



This Week's Pick: GWENDY'S BUTTON BOX

BY STEPHEN KING AND RICHARD CHIZMAR

The small town of Castle Rock, Maine, has witnessed some very strange events and unusual visitors over the years, but there is one story that has never been told...until now.

There are three ways up to Castle View from the town of Castle Rock: Route 117, Pleasant Road, and the Suicide Stairs. Every day in the summer of 1974 twelve-year-old Gwendy Peterson has taken the stairs, which are held by strong (if time-rusted) iron bolts and zig-zag up the cliffside. At the top of the Stairs, Gwendy catches her breath and listens to the shouts of the kids on the nearby playground. One day, a stranger calls to Gwendy: "Hey girl. Come on over here for a bit. We ought to palaver, you and me". On the bench in the shade sits a man in a black suit coat, and a white shirt unbuttoned at the top. On his head is a small neat black hat. The time will come when Gwendy has nightmares about that hat...

Given the locale and overall tone of the book, it would be tempting to regard this as just another Stephen King story, but it isn't. It is a collaboration, and a seamless one at that. Chizmar, whose best short fiction was recently collected in "A Long December," is an excellent writer with a clear affinity for King's brand of storytelling, which includes a clear, idiomatic prose style and a flair for creating instantly recognizable characters. Together, he and King have created what is both a superior addition to the never-quite-finished saga of Castle Rock and a cautionary tale directed toward a world that grows crazier – and more incomprehensible — with every passing day.

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