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PET SEMATARY

Stephen King



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Special thanks are in order to Russ Dorr and Steve Wentworth of Bridgeton, Maine. Russ provided medical information and Steve provided information on American funeral and burial customs and some insight into the nature of grief.

If you purchased this book without a cover you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

For Kirby McCauley

FOR RENT

Here are some people who have written books, telling what they did and why they did those things:

John Dean. Henry Kissinger. Adolph Hitler. Caryl Chessman. Jeb Magruder. Napoleon. Talleyrand. Disraeli. Robert Zimmerman, also known as Bob Dylan. Locke. Charlton Heston. Errol Flynn. The Ayatollah Khomeini. Gandhi. Charles Olson. Charles Colson. A Victorian Gentleman. Dr. X.

Most people also believe that God has written a Book, or Books, telling what He did and why—at least to a degree—He did those things, and since most of these people also believe that humans were made in the image of God, then He also may be regarded as a person . . . or, more properly, as a Person.

Here are some people who have not written books, telling what they did . . . and what they saw:

The man who buried Hitler. The man who performed the autopsy on John Wilkes Booth. The man who embalmed Elvis Presley. The man who embalmed—badly, most undertakers say—Pope John XXIII. The twoscore undertakers who cleaned up Jonestown, carrying body bags, spearing paper cups with those spikes custodians carry in city parks, waving away the flies. The man who cremated William Holden. The man who encased the body of Alexander the Great in gold so it would not rot. The men who mummified the Pharaohs.

Death is a mystery, and burial is a secret.

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PART ONE

The Pet Sematary

Jesus said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go, that I may awake him out of his sleep."

Then the disciples looked at each other, and some smiled because they did not know Jesus had spoken in a figure. "Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well."

So then Jesus spoke to them more plainly, "Lazarus is dead, yes . . . nevertheless let us go to him."

—JOHN'S GOSPEL (paraphrase)

011308

PART ONE

The

History

The history of the world is a long and complex one, spanning thousands of years and encompassing a vast array of cultures, societies, and events. It is a story of human progress, struggle, and achievement, shaped by the actions of individuals and the forces of nature. From the earliest civilizations to the modern world, the history of the world has been a continuous process of change and development. The study of world history allows us to understand the roots of our current world and the challenges we face today. It provides a context for our lives and helps us to see the bigger picture of human existence. The history of the world is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of the human spirit, and it is a source of inspiration and hope for the future.

I

Louis Creed, who had lost his father at three and who had never known a grandfather, never expected to find a father as he entered his middle age, but that was exactly what happened . . . although he called this man a friend, as a grown man must do when he finds the man who should have been his father relatively late in life. He met this man on the evening he and his wife and his two children moved into the big white frame house in Ludlow. Winston Churchill moved in with them. Church was his daughter Eileen's cat.

The search committee at the university had moved slowly, the hunt for a house within commuting distance of the university had been hair-raising, and by the time they neared the place where he believed the house to be—*all the landmarks are right . . . like the astrological signs the night before Caesar was assassinated*, Louis thought morbidly—they were all tired and tense and on edge. Gage was cutting teeth and fussed almost ceaselessly. He would not sleep, no matter how much Rachel sang to him. She offered him the breast even though it was off his schedule. Gage knew his dining schedule as well as she—better, maybe—and he promptly bit her with his new teeth. Rachel, still not entirely sure about this move to Maine from Chicago, where she had lived her whole life, burst into tears. Eileen promptly joined her. In the back of the station wagon, Church continued to pace restlessly as he had done for the last three days it had taken them to drive here from Chicago. His yowling from the cat kennel had been bad, but his restless pacing after they finally gave up and set him free in the car had been almost as unnerving.

Louis himself felt a little like crying. A wild but not unattractive idea suddenly came to him: He would suggest that they go back to Bangor for something to eat while they

waited for the moving van, and when his three hostages to fortune got out, he would floor the accelerator and drive away without so much as a look back, foot to the mat, the wagon's huge four-barrel carburetor gobbling expensive gasoline. He would drive south, all the way to Orlando, Florida, where he would get a job at Disney World as a medic, under a new name. But before he hit the turnpike—big old 95 southbound—he would stop by the side of the road and put the fucking cat out too.

Then they rounded a final curve, and there was the house that only he had seen up until now. He had flown out and looked at each of the seven possibles they had picked from photos once the position at the University of Maine was solidly his, and this was the one he had chosen: a big old New England colonial (but newly sided and insulated; the heating costs, while horrible enough, were not out of line in terms of consumption), three big rooms downstairs, four more up, a long shed that might be converted to more rooms later on—all of it surrounded by a luxuriant sprawl of lawn, lushly green even in this August heat.

Beyond the house was a large field for the children to play in, and beyond the field were woods that went on damn near forever. The property abutted state lands, the realtor had explained, and there would be no development in the foreseeable future. The remains of the Micmac Indian tribe had laid claim to nearly eight thousand acres in Ludlow and in the towns east of Ludlow, and the complicated litigation, involving the federal government as well as that of the state, might stretch into the next century.

Rachel stopped crying abruptly. She sat up. "Is that—"

"That's it," Louis said. He felt apprehensive—no, he felt scared. In fact he felt *terrified*. He had mortgaged twelve years of their lives for this; it wouldn't be paid off until Eileen was seventeen.

He swallowed.

"What do you think?"

"I think it's *beautiful*," Rachel said, and that was a huge weight off his chest—and off his mind. She wasn't kidding, he saw; it was in the way she was looking at it as they turned in the asphalted driveway that curved around to the shed in