WORKS BY STEPHEN KING
NOVELS

Carrie
'Salem's Lot
The Shining
The Stand
The Dead Zone
Firestarter
Cujo
THE DARK TOWER I:
The Gun sling er
Christine
Pet Sematary
Cycle of the Werewolf
The Talisman
(with Peter Straub)
It
The Eyes of the Dragon
Misery
The Tommyknockers

THE DARK TOWER II:
The Drawing
of the Three

THE DARK TOWER III:
The Waste Lands
The Dark Half
Needful Things
Gerald's Game
Dolores Claiborne
Insomnia
Rose Madder
Desperation
The Green Mile

THE DARK TOWER IV:
Wizard and Glass
Bag of Bones
Hearts in Atlantis
The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon
Dreamcatcher
Black House
(with Peter Straub)
From a Buick 8

AS RICHARD BACHMAN
The Long Walk
Roadwork
The Running Man
Thinner
The Regulators

COLLECTIONS
Night Shift
Different Seasons
Skeleton Crew
Four Past Midnight
Nightmares and Dreamscapes
Everything's Eventual

NONFICTION
Danse Macabre
On Writing

SCREENPLAYS
Creepshow
Cat's Eye
Silver Bullet
Maximum Overdrive
Pet Sematary
Golden Years
Sleepwalkers
The Stand
The Shining
Storm of the Century
Rose Red
The terror, which would not end for another twenty-eight years—if it ever did end—began, so far as I know or can tell, with a boat made from a sheet of newspaper floating down a gutter swollen with rain.

The boat bobbed, listed, righted itself again, dived bravely through treacherous whirlpools, and continued on its way down Witcham Street toward the traffic light which marked the intersection of Witcham and Jackson. The three vertical crosses on all sides of the traffic light were dark this afternoon in the fall of 1957, and the houses were all dark, too. There had been steady rain for a week now, and two days ago the winds had come as well. Most sections of Derry had lost their power then, and it was not back on yet.

A small boy in a yellow slicker and red galoshes ran cheerfully along beside the newspaper boat. The rain had not stopped, but it was finally slackening. It tapped on the hood of the boy’s slicker, sounding to his ears like rain on a shed roof—a comfortable, almost cozy sound.

The boy in the yellow slicker was George Denbrough. He was six. His brother, William, known to most of the kids at Derry Elementary School (and even to the teachers, who would never have used the nickname to his face) as Stuttering Bill, was at home, hacking out the last of a nasty case of influenza. In that autumn of 1957, eight months before the torments began and twenty-eight years before the final down, Stuttering Bill was ten years old.

He had made the boat beside which George now ran. Heaped it sitting up in bed, his back propped against a pile of pillows, while their mother played Für Elise on the piano parlor and rain swept restlessly against his bedroom.

A three-quarters of the way down the block as one toward the intersection and the dead traffic light,
Witcham Street was blocked to motor traffic by smudgepots and four orange sawhorses. Stencilled across each of the horses was DERRY DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS. Beyond them, the rain had spilled out of gutters clogged with branches and rocks and big sticky piles of autumn leaves. The water had first pried fingerholds in the paving and then snatched whole greedy handfuls—all of this by the third day of the rains. By noon of the fourth day, big chunks of the street’s surface were being through the intersection of Jackson and Witcham like miniature white-water rafts. By that time, many people in Derry had begun to make nervous jokes about arks. The Public Works Department had managed to keep Jackson Street open, but Witcham was impassable from the sawhorses all the way to the center of town.

But everyone agreed, the worst was over. The Kenduskeag Stream had crested just below its banks in the Barrens and bare inches below the concrete sides of the Canal which channelled it tightly as it passed through downtown. Right now a gang of men—Zack Denbrough, George’s and Bill’s father, among them—were removing the sandbags they had thrown up the day before with such panic haste. Yesterday’s overflow and expensive flood damage had seemed almost inevitable. God knew it had happened before—the flooding in 1931 had been a disaster which had cost millions of dollars and almost two dozen lives. That was a long time ago, but there were still enough people around who remembered it to scare the rest. One of the flood victims had been—a man who had found twenty-five miles east, in Bucksport. The fish had eaten this unfortunate gentleman’s eyes, three of his fingers, his penis, and most of his left foot. Clutched in what remained of his hands had been a Ford steering wheel.

Now, though, the river was receding, and when the new Bangor Hydro dam went in upstream, the river would cease to be a threat. Or so said Zack Denbrough, who worked for Bangor Hydroelectric. As for the rest—well, future floods could take care of themselves. The thing was to get through this one, to get the power back on, and then to forget it.

