



# Hearts in Atlantis

*Stephen King*

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## **Hearts in Atlantis** Stephen King

Five interconnected, sequential narratives, set in the years from 1960 to 1999. Each story is deeply rooted in the sixties, and each is haunted by the Vietnam War.

Stephen King, whose first novel, *Carrie*, was published in 1974, the year before the last U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam, is the first hugely popular writer of the TV generation. Images from that war -- and the protests against it -- had flooded America's living rooms for a decade. *Hearts in Atlantis*, King's newest fiction, is composed of five interconnected, sequential narratives, set in the years from 1960 to 1999. Each story is deeply rooted in the sixties, and each is haunted by the Vietnam War.

In Part One, "Low Men in Yellow Coats," eleven-year-old Bobby Garfield discovers a world of predatory malice in his own neighborhood. He also discovers that adults are sometimes not rescuers but at the heart of the terror.

In the title story, a bunch of college kids get hooked on a card game, discover the possibility of protest...and confront their own collective heart of darkness, where laughter may be no more than the thinly disguised cry of the beast.

In "Blind Willie" and "Why We're in Vietnam," two men who grew up with Bobby in suburban Connecticut try to fill the emptiness of the post-Vietnam era in an America which sometimes seems as hollow -- and as haunted -- as their own lives.

And in "Heavenly Shades of Night Are Falling," this remarkable book's denouement, Bobby returns to his hometown where one final secret, the hope of redemption, and his heart's desire may await him.

Full of danger, full of suspense, most of all full of heart, Stephen King's new book will take some readers to a place they have never been...and others to a place they have never been able to completely leave.

## **Hearts in Atlantis Details**

Date : Published 2001 by New English Library (first published September 14th 1999)

ISBN : 9780340818671

Author : Stephen King

Format : Paperback 640 pages

Genre : Horror, Fiction, Fantasy

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# **From Reader Review Hearts in Atlantis for online ebook**

## **Ashley Daviau says**

I definitely enjoyed this collection of stories more on my second read through but Hearts in Atlantis still remains on the bottom of the list of King story collections for me. I just don't find myself wowed by these like I normally do with his work and found them a bit too slow paced.

But I don't want it to sound like I hated this collection because I really didn't! I was able to appreciate these stories much more this time around because when I first read Hearts in Atlantis, I hadn't read the Dark Tower series yet and so naturally I didn't notice any of the connectons. But this time around I definitely did and I loved the feeling of all the dots connecting!

One thing I particularly enjoyed about this collection was how each story had a common thread and we got to see the same characters throughout, just at different ages and in different situations. I really loved that aspect and it partially made up for the slow pace.

I also really enjoyed the characters in Hearts in Atlantis, they were each so well developed and just so captivating! My favourite though would definitely have to be Ted Brautigan, I just love the relationship he and Bobby have!

So you see I actually really enjoyed this book! I just thought it lacked a bit of the spark and excitement that King's work normally has. Still a really great collection of stories though, just not my fave!

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## **Wayne Barrett says**

This is nowhere near being one of Kings scariest books, but it may possibly be one of the deepest novels he has written.

Being a child of the 60's, having grown up in the Vietnam era, this book really hit home for me. But it wasn't just because of the war itself. This was a look into the hearts of man (and woman).

Interestingly enough, I started out in the first story being entertained in the fantasy of a tale that not only took me back to a time of my childhood but was also connected to King's Dark Tower series, a series I consider a masterpiece. So yeah, I was having a good time... but by the time I reached the fifth and last story of the book I was angry; angry at war, angry at the man, angry at the government, angry at the system, angry at the atrocities of life and angry at the cruelty of my fellow human beings.

King's mastery in weaving a tale really begins when he introduces William Golding's Lord of the Flies as the book that Ted gives young Bobby to read. Throughout the five stories we see the the same theme take place in the characters that Golding gave us in LOTF. We have our young boys, stranded on an island to fend for themselves, slowly being overcome by their instincts, wildlings, feral. Chasing the pig, wanting to stick the spear up its ass, and finally when that doesn't quite satiate the hunger of the beast, they turn on one another.

