

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

*s t e p h e n*

KING



THE SHINING

'Obviously a masterpiece, probably the best supernatural novel in a hundred years' *Peter Straub*

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**KING**

**THE SHINING**

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First published in Great Britain in 1977 by New English Library  
First published in paperback in 1978 by New English Library  
A division of Hodder Headline

A New English Library Paperback

47 49 50 48 46

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A CIP catalogue record is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 450 04018 6

Typeset by Rowland Phototypesetting Ltd,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Hodder and Stoughton  
A division of Hodder Headline  
338 Euston Road  
London NW1 3BH

This is for Joe Hill King, who shines on

My editor on this book, as on the previous two, was Mr William G. Thompson, a man of wit and good sense. His contribution to this book has been large, and for it, my thanks.

S.K.

Some of the most beautiful resort hotels in the world are located in Colorado, but the hotel in these pages is based on none of them. The Overlook and the people associated with it exist wholly within the author's imagination.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood . . . a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when . . . the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause . . . to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly . . . and [they] smiled as if at their own nervousness . . . and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes . . . there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel . . .

E. A. Poe  
'The Masque of the Red Death'

The sleep of reason breeds monsters.  
Goya

It'll shine when it shines.  
Folk saying

# INTRODUCTION

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I think that in every writer's career – usually early in it – there comes a 'crossroads novel,' where the writer is presented with a choice: either doing what you have done before, or try to reach a little higher. What you only realize in retrospect is how important that choice is. Sometimes the moment only comes once. For me, the crossroads novel was *The Shining*, and I did decide to reach. I can even remember the exact moment the choice came: it was when Jack Torrance, *The Shining's* flawed protagonist, is remembering his father, a drunken brute who abused his son mentally, physically and emotionally . . . all the ways it can be done, in other words.

Part of me wanted to describe the father's brutality and leave it at that. Surely, I thought, the book's readers would make the connection between Jack's relationship with his father and Jack's relationship with his own son, Danny, who is of course *The Shining's* psychic focal point.

Another part of me wanted to go deeper – to admit Jack's love of his father in spite of (perhaps even *because of*) his father's unpredictable and often brutal nature. That was the part I listened to, and it made a big difference to the novel as a whole. Instead of changing from a relatively nice guy into a two-dimensional villain driven by supernatural forces to kill his wife

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and son, Jack Torrance became a more realistic (and therefore more frightening) figure. A killer motivated to his crimes by supernatural forces was, it seemed to me, almost comforting once you got below the surface thrills provided by any halfway competent ghost story. A killer that might be doing it because of childhood abuse *as well as* those ghostly forces . . . ah, that seemed genuinely disturbing. Furthermore, it offered a chance to blur the line between the supernatural and the psychotic, to take my story into that I-hope-this-is-only-a-dream territory where the merely scary becomes outright horrifying. My single conversation with the late Stanley Kubrick, about six months before he commenced filming on his version of *The Shining*, suggested that it was this quality about the story that appealed to him: what, exactly, is impelling Jack Torrance toward murder in the winter-isolated rooms and hallways of the Overlook Hotel? Is it undead people, or undead memories? Mr. Kubrick and I came to different conclusions (I *always* thought there were malevolent ghosts in The Overlook, driving Jack to the precipice), but perhaps those different conclusions are, in fact, the same. For aren't memories the true ghosts of our lives? Do they not drive all of us to words and acts we regret from time to time?

The decision I made to try and make Jack's father a real person, one who was loved as well as hated by his flawed son, took me a long way down the road to my current beliefs concerning what is so blithely dismissed as 'the horror novel.' I believe these stories exist because we sometimes need to create unreal monsters and bogies to stand in for all the things we fear in our real lives: the parent who punches instead of kissing, the auto accident that takes a loved one, the cancer we one day discover living in our own bodies. If such terrible occurrences were acts of darkness, they might actually be easier to cope with. But instead of being dark, they have their own terrible brilliance, it seems to me, and none shine so bright as the acts of cruelty we sometimes perpetrate in our own families. To look directly at such brilliance is to be blinded, and so we create any number of filters. The ghost story, the horror story, the uncanny tale – all of these are such filters. The man or woman

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who insists there are no ghosts is only ignoring the whispers of his or her own heart, and how cruel that seems to me. Surely even the most malignant ghost is a lonely thing, left out in the dark, desperate to be heard.

