

STEPHEN KING:

A VERY BUSY MAN

*The Spook explores the possibilities of
an interview*

STEPHEN KING
GUY
WIKING

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ISBN 0-670-45193-2

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Stephen King isn't exactly the easiest person on the planet to get an interview with. Because he is so well known, and because his name can be such a boon to a publication of any size, he has no end of requests. Add this to the fact that he is not only a prolific author but also a devoted family man, and you'll have a good feel for why he doesn't have time for every reporter who stumbles across his phone number.

So, being perhaps a little more clever than some of our competitors, your faithful servants at *The Spook* decided to take the unusual step of conducting an interview with King via e-mail. How could he refuse? It hardly takes any time at all to answer an e-mail, and if we just sent one a day over the course of a week or so, we'd hardly be bothering him at all. Also, by posting the contents of his responses verbatim, we can be sure that there will be no misquotes or misunderstandings.

It didn't take our ace researchers long to track down an e-mail address for King, and we were pleased to receive an almost immediate response. Over the course of the next two weeks, we were able to conduct quite an entertaining interview, the results of which are printed below, formatted as if the conversation had taken place in a single sitting.

THE SPOOK: Mr. King, thank you for gracing our pages with your presence! To start things off, could you sum up your career in a few sentences, just to give us a feeling of how you see yourself?

KING: Thank you for your interest in Stephen King. Unfortunately, because of the large number of fan letters and e-mails Mr. King receives, he is not able to respond to them personally.

THE SPOOK: Horror authors are often asked if there was some incident in their past, some horrible secret or terrible shock, which led them to write horror as opposed to, say, romance or science fiction. How do you respond to such questions?

KING: Thank you for your interest in Stephen King. Unfortunately, because of the large number of fan letters and e-mails Mr. King receives, he is not able to respond to them personally.

THE SPOOK: Your first novel, *Carrie*, was about a young woman who is taunted by her peers. Do you find it difficult to write from the perspective of a woman — something which you have done with great success in several novels? And did Carrie's feelings of being an outsider reflect feelings that you had as a child?

KING: Your e-mail address looks familiar. Didn't you send us another question yesterday? The reply I sent should have made clear that Mr. King doesn't really have time to answer questions from his fans. Perhaps you should see if you can find one of the many good books or articles which have been written about him

over the years. Thank you for your understanding.

THE SPOOK: You, Steve, have become almost a synonym for horror. Do you feel that this limits you as a writer? Or, at this point, do you think that people are reading you because they know to expect quality and that the shivers are just a nice addition?

KING: This isn't Mr. King you're writing to. My name's Marsha, and I'm one of the people who takes care of his office. From your e-mail address it looks like you work for *The Spook* magazine. I believe I told your publisher that Mr. King won't be able to do anything with you for at least a couple of years. Keep in mind that he has also announced his retirement, so there's a very good possibility that he'll have nothing for you even after those two years have passed. We certainly wish you the best of luck with your publication, but that's the best we can do at this time.

THE SPOOK: Okay, "Marsha," let's turn to a different subject — you took the world by surprise when it was discovered that the author of *Thinner*, Richard Bachman, was really you. There are rumors that you have used other names to hide your identity over the years. This has even led vague credibility to recent rumors that you wrote a book under an assumed name to tie in with your recent *Rose Red* miniseries. Without giving away more than you want to, can you tell us how many names you've actually written under, "Marsha"?

KING: I think we're having a bit of a misunderstanding here. Your e-mails are reaching Stephen King's business office, not his personal computer. My name really is Marsha. If you can find someone who gets *Cemetery Dance* magazine, you can look back a couple of years and find an in-depth article about the office here. I think my picture's in it and everything. In any case, I can't answer your questions, and I won't be passing them on to Steve. Sorry about that.

THE SPOOK: Speaking of "passing on" — there is definitely a focus on grisly death in several of your novels — the pantyhoose-and-insinkerator scene in *Firestarter* comes to mind — and yet you seem to prefer more character-oriented horrors. Is this because you feel that shock does not equal horror, that anticipation of the worst happening is more terrifying than actual depictions of death, or for another reason?

KING: I can't see how I could be any more clear about the futility of your continuing to send your questions to this address. If this is supposed to be a joke, I'm afraid that I don't really see the point.

THE SPOOK: You certainly would be one to know about jokes! There is much humor in your work — the riddle games in the Dark Tower series and stories like "Sole Survivor" in your anthology *Monkeyshines* come to mind.

KING: The story you are thinking of is “Survivor Type” and the name of the collection (not “anthology”) is *Skeleton Crew*. The monkey on the cover must have thrown you. *Sole Survivor* is a Dean Koontz novel. I’m trying to be friendly here, but I don’t want to encourage you. I really don’t need to see any more of your questions, and if you are working on an article of some type, I’d suggest that you be a little more careful with your research.

THE SPOOK: I know exactly what you mean about research! Do you find yourself having to do a lot of it? You mentioned in one of your essays having to find out how to hotwire a car so that your description of it in a story would be wrong — you were afraid that people might try and copy the instructions in your work. Is this a common type of problem?

KING: One last time, Steve is not receiving these questions. Please desist.

THE SPOOK: My favorite among your novels is *The Stand*, and I enjoyed the expanded version of it even more than the shorter version. Have you ever thought of revisiting some of your older novels, much as Dean R. Koontz — who you mentioned before — has done? Granted, some of his older novels really needed the work and yours don’t, but are there some of your

works you’d like to take another stab at — no pun intended!?

KING: I think I’ve said all I can say and these notes are taking up more of my time and thoughts than they should. I’ve added your address to my e-mail program’s blocked senders list. I will not receive any other notes you might send. Perhaps you should learn to read the responses to your e-mails more carefully.

THE SPOOK: That reminds me of a story. I recall hearing about one of your fans who was so in love with the original *Dark Tower* that she copied the entire book by hand by making dozens of trips to her local library — since they didn’t allow the book to circulate, knowing that copies were often “lost”. Later, when the book was eventually released as a non-limited edition, she must have felt that her notes had taken up more time than they should! Can you think of any other anecdotes involving your fanatical fans which would be particularly entertaining to our readers?

KING: [No response after two days]

THE SPOOK: Steve?

KING: [No response]

THE SPOOK: Well, thank you for your time. Now, get back to writing those books we all love to fear! ~

