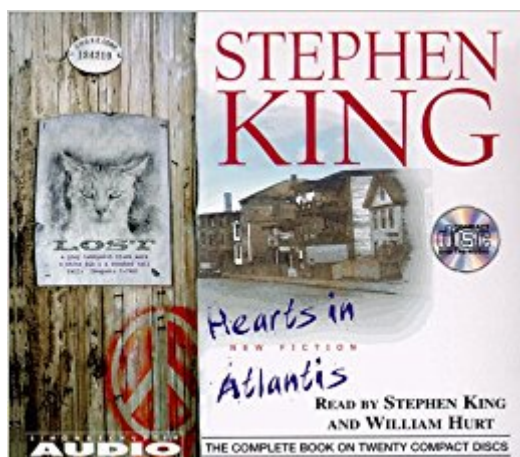


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# Hearts In Atlantis



## Synopsis

Stephen King, whose first novel, *Carrie*, was published in 1974, the year before the last U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam, is the first hugely popular writer of the TV generation. Images from that war -- and the protests against it -- had flooded America's living rooms for a decade. *Hearts in Atlantis*, King's newest fiction, is composed of five interconnected, sequential narratives, set in the years from 1960 to 1999. Each story is deeply rooted in the sixties, and each is haunted by the Vietnam War. In Part One, "Low Men in Yellow Coats," eleven-year-old Bobby Garfield discovers a world of predatory malice in his own neighborhood. He also discovers that adults are sometimes not rescuers but at the heart of the terror. In the title story, a bunch of college kids get hooked on a card game, discover the possibility of protest...and confront their own collective heart of darkness, where laughter may be no more than the thinly disguised cry of the beast. In "Blind Willie" and "Why We're in Vietnam," two men who grew up with Bobby in suburban Connecticut try to fill the emptiness of the post-Vietnam era in an America which sometimes seems as hollow -- and haunted -- as their own lives. And in "Heavenly Shades of Night Are Falling," this remarkable audiobook's denouement, Bobby returns to his hometown where one final secret, the hope of redemption, and his heart's desire may await him. Full of danger, full of suspense, most of all full of heart, Stephen King's new audiobook will take some listeners to a place they have never been...and others to a place they have never been able to completely leave.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

With his idiosyncratic blend of patrician airs and boyish charm, narrator William Hurt provides a wonderful complement to this wildly imaginative collection of short stories by author Stephen King. Hurt carefully weaves the disparate elements into a cohesive whole, embracing the subtle complexities of each character; one moment a wizened sadness leaks into his voice as a haunted old man, pursued by demons, asks his 11-year-old lookout, "You know everyone on this street, on this block of this street anyway? And you'd know strangers? Sojourners? Faces of those unknown?" Then, in a profound yet almost imperceptible switch, he exposes the boy's naive enthusiasm, "I think so." Right about here your neck hairs will stand at attention. Hurt's peculiar vocal style is in perfect pitch to King's dark, surreal vision of growing up amid the monsters of post-Vietnam America. (Running time: 21 hours, 20 CDs) --George Laney

This collection of five thematically linked short stories dwells on the legacy of the 1960s. They share a collective moodiness, a feeling of depressed hangover coming after youth has been lost and the nation has suffered troubled times. Read aloud, this pungent atmosphere is especially strong. A-list actor Hurt stylishly performs the lengthy opener, "Low Men in Yellow Coats," in which 11-year-old Bobby Garfield falls under the spell of an older man his mother has taken in as a boarder (a father figure who introduces him first to literature *A Lord of the Flies* then to supernatural phenomena). Hurt skillfully evokes pathos from the story's fine detailing: its sense of small-town place and Bobby's child's-eye-view of the evil characters around him. King reads the title story, "Hearts in Atlantis," about Maine college students who mindlessly play cards instead of studying while the Vietnam War rages in the background. The author's modest, reedy voice rings with autobiographical truth *As the* protagonist is a young would-be writer, naive to the ways of the world. Taken together, at 21 hours' listening, however, King's shining moments too often give way to fatigue: the stories are repetitious, full of plot rehashings and meaningless asides. Also available on CD. Simultaneous release with the Scribner hardcover. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I'm not much of a reader and far less a critic. I went in reverse: watching the movie, before reading the book that inspired it. I admit I impatiently groped the text for greater content. Scott Hicks, director of the film, has a way of condensing large books with extensive backgrounds of full-bodied characters very effectively. He culls out the unnecessary content, to unveil the heart of the story. He did this too in one of Guterson's novels, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, focusing on the love story. With *Hearts in Atlantis* he focuses on the magic of childhood. I enjoyed this book, but grew bored with the descriptions of the peripheral characters of the story, but was amazed how King dotted the dark

background with cameos of the main characters like stars, before bringing them all back again for their final performance.