None of these things occurred to me in coherent or even semi-coherent form when I was writing *The Shining* in my little study looking out toward the Flatirons; I had a story to write, my daily goal of 3,000 words to meet (I'm lucky if I can manage 1,800 a day in my sixth decade). All I knew was that I had a choice, either to make little Jacky's father a flat-out bad guy (which I could do in my sleep) or to try for something a little more difficult and complex: in a word, reality.

If I had been less well-fixed financially, I might well have opted for choice number one. But my first two books, *Carrie* and *'Salem's Lot*, had been successful, and we Kings were doing okay in that regard. And I didn't want to settle for less when I sensed I could up the book's emotional ante considerably by making Jack Torrance a real character instead of just The Overlook's boogeyman.

The result wasn't perfect, and there is a cocky quality to some of *The Shining's* prose that has come to grate on me in later years, but I still like the book enormously, and recognize the importance of the choice it forced on me: between the safe unreality of the amusement park funhouse and the much more dangerous truths that lurk between the lines of the fantasy genre's more successful works. That truth is that monsters are real, and ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes they win.

That our better angels sometimes – often! – win instead, in spite of all odds, is another truth of *The Shining*. And thank God it is.

New York City  
February 8, 2001



PART ONE  
PREFATORY MATTERS



## CHAPTER ONE

# JOB INTERVIEW

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Jack Torrance thought: *Officious little prick.*

Ullman stood five-five, and when he moved, it was with the prissy speed that seems to be the exclusive domain of all small plump men. The part in his hair was exact, and his dark suit was sober but comforting. I am a man you can bring your problems to, that suit said to the paying customer. To the hired help it spoke more curtly: This had better be good, you. There was a red carnation in the lapel, perhaps so that no one on the street would mistake Stuart Ullman for the local undertaker.

As he listened to Ullman speak, Jack admitted to himself that he probably could not have liked any man on that side of the desk – under the circumstances.

Ullman had asked a question he hadn't caught. That was bad; Ullman was the type of man who would file such lapses away in a mental Rolodex for later consideration.

'I'm sorry?'

'I asked if your wife fully understands what you would be taking on here. And there's your son, of course.' He glanced down at the application in front of him. 'Daniel. Your wife isn't a bit intimidated by the idea?'

'Wendy is an extraordinary woman.'

'And your son is also extraordinary?'

Jack smiled, a big wide PR smile. 'We like to think so, I suppose. He's quite self-reliant for a five-year-old.'

No returning smile from Ullman. He slipped Jack's application back into a file. The file went into a drawer. The desk top was now completely bare except for a blotter, a telephone, a Tensor lamp, and an in/out basket. Both sides of the in/out were empty, too.

Ullman stood up and went to the file cabinet in the corner.

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'Step around the desk, if you will, Mr Torrance. We'll look at the hotel floor plans.'

He brought back five large sheets and set them down on the glossy walnut plain of the desk. Jack stood by his shoulder, very much aware of the scent of Ullman's cologne. *All my men wear English Leather or they wear nothing at all* came into his mind for no reason at all, and he had to clamp his tongue between his teeth to keep in a bray of laughter. Beyond the wall, faintly, came the sounds of the Overlook Hotel's kitchen, gearing down from lunch.

'Top floor,' Ullman said briskly. 'The attic. Absolutely nothing up there now but bric-a-brac. The Overlook has changed hands several times since World War II and it seems that each successive manager has put everything they don't want up in the attic. I want rattraps and poison bait sowed around in it. Some of the third-floor chambermaids say they have heard rustling noises. I don't believe it, not for a moment, but there mustn't even be that one-in-a-hundred chance that a single rat inhabits the Overlook Hotel.'

Jack, who suspected that every hotel in the world had a rat or two, held his tongue.

'Of course you wouldn't allow your son up in the attic under any circumstances.'

'No,' Jack said, and flashed the big PR smile again. Humiliating situation. Did this officious little prick actually think he would allow his son to goof around in a rattrap attic full of junk furniture and God knew what else?

Ullman whisked away the attic floor plan and put it on the bottom of the pile.

'The Overlook has one hundred and ten guest quarters,' he said in a scholarly voice. 'Thirty of them, all suites, are here on the third floor. Ten in the west wing (including the Presidential Suite), ten in the center, ten more in the east wing. All of them command magnificent views.'

*Could you at least spare the salestalk?*

But he kept quiet. He needed the job.

Ullman put the third floor on the bottom of the pile and they studied the second floor.

