



Bag of Bones

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Stephen King published his first horror classic, *CARRIE*, in 1974. Since then, King has produced numerous best-selling terrifying novels, including *THE SHINING* (1977), *IT* (1986), *MISERY* (1987), *THE DARK HALF* (1989), and *INSOMNIA* (1994). One of King's special talents has been the ability to successfully insert popular culture into the horror genre. For *BAG OF BONES*, King has once again employed a writer as his central character and narrator. Mike Noonan is a middle-aged author from Maine who writes suspense novels. His novels have been widely successful, but the tragic death of his wife shatters his whole world. The grief becomes so overpowering that Noonan suffers from writer's block. Since Noonan has a number of unpublished manuscripts locked away, he is able to deliver what seems to be new material to his publisher on a regular basis. Once he runs out of old manuscripts though, Noonan decides to go to his vacation lodge, Sara Laughs, in rural Maine with the hope of shaking off his writer's block. Sara Laughs was so named for an African American folksinger who had lived in the area.

While at the lodge, Noonan discovers that it is haunted. He also becomes attached to the twenty-year-old widow Mattie Devore and her young daughter, Kyra. Through his relationship with Mattie and Kyra, Noonan finds the strength to deal with his grief and begin writing again. In addition, he must also support Mattie in her struggle to fight against Kyra's wealthy grandfather, Max Devore, in a custody battle. The devious grandfather will stop at nothing to gain custody of his granddaughter. Noonan must be ever-vigilant against the tortured spirits that haunt Sara Laughs as well as the malevolent intentions of the elderly Devore.

While part suspense story, *BAG OF BONES* is also a musing about the creative process itself and comments on how love can serve as a salve for a wounded soul. King attempts to weave together a number of diverse elements in *BAG OF BONES*. For the most part, it all holds together. However, there are some awkward transitions that may jar a reader to distraction.

Sources for Further Study

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