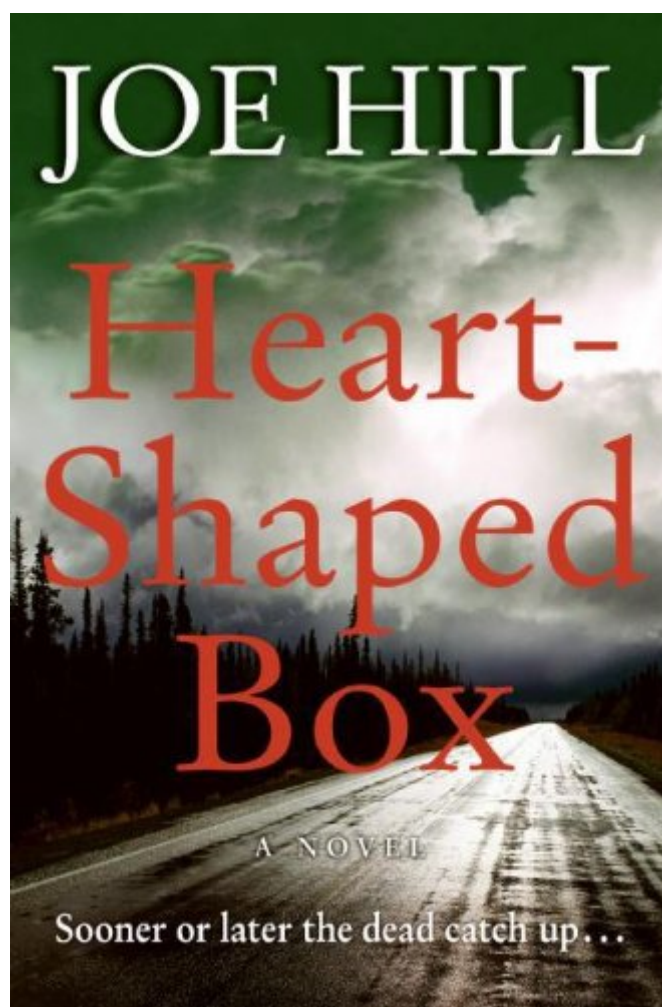


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Heart-Shaped Box: A Novel



Synopsis

Judas Coyne is a collector of the macabre: a cookbook for cannibals . . . a used hangman's noose . . . a snuff film. An aging death-metal rock god, his taste for the unnatural is as widely known to his legions of fans as the notorious excesses of his youth. But nothing he possesses is as unlikely or as dreadful as his latest discovery, an item for sale on the Internet, a thing so terribly strange, Jude can't help but reach for his wallet. I will "sell" my stepfather's ghost to the highest bidder. . . . For a thousand dollars, Jude will become the proud owner of a dead man's suit, said to be haunted by a restless spirit. He isn't afraid. He has spent a lifetime coping with ghostsâ of an abusive father, of the lovers he callously abandoned, of the bandmates he betrayed. What's one more? But what UPS delivers to his door in a black heart-shaped box is no imaginary or metaphorical ghost, no benign conversation piece. It's the real thing. And suddenly the suit's previous owner is everywhere: behind the bedroom door . . . seated in Jude's restored vintage Mustang . . . standing outside his window . . . staring out from his widescreen TV. Waitingâ with a gleaming razor blade on a chain dangling from one bony hand. . . . A multiple-award winner for his short fiction, author Joe Hill immediately vaults into the top echelon of dark fantasists with a blood-chilling roller-coaster ride of a novel, a masterwork brimming with relentless thrills and acid terror.

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Customer Reviews

I'll finish the sentence that started this review in a bit. First, two disclaimers or confessions here: 1. I don't normally like horror stories. 2. I don't usually like novels that have to do with the supernatural or life beyond the grave or any of that - with some notable exceptions. Many of them simply don't seem all that engrossing. Gross? Maybe. But captivating? Not usually. But this book grabbed hold of me from the start. It could be because I've been thinking about mortality lately and so the plot (centering on life and death, love and revenge) was compelling to me. But I don't think so. I think it is truly a good book. The plot: Judas Coyne (known simply as Jude to most) collects macabre objects, even snuff films (and yes, this is a sign that his soul is a bit awry and aching). But when he buys a dead man's suit he isn't prepared for what is coming to haunt him. Joe Hill, the author of this novel, did such a fine job creating the atmosphere and characters in this book that I didn't want to put it down. Jude Coyne, the main guy in this one, isn't prone to staying in relationships and he can be a cold, hard man. As the book progresses, I found his evolution and development to be compelling. I was rooting for him. Would he be able to face his internal and external ghosts, past and present, and become a better person for it? I really wanted to know and I found him to be believable, however flawed (and maybe more compelling because of his flaws). The author has a firm grasp on the art of creating cliff-hanger endings for chapters. Take this sentence: "And who knew that getting a finger blown off and losing half a pint of blood could be so good for your sense of humor?", for example.

I was a Stephen King fan going way back and always love to get my hands on a new book that makes me feel like I did when I first read King classics like *The Shining*, *The Stand* and *Misery*--like I was riding in a car barreling down a road at night, going a little fast for my comfort but knowing that the driver had a sure hand on the wheel...even if he's overdriving the headlights just a little and the landscape around the car is getting more surreal, I'm sure we'll make it out okay on the other side so I just have to buckle in and enjoy the ride. It's been a long time since I've enjoyed a horror/supernatural book in that way. When I saw the great reviews for Joe Hill's *Heart Shaped Box*, I got my hopes up and hurried to get the book in my hands. I was not in the least disappointed. *Heart Shaped Box* is a bit of a horror tale, more than a hint of Southern Gothic, a road story but above all it is a tale of redemption. Judas Coyne is a heavy metal rocker who used his music to express the anger and hurt of his own abusive upbringing, and is now living in luxurious if semi-meaningless

retirement. He manages his holdings, has a succession of much younger girlfriends named after states, and has a collection of oddities bought off the internet or purchased over the years. So he can't resist the opportunity to buy a real ghost, which comes attached to an old fashioned suit the ghost used to wear. As soon as the ghost arrives, however, Judas finds there's much more at stake. He's been set up, and this ghost-or whatever it is-has a very personal vendetta with him. He and everyone close to him will die, the ghost promises.

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