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'Forty rooms,' Ullman said, 'thirty doubles and ten singles. And on the first floor, twenty of each. Plus three linen closets on each floor, and a storeroom which is at the extreme east end of the hotel on the second floor and the extreme west end on the first. Questions?'

Jack shook his head. Ullman whisked the second and first floors away.

'Now. Lobby level. Here in the center is the registration desk. Behind it are the offices. The lobby runs for eighty feet in either direction from the desk. Over here in the west wing is the Overlook Dining Room and the Colorado Lounge. The banquet and ballroom facility is in the east wing. Questions?'

'Only about the basement,' Jack said. 'For the winter caretaker, that's the most important level of all. Where the action is, so to speak.'

'Watson will show you all that. The basement floor plan is on the boiler room wall.' He frowned impressively, perhaps to show that as manager, he did not concern himself with such mundane aspects of the Overlook's operation as the boiler and the plumbing. 'Might not be a bad idea to put some traps down there too. Just a minute . . .'

He scrawled a note on a pad he took from his inner coat pocket (each sheet bore the legend *From the Desk of Stuart Ullman* in bold black script), tore it off, and dropped it into the out basket. It sat there looking lonesome. The pad disappeared back into Ullman's jacket pocket like the conclusion of a magician's trick. Now you see it, Jacky-boy, now you don't. This guy is a real heavyweight.

They had resumed their original positions, Ullman behind the desk and Jack in front of it, interviewer and interviewee, supplicant and reluctant patron. Ullman folded his neat little hands on the desk blotter and looked directly at Jack, a small, balding man in a banker's suit and a quiet gray tie. The flower in his lapel was balanced off by a small lapel pin on the other side. It read simply STAFF in small gold letters.

'I'll be perfectly frank with you, Mr Torrance. Albert Shockley is a powerful man with a large interest in the Overlook, which showed a profit this season for the first time in its history.

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Mr Shockley also sits on the Board of Directors, but he is not a hotel man and he would be the first to admit this. But he has made his wishes in this caretaking matter quite obvious. He wants you hired. I will do so. But if I had been given a free hand in this matter, I would not have taken you on.'

Jack's hands were clenched tightly in his lap, working against each other, sweating. *Officious little prick, officious little prick, officious—*

'I don't believe you care much for me, Mr Torrance. I don't care. Certainly your feelings toward me play no part in my own belief that you are not right for the job. During the season that runs from May fifteenth to September thirtieth, the Overlook employs one hundred and ten people full-time; one for every room in the hotel, you might say. I don't think many of them like me and I suspect that some of them think I'm a bit of a bastard. They would be correct in their judgment of my character. I have to be a bit of a bastard to run this hotel in the manner it deserves.'

He looked at Jack for comment, and Jack flashed the PR smile again, large and insultingly toothy.

Ullman said: 'The Overlook was built in the years 1907 to 1909. The closest town is Sidewinder, forty miles east of here over roads that are closed from sometime in late October or November until sometime in April. A man named Robert Townley Watson built it, the grandfather of our present maintenance man. Vanderbilts have stayed here, and Rockefellers, and Astors, and Du Ponts. Four Presidents have stayed in the Presidential Suite. Wilson, Harding, Roosevelt, and Nixon.'

'I wouldn't be too proud of Harding and Nixon,' Jack murmured.

Ullman frowned but went on regardless. 'It proved too much for Mr Watson, and he sold the hotel in 1915. It was sold again in 1922, in 1929, in 1936. It stood vacant until the end of World War II, when it was purchased and completely renovated by Horace Derwent, millionaire inventor, pilot, film producer, and entrepreneur.'

'I know the name,' Jack said.

'Yes. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold ...

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except the Overlook. He funneled over a million dollars into it before the first postwar guest ever stepped through its doors, turning a decrepit relic into a showplace. It was Derwent who added the roque court I saw you admiring when you arrived.'

'Roque?'

'A British forebear of our croquet, Mr Torrance. Croquet is bastardized roque. According to legend, Derwent learned the game from his social secretary and fell completely in love with it. Ours may be the finest roque court in America.'

'I wouldn't doubt it,' Jack said gravely. A roque court, a topiary full of hedge animals out front, what next? A life-sized Uncle Wiggly game behind the equipment shed? He was getting very tired of Mr Stuart Ullman, but he could see that Ullman wasn't done. Ullman was going to have his say, every last word of it.

'When he had lost three million, Derwent sold it to a group of California investors. Their experience with the Overlook was equally bad. Just not hotel people.'