Derry such forgetting of tragedy and disaster was almost an art, as Bill Denbrough would come to discover in the course of time.

George paused just beyond the sawhorses at the edge of a deep ravine that had been cut through the tar surface of Witcham Street. This ravine ran on an almost exact diagonal. It ended on the far side of the street, roughly forty feet farther down the hill from where he now stood, on the north side of the street. He laughed aloud—the sound of solitary, childish glee—just thinking up in bed, his cheeks still flushed with heat (but his face, like the Kenduskeag, finally receding), Bill had finally gotten out of the boat—but when George reached for it, Bill held it out, saying, “I’m not here, George. I’m not here.”
"It's on the cellar shuh-shuh-shelf as you go downstairs," Bill said. "In a box that says Guh-Guh-huf . . . Gulf. Bring that to me, and a knife, and a b-bowl. And a pub-pack of muh-muh-matches."

George had gone obediently to get these things. He could hear his mother playing the piano, not Für Elise now but something else he didn't like so well—something that sounded dry and fuzzy; he could hear rain flicking steadily against the kitchen windows. These were comfortable sounds, but the thought of the cellar was not a bit comfortable. He did not like the cellar, and he did not like going down the cellar stairs, because he always imagined there was something down there in the dark. That was silly, of course, his father said so and his mother said so and, even more important, Bill said so, but still—

He did not even like opening the door to flick on the light because he always had the idea—this was so exquisitely stupid he didn't dare tell anyone—that while he was feeling for the light switch, some horrible clawed paw would settle lightly over his wrist . . . and then jerk him down into the darkness that smelled of dirt and wet and dim rotted vegetables.

Stupid! There were no things with claws, all hairy and full of killing spite. Every now and then someone went crazy and killed a lot of people—sometimes Chet Huntley told about such things on the evening news—and of course there were Commies, but there was no weirdo monster living down in their cellar. Still, this idea lingered. In those interminable moments while he was groping for the switch with his right hand (his left arm curled around the doorjamb in a deathgrip), that cellar smell seemed to intensify until it filled the world. Smells of dirt and wet and long-gone vegetables would merge into one unmistakable ineluctable smell, the smell of the monster, the apothecary of all monsters. It was the smell of something for which he had no name: the smell of It, crouched and lurking and ready to spring. A creature which would eat anything but which was especially hungry for boymeat.

He had opened the door that morning and had groped interminably for the switch, holding the jamb in his usual deathgrip, his eyes squinted shut, the tip of his tongue poked from the corner of his mouth like an agonized rootlet searching for water in a place of drought. Funny? Sure! You betcha! Lookit you, Georgie! Georgie's scared of the dark! What a baby!

The sound of the piano came from what his father called the living room and what his mother called the parlor. It sounded like music from another world, far away, the way talk and laughter on a summer-crowded beach must sound to an exhausted swimmer who struggles with the undertow. His fingers found the switch! Ah!

They snapped it—
—and nothing. No light.

Oh, cripes! The power!

George snatched his arm back as if from a basket filled with snakes. He stepped back from the open cellar door, his heart hurrying in his chest. The power was out, of course—he had forgotten the power was out. Jeezly-crow! What now? Go back and tell Bill he couldn't get the box of paraffin because the power was out and he was afraid that something might get him as he stood on the cellar stairs, something that wasn't a Commie or a mass murderer but a creature much worse than either? That it would simply slither part of its rotted self up between the stair risers and grab his ankle? That would go over big, wouldn't it? Others might laugh at such a fancy, but Bill wouldn't laugh. Bill would be mad. Bill would say, "Grow up, Georgie . . . do you want this boat or not?"

As if this thought were his cue, Bill called from his bedroom: "Did you d-d-die out there, Juh-Georgie?"

"No, I'm gettin it, Bill," George called back at once. He rubbed at his arms, trying to make the guilty gooseflesh disappear and be smooth skin again. "I just stopped to get a drink of water."

"Well, h-hurry up!"

So he walked down the four steps to the cellar shelf, his heart a warm, beating hammer in his throat, the hair on the nape of his neck standing at attention, his eyes hot, his hands cold, sure that at any moment the cellar door would swing shut on its own, closing off the white light falling through the kitchen windows, and then he would hear It, something worse than all the Commies and murderers in the world, worse than the Japs, worse than Attila the Hun, worse than the somethings in a hundred horror movies. It, growing deeply—he would hear the growl in those lunatic seconds before it pounced on him and unzipped his guts.