And so now, even though the boys (and girls) of King's story have all moved on...aged, they still carry the

scars, the nightmares. Mamasan was murdered out there in the bush many years earlier but she still sits in their presence, forever staring with her accusing dead eyes. Eyes that last stared at them when they ran her through with a bayonet. Kill the pig...stick the spear in its ass!

I can see where some might consider this a platform for King's politics, and even I have to restrain myself from using this review as a venting point. But I did say in the beginning that this book was deep. The 60's are long gone, Vietnam is history, but here we are again. When this was written the attacks on 9/11 had yet to happen. King delved deeper into just the moment. He shows us the beast.

If you think vampires, ghosts and rabid dogs are bad, watch what happens when we put the controls of video games in the hands of our children, sit them down in front of televisions where they get to watch Hollywoods glorified war movies and then hand them M-16's and tell them to go and fight. Pretty soon Mamasan will be sitting in their livingrooms with dead eyes while they scratch at the scars on their bodies and the scars on their minds. Now, that will be one hell of a horror story.

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### **Amar says**

Itavo vrijeme sam pisao da je ovo zbirka novela , ali sad , nakon što sam završio ovu predivnu knjigu , mijenjam mišljenje i kažem da je ovo roman. Roman koji genijalno funkcioniše sa tim novelama i koji je zaokružuju kao cjelinu .

Ne znam sta bi mogao napisati , da bi bilo dostojno ovom djelu .

Prva priča - Genijalna !

Druga - pa onako , ali paše u cjelokupnu priču.

Treća - Genijalna!

Četvrta - Genijalna ! ( sa odličnom scenom jedne vizije . Jest da je ni sam nisam najbolje razumio , ali odlično djeluje)

Peta - Zaokružuje na Kingovski način .

Šteta je stvarno što će ovu knjigu cijeniti samo fanovi Stephena Kinga. Velika je šteta da ovaj roman nije više cijenjen u svjetskoj literaturi .

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### **Daniel says**

No one has ever written the joys of boyhood better than Stephen King. That's not what people talk about when they talk about him, but it's true. It's a subject that needs to be written about entirely without pretense and absolutely free of language too large for ball games and playing in the mud. Between this one, The Body, and It, the good reader will find himself transported into the actual moments of young pleasure, before girls take over and ruin the perfect freedom of true youth. Not that girls are bad, of course, just that something breaks at the moment when boys become aware of them and it never comes all the way back. Often, I wonder about how much of a man's life is spent trying to dance between the moment before and the excitement that comes after the discovery of girls. This small gap is the space that King covers in several of his books and all of them are delightful and thrilling in the way that only a carnival can be to a young boy. Moments of the supernatural and plot aside, it's this subject that draws me to the book.

For reasons I can't fully explain, I've read the first 200 pages of this one half a dozen times over the years but never finished it. I've purchased the audiobook twice (by accident) and bought the paperback two or three times (lost copies). I've decided to finish it this time because it's been hanging there, a desire that's been unfulfilled and dangling over me for years. Somehow, I need to be free of it, or at least have passed the experience into the history of my reading pleasures. So here I go.

William Hurt was a good choice for the audiobook. There's something about his voice that's trance-like and lulls you right in. I'm glad I've decided to finally and fully experience the book in just this way.

King himself read the the next two stories in the book. Some reviewers suggested that the other stories were boring, but that wasn't my feel at all. I quite enjoyed them, especially the title story. I can see, however, that someone whose only reason for reading King is action/horror excitement may not find much of value in a book that's mostly composed of nostalgia and a look back at the turning points that shaped us as people. It's not exactly the stuff of horror lore. If you're that sort, you might want to shuffle on and find another book because this one is far too delicate and filled with entirely too much longing for the adventure seeking reader.