'In 1970, Mr Shockley and a group of his associates bought the hotel and turned its management over to me. We have also run in the red for several years, but I'm happy to say that the trust of the present owners in me has never wavered. Last year we broke even. And this year the Overlook's accounts were written in black ink for the first time in almost seven decades.'

Jack supposed that this fussy little man's pride was justified, and then his original dislike washed over him again in a wave.

He said: 'I see no connection between the Overlook's admittedly colorful history and your feeling that I'm wrong for the post, Mr Ullman.'

'One reason that the Overlook has lost so much money lies in the depreciation that occurs each winter. It shortens the profit margin a great deal more than you might believe, Mr Torrance. The winters are fantastically cruel. In order to cope with the problem, I've installed a full-time winter caretaker to run the boiler and to heat different parts of the hotel on a daily rotating basis. To repair breakage as it occurs and to do repairs, so the elements can't get a foothold. To be constantly alert to any and every contingency. During our first winter I hired a family

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instead of a single man. There was a tragedy. A horrible tragedy.'

Ullman looked at Jack coolly and appraisingly.

'I made a mistake. I admit it freely. The man was a drunk.'

Jack felt a slow, hot grin – the total antithesis of the toothy PR grin – stretch across his mouth. 'Is that it? I'm surprised Al didn't tell you. I've retired.'

'Yes, Mr Shockley told me you no longer drink. He also told me about your last job . . . your last position of trust, shall we say? You were teaching English in a Vermont prep school. You lost your temper, I don't believe I need to be any more specific than that. But I do happen to believe that Grady's case has a bearing, and that is why I have brought the matter of your . . . uh, previous history into the conversation. During the winter of 1970–71, after we had refurbished the Overlook but before our first season, I hired this . . . this unfortunate named Delbert Grady. He moved into the quarters you and your wife and son will be sharing. He had a wife and two daughters. I had reservations, the main ones being the harshness of the winter season and the fact that the Gradys would be cut off from the outside world for five to six months.'

'But that's not really true, is it? There are telephones here, and probably a citizen's band radio as well. And the Rocky Mountain National Park is within helicopter range and surely a piece of ground that big must have a chopper or two.'

'I wouldn't know about that,' Ullman said. 'The hotel does have a two-way radio that Mr Watson will show you, along with a list of the correct frequencies to broadcast on if you need help. The telephone lines between here and Sidewinder are still aboveground, and they go down almost every winter at some point or other and are apt to stay down for three weeks to a month and a half. There is a snowmobile in the equipment shed also.'

'Then the place really isn't cut off.'

Mr Ullman looked pained. 'Suppose your son or your wife tripped on the stairs and fractured his or her skull, Mr Torrance. Would you think the place was cut off then?'

Jack saw the point. A snowmobile running at top speed could get you down to Sidewinder in an hour and a half . . . maybe.



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A helicopter from the Parks Rescue Service could get up here in three hours . . . under optimum conditions. In a blizzard it would never even be able to lift off and you couldn't hope to run a snowmobile at top speed, even if you dared take a seriously injured person out into temperatures that might be twenty-five below – or forty-five below, if you added in the wind chill factor.

'In the case of Grady,' Ullman said, 'I reasoned much as Mr Shockley seems to have done in your case. Solitude can be damaging in itself. Better for the man to have his family with him. If there was trouble, I thought, the odds were very high that it would be something less urgent than a fractured skull or an accident with one of the power tools or some sort of convulsion. A serious case of the flu, pneumonia, a broken arm, even appendicitis. Any of those things would have left enough time.'

'I suspect that what happened came as a result of too much cheap whiskey, of which Grady had laid in a generous supply, unbeknownst to me, and a curious condition which the old-timers call cabin fever. Do you know the term?' Ullman offered a patronizing little smile, ready to explain as soon as Jack admitted his ignorance, and Jack was happy to respond quickly and crisply.

'It's a slang term for the claustrophobic reaction that can occur when people are shut in together over long periods of time. The feeling of claustrophobia is externalized as dislike for the people you happen to be shut in with. In extreme cases it can result in hallucinations and violence – murder has been done over such minor things as a burned meal or an argument about whose turn it is to do the dishes.'

Ullman looked rather nonplussed, which did Jack a world of good. He decided to press a little further, but silently promised Wendy he would stay cool.

'I suspect you did make a mistake at that. Did he hurt them?'

'He killed them, Mr Torrance, and then committed suicide. He murdered the little girls with a hatchet, his wife with a shotgun, and himself the same way. His leg was broken. Undoubtedly so drunk he fell downstairs.'