The cellar-smell was worse than ever today, because of flood. Their house was high on Witcham Street, near the top of the hill, and they had escaped the worst of it, but they were still standing water down there that had seeped in through the old rock foundations. The smell was low and dank, making you want to take only the shallowest
George sifted through the junk on the shelf as fast as he could—old cans of Kiwi shoe polish and shoe polish rags, a broken kerosene lamp, two mostly empty bottles of Windex, an old flat can of Turtle wax. For some reason this can struck him, and he spent nearly thirty seconds looking at the turtle on the lid with a kind of hypnotic wonder. Then he tossed it back... and here it was at last, a square box with the word GULF on it.

George snatched it and ran up the stairs as fast as he could, suddenly aware that his shirttail was out and suddenly sure that his shirttail would be undoing: the thing in the cellar would allow him to get almost all the way out, and then it would grab the tail of his shirt and snatch him back and—

He reached the kitchen and swept the door shut behind him. It banged gustily. He leaned back against it with his eyes closed, sweat popped off on his arms and forehead, the box of paraffin gripped tightly in one hand.

The piano had come to a stop, and his mom's voice floated to him: "Georgie, can't you slam that door a little harder next time? Maybe you could break some of the plates in the Welsh dresser, if you really tried."

"Sorry, Mom," he called back.

"Georgie, you waste," Bill said from his bedroom. He pitched his voice low so their mother would not hear.

George snickered a little. His fear was already gone; it had slipped away from him as easily as a nightmare slips away from a man who awakes, cold-skinned and gasping from its grip; who feels his body and strengthens his surroundings to make sure that none of it ever happened and who then begins at once to forget it. Half is gone by the time his feet hit the floor; three-quarters of it by the time he emerges from the shower and begins to towel off; all of it by the time he finishes his breakfast. All gone... until the next time, when, in the grip of the nightmare, all fears will be remembered.

That turtle, George thought, going to the counter drawers where the matches were kept. Where did I see a turtle like that before?

But no answer came, and he dismissed the question.

He got a pack of matches from the drawer, a knife from the rack (holding the sharp edge studiously away from his body, as his dad had taught him), and a small bowl from the Welsh dresser in the dining room. Then he went back into Bill's room.

"W-What an a-hole you are, Juh-Georgie," Bill said, and

ably enough, and pushed back some of the sick-stuff on his nightstand: an empty glass, a pitcher of water, Kleenex, books, a bottle of Vicks VapoRub—the smell of which Bill would associate all his life with thick, phlegmy chests and snotty noses. The old Philco radio was there, too, playing not Chopin or Bach but a Little Richard tune... very softly, however, so softly that Little Richard was robbed of all his raw and elemental power. Their mother, who had studied classical piano at Juilliard, hated rock and roll. She did not merely dislike it; she abominated it.

"I'm no a-hole," George said, sitting on the edge of Bill's bed and putting the things he had gathered on the nightstand.

"Yes you are," Bill said. "Nothing but a great big brown a-hole, that's you."

George tried to imagine a kid who was nothing but a great big a-hole on legs and began to giggle.

"Your a-hole is bigger than Augusta," Bill said, beginning to giggle, too.

"Your a-hole is bigger than the whole state," George replied. This broke both boys up for nearly two minutes.

There followed a whispered conversation of the sort which means very little to anyone save small boys: accusations of who was the biggest a-hole, who had the biggest a-hole, which a-hole was the brownest, and so on. Finally Bill said one of the forbidden words—he accused George of being a big brown shitty a-hole—and they both got laughing hard.

Bill's laughter turned into a coughing fit. As it finally began to taper off (by then Bill's face had gone a plummy shade which George regarded with some alarm), the piano stopped again. They both looked in the direction of the parlor, listening for the piano-bench to scrape back, listening for their mother's impatient footsteps. Bill buried his mouth in a crook of his elbow, stifling the last of the coughs, pointing at the pitcher at the same time. George poured him a glass of water, which he drank off.

The piano began once more—Für Elise again. Stuttering he never forgot that piece, and even many years later it failed to bring gooseflesh to his arms and back; his neck would drop and he would remember: My mother was dead—what the day Georgie died.

"You gonna cough anymore, Bill?"

Bill pulled a Kleenex from the box, made a rumbling sound in his chest, spat phlegm into the tissue, screwed it up and tossed it into the wastebasket by his bed, which was filled with similar twists of tissue. Then he opened the box of
paraffin and dropped a waxy cube of the stuff into his palm. George watched him closely, but without speaking or questioning. Bill didn't like George talking to him while he did stuff, but George had learned that if he just kept his mouth shut, Bill would usually explain what he was doing.

