right.”

I didn’t know how to respond to that. I’d had a lot of conversations with Al in the six or seven years I’d been going to the diner, and he could be odd