Hurt returned for the final story. By now, the crossover between all the stories and characters was wrapped up tight and everywhere. It seemed almost like a novel with shifting perspectives over the years. Depending on your point of view, the interconnections could come across as overly-coincidental or just a tidy way of letting us know where things ended up with various people we'd come to know in their youth. I prefer the latter. Actually, I loved touching in on people years later, finding out how they'd turned out without the direct story of it ever really being the point of the story itself.

The plain fact is that this book got to me far more than it should have. It was a beautiful novel shaped like short stories and made of youth lost and memory unwound. Maybe it took me so long to actually read it because I needed the years between to lose more and more of my past into the old fireplace of time. Maybe I needed to remember only enough to know how much I'd lost and how beautiful so much of it had been. Maybe it's a book that can only be understood when your life has made the same sorts of strange turns and you look back, wondering, lost, wistful.

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## AMEERA says

My favorite ??'

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## Franco Santos says

4.5 estrellas.

**Corazones en la Atlántida es esa clase de obra que cuando la terminás, resultás una persona diferente a la que eras cuando la empezaste.**

*Los corazones pueden romperse. Si, los corazones pueden romperse. A veces pienso que sería mejor si muriéramos cuando lo hacen, pero no lo hacemos.*

**Este es uno de los libros de King que más me gustaron.** Las cinco historias presentes en esta novela me

parecieron grandiosas. Todas tocan temas delicados, terroríficos y hasta tienen una alta dosis de drama. Algunas se pueden tornar un poco pesadas en ocasiones, sin embargo, King me cautivó con lo que transmite cada una. **Cada una es especial.** Y me pareció brillante que todas se relacionen, todas comparten algo. Los cinco relatos componen una cadena que tenés que seguir para saber hasta dónde te llevará.

*Llega a un libro como llegarías a una tierra inexplorada. Sin un mapa. Explóralo, y dibuja tu propio mapa... Un libro es como un inflador. No te da nada si no le das primero a él.*

**Magnífico este trabajo de King.**

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## **Becky says**

So... This is not one of my favorite King books. The first time I ever read it, I did so without realizing that it was a collection of inter-related short stories, and not having read The Dark Tower series (though, Ted wouldn't have made an appearance in that series way back when anyway, so...), but either way - it didn't really do much for me.

On subsequent reads, the confusion regarding the format is not there, but the stories just don't really grab me like I want them to, and how I'm used to King's stories grabbing me. I will say that they are much better appreciated by me now, at the age I am, and with the experience I now have, than it was when I first read it as a teen.

The first story is by far my favorite, and the one I always think of when I think of this book. It's the one that speaks to me the most out of the whole collection. I love Ted Brautigan's character, and seeing him in his little "vacation" to Connecticut is always interesting - but definitely more so now that I know where, and to what, he's taken by the Low Men in the yellow coats. I like Ted's interaction with Bobby, and I like the way that the story kind of feels like a nightmare that's just getting going - shifting between confusion and horror (Liz's experience, the Low Men, etc), and normal summer reality for an 11 year old.

I also really liked Bobby, and I both liked, and pitied, the way he lost some of his innocence that summer. He stopped seeing the world through a child's eyes, and as a result, his whole life shifted. His relationship with his mother became a wary tightrope walk, when before it was simply Liz Rules The Roost. Now Bobby has an understanding of things... and though he still needs her, and loves her in his way, he doesn't like her much, and certainly doesn't respect her. And she knows it.

I do pity Liz, though... to a point. She's raising a son on her own in a world where women are tolerated in the workplace - allowed to get men their coffee, and answer the phones, and they better not complain if there's a little bit of a roaming eye or hand from the boss... not if she wants to keep her job, that is. I am sure it was hard. But my grandmother did it... and she had six kids to raise on her own. That woman made miracle dinners from canned peas, butter, and crackers. She made it work, and so, while I do appreciate that Liz was in a hard spot and I could understand her miserly ways - I could only feel sorry for her to a point.

