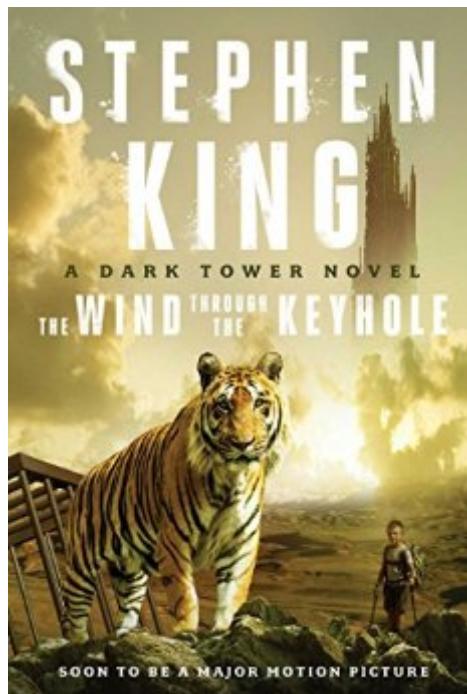


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The Wind Through The Keyhole: The Dark Tower IV-1/2



Synopsis

Soon to be a major motion picture starring Matthew McConaughey and Idris Elba In The Wind Through the Keyhole, Stephen King returns to the rich landscape of Mid-World, the spectacular territory of the Dark Tower fantasy saga that stands as his most beguiling achievement. Roland Deschain and his ka-tet—“Jake, Susannah, Eddie, and Oy, the billy-bumblers”—encounter a ferocious storm just after crossing the River Whye on their way to the Outer Baronies. As they shelter from the howling gale, Roland tells his friends not just one strange story but two...and in so doing, casts new light on his own troubled past. In his early days as a gunslinger, in the guilt-ridden year following his mother’s death, Roland is sent by his father to investigate evidence of a murderous shape-shifter, a cœskin-man • preying upon the population around Debaria. Roland takes charge of Bill Streeter, the brave but terrified boy who is the sole surviving witness to the beast’s most recent slaughter. Only a teenager himself, Roland calms the boy and prepares him for the following day’s trials by reciting a story from the Magic Tales of the Eld that his mother often read to him at bedtime. “A person’s never too old for stories,” • Roland says to Bill. “Man and boy, girl and woman, never too old. We live for them.” • And indeed, the tale that Roland unfolds, the legend of Tim Stoutheart, is a timeless treasure for all ages, a story that lives for us. King began the Dark Tower series in 1974; it gained momentum in the 1980s; and he brought it to a thrilling conclusion when the last three novels were published in 2003 and 2004. The Wind Through the Keyhole is sure to fascinate avid fans of the Dark Tower epic. But this novel also stands on its own for all readers, an enchanting and haunting journey to Roland’s world and testimony to the power of Stephen King’s storytelling magic.

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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 ½." 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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