Bill used the knife to cut off a small piece of the paraffin cube. He put the piece in the bowl, then struck a match and put it on top of the paraffin. The two boys watched the small yellow flame as the dying wind drove rain against the window in occasional spatters.

"Got to waterproof the boat or it'll just get wet and sink," Bill said. When he was with George, his stutter was light—sometimes he didn't stutter at all. In school, however, it could become so bad that talking became impossible for him. Communication would cease and Bill's schoolmates would look somewhere else while Bill clutched the sides of his desk, his face growing almost as red as his hair, his eyes squeezed into slits as he tried to winch some word out of his stubborn throat. Sometimes—most times—the word would come. Other times it simply refused. He had been hit by a car when he was three and knocked into the side of a building; he had remained unconscious for seven hours. The doctor said it was an accident which had caused the stutter. George sometimes got the feeling that his dad—and Bill himself—was not so sure.

The piece of paraffin in the bowl was almost entirely melted. The match-flame guttered lower, growing blue as it hugged the cardboard stick, and then it went out. Bill dipped his finger into the liquid, jerked it out with a faint hiss. He smiled apologetically at George. "Ha," he said. After a few seconds he dipped his finger in again and began to smear the wax along the sides of the boat, where it quickly dried to a milky haze.

"Can I do some?" George asked.

"Okay. Just don't get any on the blankets or Mom'll kill you."

George dipped his finger into the paraffin, which was now very warm but no longer hot, and began to spread it along the other side of the boat.

"Don't put on so much, you a-hole!" Bill said. "You want to sink it on its maiden cruise?"

"I'm sorry.

"That's all right. Just g-go easy."

George finished the other side, then held the boat in his hands. It felt a little heavier, but not much. "Too cool," he said. "I'm gonna go out and sail it."

"Yeah, you do that," Bill said. He suddenly looked tired—tired and still not very well.

"I wish you could come," George said. He really did. Bill sometimes got bossy after awhile, but he always had the coolest ideas and he hardly ever hit. "It's your boat, really."

"She," Bill said. "You call boats sh-sh."?

"She, then."

"I wish I could come, too," Bill said glumly.

"Well..." George shifted from one foot to the other, the boat in his hands.

"You put on your rain-stuff," Bill said, "or you'll wind up with the fluh-huh like me. Probably catch it anyway, from my juh-germs."

"Thanks, Bill. It's a neat boat." And he did something he hadn't done for a long time, something Bill never forgot: he leaned over and kissed his brother's cheek.

"You'll catch it for sure now, you a-hole," Bill said, but he seemed cheered up all the same. He smiled at George.

"Put all this stuff back, too. Or Mom'll have a h-bird."

"Sure." He gathered up the waterproofing equipment and crossed the room, the boat perched precariously on top of the paraffin box, which was sitting askew in the little bowl.

"Huh-Juh-Geologie?"

George turned back to look at his brother.

"Be c-careful."

"Sure." His brow creased a little. That was something, too. Mom said, not your big brother. It was as strange as him giving Bill a kiss. "Sure I will."

He went out. Bill never saw him again.
sprawling, skinning one knee and crying out in pain. From
his new pavement-level perspective he watched his boat swing
around twice, momentarily caught in another whirlpool, and
then disappear.

"Shit and Shinola!" he yelled again, and slammed his fist
down on the pavement. That hurt too, and he began to cry a
little. What a stupid way to lose the boat!

He got up and walked over to the stormdrain. He dropped
to his knees and peered in. The water made a dank hollow
sound as it fell into the darkness. It was a spooky sound. It
reminded him of—

"Huh!" The sound was jerked out of him as if on a string,
and he recoiled.

There were yellow eyes in there: the sort of eyes he had
always imagined but never actually seen down in the base-
ment. It's an animal, he thought incoherently, that's all it is,
some animal, maybe a housecat that got stuck down in there—

Still, he was ready to run—would run in a second or two,
when his mental switchboard had dealt with the shock those
two shiny yellow eyes had given him. He felt the rough
two shiny yellow eyes had given him. He felt the rough
surface of the macadam under his fingers, and the thin sheen
of cold water flowing around them. He saw himself getting
up and backing away, and that was when a voice—a per-
fectly reasonable and rather pleasant voice—spoke to him
from inside the stormdrain.

"Hi, Georgie," it said.

George blinked and looked again. He could barely credit
what he saw; it was like something from a made-up story, or
a movie where you know the animals will talk and dance. It
he had been ten years older, he would not have believed
what he was seeing, but he was not sixteen. He was six.