And then she completely ruined any pity that I had for her by being... well, Liz. She's judgmental, hypocritical, manipulative, greedy, and cruel. She jumps to conclusions, and doesn't care if she's wrong, and her fear and anger lead her to make decisions that she should regret... but probably doesn't. She's too selfish to regret on anyone else's behalf... even her son's.

I do like how the story mirrors, in parts, *The Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. It has a certain tone that causes dread, even if you don't know why yet.

The other stories... well, they just don't really do much for me. There are characters that we recognize in each of them, and honestly, the subject matter in the remaining stories (except the very last) should speak to me more than it does. These are stories about the Vietnam war, and protesting it, and how that war changed an entire generation of people. It should feel important... but I found it just dragging on.

I will say that King writes an amazing story... even when I'm feeling the drag and not really feeling the story, the words on the page still paint a vivid picture and I can see it clearly in my mind. I love that aspect of King's writing... I'm never at a loss when it comes to seeing what he wants to show me, it's just that sometimes I'm not as interested as I feel I'd need to be in order to fully appreciate it.

## Diana D says

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## Christy says

### 5\*.....For trying, and succeeding in a new concept. Individual stories interconnected by a string....

I loved this book! This is, by far, one of King's deepest books--delving into the time period, one of tension and fear... and the humanity of the characters...their coming of age, their trials, their sanity, and even deaths. It is far more than a collection of short stories, as there is a continuation of characters throughout the book in some way in each story. I'm not saying that this is like a novel, it's a book with a string holding the stories together in a unique way. We are able to see how a lot of the characters introduced in the novella that starts the book developed--including one who seemed to get what was coming to him after attacking Carol Gerber brutally in the first story. Nice touch--I don't remember ever reading a set of short stories that were all linked together this way. This book stands out from all of King's other works. Not a novel. Not a group of great, but unrelated stories...I will say some of the stars are for even trying this new method....but that's not all, by far.

One Note: King writes masterfully, interconnecting the stories beautifully, trying something different and succeeding in my opinion--but the people who are looking for horror and gore aren't going to find very much of it here.... You are more likely to find a few tears and some anger. Mr. King, you are brilliant...able to write anything....your creativity never ceases to amaze me...

The Vietnam war also plays a big role in this book as the characters age (King was busy righting Carrie as it finally ended, so it is a time period he knows well, much better than me, as I did not live through it and love getting the fictionalized tales from that period of history I missed...I find it interesting that he grew up during the time period the characters in these stories did, from childhood through adult--this book not only follows King's time frame, but other similarities are here...he was raised mostly in New England, by a single mother, the threat of the draft was undoubtedly a heavy topic with his college friends. I love how much of his own life is mirrored in this and other stories, such as fighting alcoholism, etc. ). It certainly comes across as ANTI-Vietnam war....so if you don't feel the same (and you certainly did not have to live during the time-period in question to have feelings on this one, since it's a huge part of recent history) well, it just may make you mad....just think of all the relatively small "wars" we've been involved in, and you can imagine how angering to see people you were in school with (or could have been) coming home in countless numbers in boxes. It was a horrible time to be young in I imagine...a fearsome time, in which being in college, or having young children protected you a bit...And of course the ties to the dark tower are here....this book was written right after the fourth Dark Tower book and would be the perfect read then, as these events and even the character Ted Brautigan from the opening novella and closing story is in the DT books, being hunted, and escaping, and getting caught--as we get a glimpse of here....(view spoiler)

The opening novella, Low Men in Yellow Coats, was by far my favorite and is the story--along with the final one in this book, Heavenly Shades of Night are Falling--which the movie Hearts in Atlantis was really based on....But the story Hearts in Atlantis had nothing to do with it.....strange. I guess it just sounded better,

though it made no sense--at all. I still loved the movie....though I wondered where Atlantis came in.

