



Blaze: A Novel

By Richard Bachman, Stephen King

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The last of the Richard Bachman novels, recently recovered and published for the first time. Stephen King's "dark half" may have saved the best for last.

A fellow named Richard Bachman wrote *Blaze* in 1973 on an Olivetti typewriter, then turned the machine over to Stephen King, who used it to write *Carrie*. Bachman died in 1985 ("cancer of the pseudonym"), but in late 2006 King found the original typescript of *Blaze* among his papers at the University of Maine's Fogler Library ("How did this get here?!"), and decided that with a little revision it ought to be published.

Blaze is the story of Clayton Blaisdell, Jr. -- of the crimes committed against him and the crimes he commits, including his last, the kidnapping of a baby heir worth millions. Blaze has been a slow thinker since childhood, when his father threw him down the stairs -- and then threw him down again. After escaping an abusive institution for boys when he was a teenager, Blaze hooks up with George, a seasoned criminal who thinks he has all the answers. But then George is killed, and Blaze, though haunted by his partner, is on his own.

He becomes one of the most sympathetic criminals in all of literature. This is a crime story of surprising strength and sadness, with a suspenseful current sustained by the classic workings of fate and character -- as taut and riveting as Stephen King's *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*.

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Blaze: A Novel By Richard Bachman, Stephen King Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #20200 in Audible
- Published on: 2007-06-04
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 492 minutes

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Written circa 1973, this trunk novel, as Bachman's double (aka Stephen King) refers to it in his self-deprecating foreword, lacks the drama and intensity of *Carrie* and the horror opuses that followed it. Still, this fifth Bachman book (after 1996's *The Regulators*) shows King fine-tuning his skill at making memorable characters out of simple salt-of-the-earth types. Clayton Blaze Blaisdell has fallen into a life of delinquency ever since his father's brutal abuse rendered him feble-minded. King alternates chapters recounting Blaze's past mistreatment at a series of Maine orphanages and foster homes with Blaze's current plans to follow through on a kidnapping scheme plotted by his recently murdered partner in crime, George Rackley. Blaze talks to George as though he's still there, and the conversations give the tale tension, with Blaze coming across as a pitiable and surprisingly sympathetic contrast to prickly George. Despite its predictability, this diverting soft-boiled crime novel reflects influences ranging from John Steinbeck to James M. Cain. Also included is a previously uncollected story, *Memory*, the seed of King's forthcoming novel *Duma Key*. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review *Blaze*—Clayton Blaisdell Jr.—is a big dummy, very big: six-seven, 270. But not exactly very dumb. He was a smart little boy until his drunken father threw him downstairs three times in a row. He relearned to read a bit, mostly comic books, but was thereafter an otherwise learning-challenged ward of the state with a horrendous dent in his forehead. Now a mid-twenties adult, he has just lost his bosom buddy and partner in petty cons, George, who still speaks to him somehow, especially about the big score, the one to retire on. Blaze realizes that George isn't really haunting him; in fact, Blaze possesses an excellent, though highly selective, memory. In honor of George, he decides to do the big one, the kidnapping of a wealthy couple's baby. He succeeds, albeit imperfectly enough that the state cops and FBI know whodunit within a day, and he surprises himself by bonding with the infant, which for readers makes the hunt for Blaze an Alfred Hitchcock-like exercise in moral ambivalence. It's impossible not to root for Blaze, especially since Bachman flashes back copiously and with maximal sympathy to the damaged man's past. Stephen King, who "buried" Bachman in 1985, here revamps a 1973 manuscript by his alter ego that he says is something of an homage to James T. Farrell, Jim Thompson, and Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Powerful and moving, it's a worthy tribute, especially to Steinbeck. Olson, Ray

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About the Author

During the years 1966-1973, **Stephen King** was actually two men. Stephen King wrote (and sold) horror stories to magazines such as *Cavalier* and *Adam*, while **Richard Bachman** wrote a series of novels that would not be published until the early 1980s and were then collected as *The Bachman Books*. Bachman died of pseudonym cancer in 1985, shortly after another of his novels, *Thinner*, was attributed to Stephen King; but a sixth Bachman novel, *The Regulators*, surfaced in 1995 and was published simultaneously with Stephen King's *Desperation*, to which it bore a weird resemblance. *Blaze* -- both brutal and sensitive -- was the last novel written during Bachman's early period. It is his legacy.

King's proceeds from *Blaze* will be donated to The Haven Foundation, which supports freelance artists.

Ron McLarty has appeared on Broadway in *That Championship Season*, *Our Country's Good*, and *Moonchildren*. His film credits include *Two Bits*, *The Postman*, and *The Flamingo Kid*. He has starred on television in *Spenser for Hire* and *Cop Rock*. Mr. McLarty is also a novelist and an award-winning

playwright.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Wood:

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