There was a clown in the stormdrain. The light in there
was far from good, but it was good enough so that George
Denbrough was sure of what he was seeing. It was a clown
like in the circus or on TV. In fact he looked like a cross
between Bozo and Clarabell, who talked by honking his
horn on Howdy Doody Saturday mornings—Buffalo Bob.

George was never really sure of the gender of the clown,
and that always cracked George up. The face of the clown
in the stormdrain was white, there were funny tufts of red
on either side of his bald head, and there was a big clown
smile painted over his mouth. If George had been in his
later year, he would have surely thought of Ronald
Donald before Bozo or Clarabell.

The clown held a bunch of balloons, all colors, like gor-
geous ripe fruit in one hand.

In the other he held George’s newspaper boat.

“Want your boat, Georgie?” The clown smiled.

George smiled back. He couldn’t help it; it was the kind
of smile you just had to answer. “I sure do,” he said.

The clown laughed. “I sure do. That’s good! That’s very
good! And how about a balloon?”

“Well... sure!” He reached forward... and then drew
his hand reluctantly back. “I’m not supposed to take stuff
from strangers. My dad said so.”

“Very wise of your dad,” the clown in the stormdrain
said, smiling. How, George wondered, could I have thought
his eyes were yellow? They were a bright, dancing blue, the
color of his mom’s eyes, and Bill’s. “Very wise indeed.
Therefore I will introduce myself. I, Georgie, am Mr. Bob
Gray, also known as Pennwise the Dancing Clown. Penn-
wise, meet George Denbrough. George, meet Pennwise.
And now we know each other. I’m not a stranger to you,
you’re not a stranger to me. Kee-rect?”

George giggled. “I guess so.” He reached forward again
and drew his hand back again. “How did you get down there?”

Storm just blew me away,” Pennwise the Dancing
Clown said. “It blew the whole circus away. Can you smell
the circus, Georgie?”

George leaned forward. Suddenly he could smell peanuts!
Not roasted peanuts! And vinegar! The white kind you put
on your french fries through a hole in the cap! He could
smell cotton candy and fried doughboys and the faint but
thunderous odor of wild-animal shit. He could smell the
fusty aroma of midway sawdust. And yet...

And yet under it all was the smell of flood and decompos-
ing leaves and dark stormdrain shadows. That smell was wet
and rotten. The cellar-smell.

But the other smells were stronger.

“Is it true I can smell it,” he said.

“Was it your boat, Georgie?” Pennwise asked. “I only
ask because you really do not seem that eager.”

He was wearing a baggy silk suit with
range buttons. A bright tie, electric-blue, flopped
out, and on his hands were big white gloves, like
Jockey Mouse and Donald Duck always wore.

“I see,” George said, looking into the stormdrain.

“Balloon? I’ve got red and green and yellow and
"Do they float?"

"Float?" The clown's grin widened. "Oh yes, indeed they do. They float! And there's cotton candy. . . ."

George reached.

The clown seized his arm.

And George saw the clown's face change.

What he saw then was terrible enough to make his worst imaginings of the thing in the cellar look like sweet dreams; what he saw destroyed his sanity in one clawing stroke.

"They float," the thing in the drain crooned in a clotted, chuckling voice. It held George's arm in its thick and wormy grip, it pulled George toward that terrible darkness where the water rushed and roared and bellowed as it bore its cargo of storm debris toward the sea. George craned his neck away from that final blackness and began to scream into the rain, to scream mindlessly into the white autumn sky which curved above Derry on that day in the fall of 1957. His screams were shrill and piercing, and all up and down Witcham Street people came to their windows or bolted out onto their porches.

"They float," it growled, "they float, Georgie, and when you're down here with me, you'll float, too—"

George's shoulder socked against the cement of the curb.

The Shoeboat that day because of the flood, saw only a small boy in a yellow rainslicker, a small boy who was screaming and writhing in the gutter with muddy water spilling over his face and making his screams sound bubbly.

"Everything down here floats," that chuckling, rotten voice whispered, and suddenly there was a ripping noise and a flaring sheet of agony, and George Denbrough knew no more.

Dave Gardener was the first to get there, and although he arrived only forty-five seconds after the first scream, George Denbrough was already dead. Gardener grabbed him by the back of the slicker, pulled him into the street . . . and began to scream himself as George's body turned over in his hands.

The left side of George's slicker was now bright red. Blood flowed into the storm drain from the tattered hole where the left arm had been. A knob of bone, horribly bright, peeped through the torn cloth.

The boy's eyes stared up into the white sky, and as Dave staggered away toward the others already running pell-mell down the street, they began to fill up with rain.