The Novella *Low Men in Yellow Coats* begins our interlocking string that winds through the rest of the book; including all the characters that will appear in the rest of the stories with a tale of children coming of age-- Bobby Garfield, with friends Carol Gerber and John "sully" Sullivan playing the biggest roles, dealing with bullies, then a touch of the supernatural when an interesting older man rents the room upstairs in Bobby's house; Ted Brautigan. (view spoiler)

More to come soon.....

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### **Thomas Strömquist says**

King's last book of the 90's is probably the best surprise of my King reading project this far. This book is a display of enchanting storytelling, so good that long passages of little happening and small inconsistencies or lacking explanations simply do not matter at all. The first and longest story is a brilliant one about small-town kids, echoing Ray Bradbury, Dan Simmons' *Summer of Night* and Kings' own *It*, *The Body* and numerous others of course. A perfect blend of kids real, imagined and unusual problems with growing up. I must say I was stunned when the connection was made to a series of the author's other books and for a split second thought to myself that "if this theme can be this good, do I have another 4,500 or so pages to add to the plan?". After a second afterthought I told myself to calm down and not be silly. I'll go back and revisit a couple of my earlier reviews should the doubts assail me again!

When this first one drew to an end I thought that I had read the good part of this book - the other, interconnected stories could not very well be as good or I would have heard more about the book, really!

The second story is set on college campus and involves very much the game of Hearts. Not being familiar with the surroundings I felt that this would not ensnare me like the first. Felt that for a full 10 pages that is, and then I was lost again.

The last 3 stories are shorter, but carries the suspense superbly. The book or stories never lost focus I felt and all in all, this sailed high up on the list of the great man's many great books.

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### **Andrew Smith says**

Do the parts make a whole? I'm not sure. But does it even matter when the totality adds up to something that held me totally enthralled from start to finish.

The parts are made up of two novella length tales, two short stories and an epilogue that seeks to tie up loose ends. The uniting theme here is, I guess, the Vietnam War, although maybe it's more about growing up and discovery and friendship and pain. I suppose it's for the reader to decide.

The stories flow chronologically and the first is set in 1960. We follow the plight of eleven-year-old Bobby Garfield who lives with his protective mother in Connecticut. King paints a nostalgic picture of that time and for the most part it feels like a standard coming of age tale. But Bobby befriends lodger Ted, who we gradually start to understand is a little odd. Ted introduces Bobby to *Lord of the Flies* and other books; he

opens Bobby's eyes to a world Bobby's not seen before and a kind of hero worship begins to grip him. But the events take a darker turn as Bobby's mother sets off for an ill-fated business trip. And what of Ted, what is to be made of the strange requests he's now making of Bobby?

The jump to story two is sudden and disconcerting. We're thrust into the world of college students in 1966. Pete Riley is a freshman who needs to keep his grade average up to prevent himself from flunking out and, potentially, being shipped off to Vietnam via the draft. But he becomes sucked in to a mania for the card game Hearts that is rampant within sections of the college. He starts to stay up late playing the game, avoiding classes and study. Before long he's in trouble: his grades are falling and an early exit is starting to look like an inevitability. This is a very different story but some continuity is provided by the inclusion of a girl named Carol Gerber, who appeared briefly in the first story as Bobby's first girlfriend.

In the two short stories that follow we meet up two Vietnam War veterans. One spends his time impersonating a blind veteran, begging on the city streets, and the other is a salesman haunted by the violent death of a Vietnamese woman. The unifying elements here are that both continue the war theme and characters from previous stories are drip-fed into the narrative of the second of these. In the final section Bobby returns to the town of his youth, a town he hasn't visited in 40 years, to attend a memorial service for a childhood friend. This is really a continuance to or closure of the first story in the book.

I listened to an audio version which was read by a combination of actor William Hurt and the author. Hurt did a superb job and I can't help feeling that this version would have benefitted from having had him read all of the stories. But I'd have been happy to listen to a dozen more and I was sad when I'd finished the book. I'm not going to get too hung up on the worth of each particular element here or whether the epilogue was a useful add-on, I'm just happy to spend time with stories from this brilliant writer. I'm already searching eagerly for my next Stephen King fix!