I've listened to this audio book twice and I'll listen to it again. King's story telling mastery shines in this one tying the world of the "low men in yellow dusters" (agents of the Dark Tower's Crimson King) who search for and finally catch Ted (an escaped breaker - psychics who are captured by the Crimson King and forced to aid this monster in trying to destroy the tower - the object of Roland's quest in the Dark Tower series); with the world of Bobby, a young boy just entering his teen years who lives in the same rental building where Ted takes up residency while trying to hide from the low men. Bobby strikes up a friendship with the much older and mysterious Ted who hires Bobby to read the daily newspaper to him and to watch the neighborhood for signs that the low men may be close by. When Bobby starts seeing the signs he is supposed to watch for, he doesn't tell Ted because he knows that Ted will flee the low men if they are near. Bobby's two closest young friends are Carol and Sully John who also are drawn into Ted's wierd and mysterious circle of influence. Before he is captured by the low men Ted uses his abilities to help heal the injured Carol when Bobby carries her home after she is beaten by the neighborhood bully boys with a baseball bat. In the later short stories tied into this book so smoothly by the King, Bobby and Carol are reunited during their college years after being separated following Ted's capture when Bobby's mother abruptly leaves the neighborhood for a new town and a new job after she was horribly attacked and sexually assaulted by her boss and 2 of his croonies at a real estate convention where the ambitious and not so gullible mother has manuvered herself leaving Bobby in Ted's care while she is gone. Bobby's life in the college dorms is a nostalgic trip for those of us who entered college during the Viet Nam era, and his passing reunification with Carol has a striking resemblance to the ships-passing-in-the-night relationship between Forest Gump and the love of his life. The beginning and ending of this book involves Bobby's return to the old neighborhood to attend Carol's funeral. For those who are Dark Tower junkies like me, the timing of this book fills in some vital facts about what is wrong with the Tower which King has not yet revealed in the Tower series books. You can also pick up more insights regarding the cause of the problems with the tower in *Insomnia*, and *Black House*. In all this is another great story by the master story-teller of our time with magically vivid characters and richly described worlds for them to live in. NOBODY but King could take 5 short stories and tie them together so smoothly while revealing as yet untold details for an entirely different series of Books which he has been creating over the last 30+ years. Amazing.

can't remember some details. I saw the movie too. that's why I chose the book as a gift. price is very acceptable.

I'd seen the movie first. The book began about the same, but was much different than the movie. I liked the characters in the movie more. I think the movie actually improved on the book, especially the ending. The movie was more nostalgic, less Steven King like. The book has all the usual Stephen King scary characters. King is never particularly kind in describing or writing about his human characters. Still, I liked the book and if I was not comparing it to the movie I'd probably have liked it more.

Hearts in Atlantis is the second King I've read. It possesses an odd dose of Sci-Fi in a series of 5 stories that lead up to and look back on the 60s, Vietnam factoring huge in 3 and 4. The characterizations of people in all are fantastic. The first two stories are brilliant. King starts with an outlandish premise that succeeds against all odds. It's a wonderfully human story about a sucky mother who has a terrific son, childhood relationships and another dimension - go figure - and has the largest dose of Sci-Fi. In fact, there is no more Sci-Fi until the very end of story 4. The second story follows to college the girl of three childhood friends (Bobby, Sully-John and Carol) from story 1. It's about college relationships and has phenomenal scenes of students possessed by a card game called Hearts. Really terrific. The third is about a man whose bizarrely lucrative adult life is constructed around the reverberations of Vietnam and a cowardly vicious childhood act depicted in story 1. The fourth picks up the life of Sully-John, now in his 50s. Story 5 picks up the life of Bobby, the wonderful boy with the sucky mother from story 1. I was so happy to see this wonderful boy again that I was disappointed by the story, which was sappy, predictable and a cop out. It was a necessary glue, however.

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