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### **J.K. Grice says**

I really felt like this is one of King's best collections. The film version of HEARTS IN ATLANTIS was also excellent. A great group of narratives...this is one of my favorite King books.

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### **Rachel says**

No one would claim that King is Shakespear. That being said, SK has crafted stories like "The Body" and "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption" in such a way that to dismiss the people within them or describe them as simply "characters" is somehow lacking. The outer novella in HEARTS IN ATLANTIS was like that for me. "Low Men in Yellow Coats" although referential to King's SF Gunslinger series is easily a stand alone. Bobby and Ted are drawn so expertly, so deftly, that as I read this book, I felt as though I was listening, rather than reading...being pulled into the circumstances. I was so emotionally connected with Bobby and Ted, even Bobby's mother, that each reading was like visiting with and sharing the sadness of a friend.

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## Matt says

Little did I know what kind of Pandora's box I opened by reading this novel! I came upon it by accident:

In 2003 I accompanied a nephew of mine (then 9 years old) on a chess-tournament because his father didn't have time. So I got stuck for a few days in the small (very small!) town called *Wurmannsquick* in Lower Bavaria with nothing to do while the kids were playing chess (which lasted pretty much all day). I went to the local supermarket, which was more like a minimarket, to see if I could find something worthwhile. They had a few books to sell. Mostly comic books and books with barley dressed couples on their covers, and the only one that looked remotely interesting was this one by Stephen King. Back then I only knew Stephen King was a writer of horror stories, and a few of the German titles, like *Es (IT)*, or *Sie (Misery)*, but I never read anything by him and I considered the author *infra dig* for me. But I was sort of desperate and I needed distraction – it was the time before the blessed smart phones, mind you! – so I picked up this 620 page paperback for only €2,75 on 4/22/2003 and I paid for it with a ten-euro-bill (I know this all because I used the receipt as a bookmark). I don't recall exactly how long it took me to read the book, but it couldn't have been more than two and a half days because that's when we had to leave this one-horse-town and the novel was finished by then with time to spare. My initial skepticism about Stephen King quickly turned into fascination, almost euphoria and I just couldn't stop reading (talking addiction here). If there was ever a book I devoured it must be this one! In hindsight it turned out that this was a very good starting point into the universe of Stephen King.

Now that I read each and every novel and short-story-collection by *Uncle Steve* I realize how closely connected they all are. There are five stories/novellas here that are loosely connected and set between 1960 and 1999. All characters were children in 1960 whose lives are derailed by meeting other people or by major events like the Vietnam war, but in essence it's a book about love and loss, friendship and regret. Many characters re-appear in other novels, or better they make a re-appearance here (although I didn't know it back then). For instance the mysterious old man, Ted Brautigan, who moved in next door and gets to know little Bobby Garfield in the book's first and longest novella *Low Men in Yellow Coats* will rise and shine again in the *Dark Tower* epic series. Or Carol Gerber. She was ("will have been" be in my case) one of the members of the gang of losers fighting the monster in *IT*. And there are quite a few more references to other books.

But that's not why I wrote this here today, 13 years after I read the book. It's because of the second story, the titular *Hearts in Atlantis*. In this story the main character is a college student who learned the card-game *Hearts* from his classmates and slowly but steadily he becomes totally addicted to this game. It got to the point where playing this game is the only thing he could think of. Stephen King has his own experiences with addictions, and he can write about it pretty well. Now, this afternoon I found that I installed a *Hearts*-app on my phone a few years back and I started to play ... just for fun. And then I realized I couldn't stop! Just like the guy in the story this fucking game totally sucked me in. I had to tear myself away from this god-damned smart phone and the best way I could think of was writing this dreary review. And I think it helped.

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If I could give six stars to this book, I would. And seven. And eight...And nine. And ten...

HEARTS IN ATLANTIS is one of Stephen King's more critically acclaimed novels. Perhaps critics missed the genre references in the opening story. But they are correct to herald it. I was moved by the story and its characters.

However, King does not romanticize. Each of his characters emerges from the decade broken somehow. King is perhaps too hard on his generation when, as the novel winds down, he criticizes them for trading peace and love for junk bonds and cocaine. As much as I used to enjoy occasionally baiting my late mother into an argument about how her generation was the most spoiled in history, the Baby Boomers deserve credit for bringing about positive cultural, political, and social change.

King is right to not spare his generation's most radical members in his story. The Weathermen Underground is one of the most despicable groups ever to form in the United States – and it is clearly the Weathermen Underground that King has in mind when he recounts Carol's life journey. Perhaps there was a touch of the Symbionese Liberation Army in there, too. But as much as the sixties were about peace and love on the home front, there was as much disorder and harm created by the movement.

Certainly, we can interpret the demise of John Sullivan as the death of the Age of Aquarius as he is bombarded with household furnishings and other possessions that the Baby Boomers sought to acquire as they grew up and abandoned their ideals.

As much as Ray Bradbury chronicled pre-depression America with his tales of Greentown, IL, Stephen King is a chronicler of his generation with books such as this and *It* which masks a tale of growing up American in the 1950s with a horror story. Bradbury broke the barrier that has held back three generations of genre fiction writers from being recognized as “serious” writers with something important to contribute to literature. Perhaps King will one day get his due. With *HEARTS IN ATLANTIS*, he certainly earned it.

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## **Johann (jobis89) says**

"Hearts can break. Yes, hearts can break. Sometimes I think it would be better if we died when they did, but we don't."

*Hearts in Atlantis* is quite an unusual book in that it is comprised of 5 interlinking stories (technically 2 novellas and 3 short stories) that contain the same recurring characters and take place chronologically. The stories refer to events that take place in the 1960s, primarily the Vietnam war. I also feel like this will be quite hard to review without spoiling, so bear with me!

*Low Men in Yellow Coats* is the first novella and was actually my favourite part of the entire collection. It tells the story of a young boy Bobby Garfield, who comes into contact with a strange man who moves in upstairs, Ted Brautigan, who possesses some psychic abilities. This story contains amazing *Dark Tower* references and connections, and as a DT junkie, this was SOOO exciting.

The next novella was the self-titled *Hearts in Atlantis*, which focuses on the story of Peter Riley, who gets addicted to playing the card game *Hearts* in the dorm when he is a student at the University of Maine. This addiction interferes with his studies, which leaves him open to the possibility of being enrolled in the war. Again, I really enjoyed this one!

The last three short stories (*Blind Willie*, *Why We're in Vietnam*, *Heavenly Shades of Night are Falling*) are focused on veterans and fallout from the Vietnam war. The first two short stories are decent enough, but I only really enjoyed the last one. Mainly because it involved Bobby Garfield!

One of my favourite things about this collection is the relationship between Bobby Garfield and Ted Brautigan. King writes these kind of relationships so well. You can just feel the love and admiration Bobby has for Ted, it's absolutely beautiful. Ted becomes a surrogate father figure for Bobby. Their discussions about books and literature are so heart-warming, it's necessary for every child to have this kind of person in their life - the person who ignites that passion for reading. But not only is Ted under possible attack from the *Low Men*, but also from Bobby's mother, who has her suspicions about their blossoming friendship.

I kinda feel like a main theme within this book is that of survivor guilt. Those who either avoided fighting in the Vietnam war or those who went and fought and came home alive. In *Hearts in Atlantis*, the university students who become addicted to playing *Hearts* are basically flunking themselves out to war. The main character just keeps getting closer and closer to the edge of that cliff until he forms a relationship with Carol (from the previous novella). *Blind Willie* is focused around a veteran's penance for his previous actions (in the first novella of course!). *Why We're in Vietnam* is about two veterans basically discussing how their

generation squandered the promise of the 60's and their resultant commiserations. The last short story is kind of more of an epilogue than a story, revisiting both Bobby and Carol from the first novella. A touching moment as they reminisce about the past.

This was definitely a very enjoyable read, more so the two novellas than the short stories. It makes you think about this period of time and the Vietnam war, and how savage and pointless war can be. Especially when you look at the impact it has on people who are living through it, as well as those who come out the other side. Hard-hitting and emotional. Great work by the King!

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??? 2.5 says

★★??½

Before you go casting aspersions on this review, please note that I'm not a big fan of these short story collections, and I only read this for the Dark Tower tie-ins, which the first story delivered in spades.

In *Wolves of the Calla*, Father Callahan shared some of his story with our ka-tet. Part of which involved his travels down *highways in hiding*, and the relentless pursuit of his trail by the *Low Men in Yellow Coats*. So I was eager to learn more about these mystery men through the first story in this collection.

What better way to kick things off than with this perfect little time capsule of 1960, and those sublime childhood days at the start of summer vacation with a couple of your best friends in tow. Where there are seemingly new and exciting adventures waiting to be discovered, around every corner, and those friendships are sure to last forever. Everything's just peachy, until a mysterious old man moves in upstairs, and those *Low Men in Yellow Coats* come sniffing around. Sing it now . . . ? It's a cruel (cruel), cruel summer, leaving me here on my own. ?

Such an awesome little tale, which drew back the curtains on those *Low Men*. Easy 4+ stars.

Next, we fast forward to 1966 for the titular story *Hearts in Atlantis* with the addition of some funny new characters. We follow along as these freshmen struggle to adjust to college life, during a period of great turmoil in the US, only to end up mired in the Hearts tournament from hell. The story started off strong enough, but then slowly devolves into a hippy drippy diatribe railing against the Vietnam War. Sadly, once this can of worms was opened it became quite evident that this was to become the main focus of the rest of the stories. I get it, brother, war is hell. Especially ones we should have never gotten tangled up in to begin with, and doubly so when they're drafting unwilling participants into the shit-storm. Live and let live, put John Lennon's *Imagine* on an endless loop, that's my motto. So please forgive me while I bury my head in the sand, but I don't care to spend so much time thinking about that tragedy, which could have/should have been avoided, and all the lives lost to it. This story fell to a low 3 stars, for me.

The last three stories are all extremely short in comparison to the first two, and, excluding a couple of scenes with minor Dark Tower relevance, there's nothing too noteworthy. Therefore, I'd rate each of these 2 stars.

There are a few reoccurring characters which tie all the stories together nicely, making the book much more interesting than it would have been otherwise. Nevertheless, my overall average for the entire collection adds up to a paltry 2.6 stars. Loved that first story and parts of the second, but I could have done without much of the rest.



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## **SAM says**

I've had this on my book shelf since March. It was one of the Stephen King books i was less bothered about reading because of a very stupid reason: the Anthony Hopkins film. A film i have never even seen but there's something about the ridiculous movie poster with a wizened Hopkins holding his palm out that put me off. Shallow me. Turns out the book is one of the best Stephen Kings I've read.

The first story is the longest and has a connection to the dark tower. I felt a nerdy shiver of joy envelop my spine when i read the phrases 'all things serve the beam' and 'other worlds than these'. The story is about a beam breaker who has escaped from Algul Siento and is now being hunted by the low men (or Can-Toi to the initiated). He moves into the apartment above Bobby Garfield and befriends him.

The second story is a weird combination of the card game Hearts and the Vietnam war. I guess it's a coming of age story with a couple of links to story one. The other stories are a lot shorter but are more heavily linked to story one. 'Blind Willie' and 'Why we're in Vietnam' tackle PTSD and the last story is a superb finale. I've read a couple of reviews that comment on the loose links between each story but i would have to disagree. The book is one complete story split into five sections over a forty year period.

A great book and i didn't even hesitate giving five stars. Who cares if it isn't a horror story, Stephen King is just a great story teller. The best.

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