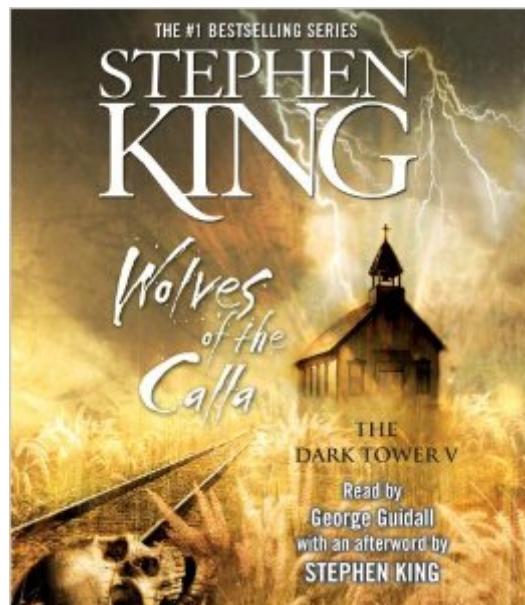


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The Dark Tower V: Wolves Of The Calla



Synopsis

Roland Deschain and his ka-tet are bearing southeast through the forests of Mid-World, the almost timeless landscape that seems to stretch from the wreckage of civility that defined Roland's youth to the crimson chaos that seems the future's only promise. Followers of Stephen King's epic series know Roland well, or as well as this enigmatic hero can be known. They also know the companions who have been drawn to his quest for the Dark Tower: Eddie Dean and his wife, Susannah; Jake Chambers, the boy who has come twice through the doorway of death into Roland's world; and Oy, the Billy Bumbler. In this long-awaited fifth novel in the saga, their path takes them to the outskirts of Calla Bryn Sturgis, a tranquil valley community of farmers and ranchers on Mid-World's borderlands. Beyond the town the rocky ground rises towards the hulking darkness of Thunderclap, the source of a terrible affliction that is slowly stealing the community's soul. One of the town's residents is Pere Callahan, a ruined priest who, like Susannah, Eddie and Jake, passed through one of the portals that lead both into and out of Roland's world. As Father Callahan tells the ka-tet the astonishing story of what happened following his shamed departure from Maine in 1977, his connection to the Dark Tower becomes clear, as does the danger facing a single red rose in a vacant lot off Second Avenue in midtown Manhattan. For Calla Bryn Sturgis, danger gathers in the east like a storm cloud. The Wolves of Thunderclap and their unspeakable depredation are coming. To resist them is to risk all, but these are odds the gunslingers are used to, and they can give the Calla folken both courage and cunning. Their guns, however, will not be enough.

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Customer Reviews

Maybe not the best in the series...I still think the fourth book holds that place, but well worth the wait. It is in this book we see the characters finally work together as trained Gunslingers. Each of the characters has a pressing problem and hardship in their lives, and yet they must put them aside to help the children of the Calla. How these characters deal with their own monumental problems and act as true heroes at the same time is a reflection of the fact they have become true gunslingers, following Roland. King also takes the opportunity to let this book show us more of Roland's world and culture. I found the dance Roland did at the start of the book fascinating, and the society of goddess worshiping disk throwing women seemed like they might have walked out of the pages of Roman Mythology. King does a great job rounding the culture, and giving us views of the world just as if we were reading a historical fiction, instead of high fantasy. *Wolves of the Calla*, at 736 pages, is the longest yet of the series. But the length is justified as King takes time to create characters and places so real, you feel as if you might have been there before in some odd and half forgotten dream. He builds suspense to the final battle with the Wolves, and then makes that battle as fast, and horrible as any real war skirmish. Many complained about the references to pop culture, King's other works, and aspects of the "real" world, but I thought they only served to make the idea of the Tower as an axis of reality more believable. Making himself a real, yet invisible character in the book gave me a little shiver, after all...if King is real in that world so am I and all his readers. Heh heh heh. It only served to make the sense of so many realities tied in one moment of fate more grand.

Stephen King has said that of all the books he has written, the Dark Tower is the most important and deeply meaningful work he has produced. Reading each successive volume, I can see that this is increasingly true. The series seems to be the summing up of his writing career by incorporating many of the characters, story lines, philosophies, mythologies, and literary inspirations of his previous works into this single far-reaching fantasy universe. This fifth installment more strongly than ever incorporates such references, including *Salem's Lot*, *The Stand*, *Hearts in Atlantis*, and many others. He also includes references to a myriad of books by other authors besides the obvious Tolkien. I found allusions to the works of L. Frank Baum, J.K. Rowling, Richard Adams, and even Marvel Comics. I will not provide a detailed recap of the story here since so many other reviewers have already done so. What I will attempt to do is explain why I give *Wolves of the Calla* only 3 stars, as well as to list its strengths and weaknesses. The story of the residents of the Calla and their joining forces with Roland's ka-tet to vanquish the wolves deserves 5 stars. There is intrigue, town politics, an ominous threat hanging over the twin children of the residents, and an

exciting battle between Wolf and man. The personalities of the townsfolk, who are divided in their opinions of whether to fight or submit to the wolves, are well developed, as is that of the enigmatic Andy the Messenger Robot. King has done an excellent job developing the mythology and culture of the "folken" of Calla Bryn Sturgis. The reader is treated to a realistic and colorful portrayal of their language, culture, festivals, music, and traditions.

(I'll attempt to make this review spoiler-free, but I can't give any promises) I'm aware that the crowd here is fairly rabid, so I'll get the obligatory positive points out of the way. I've read almost everything Mr. King has written up 'til the point, and I firmly believe that he will be lauded in retrospect (laudation always seems to occur in retrospect) as one of the preeminent writers of his generation. His prose is artful, his characters believable, and his stories spell-binding, and the Dark Tower is no exception. It is, as he has frequently said, the lynchpin around which his universe revolves. In recent years, however, I've seen this as becoming more of a crutch than anything else. Mr. King has been inserting Dark Tower-isms into everything he's written as of late, and while I don't necessarily mind this particular conceit, it frequently comes off occasionally as something he simply cannot escape doing (like that legendary gag about how every William Shatner TV appearance includes the word "Klingons" somewhere). "Black House" disappointed me by turning the vibrant and original world of the "Territories" that he and Peter Straub created in "The Talisman" into just another adjunct of the Dark Tower universe. I was hoping, then, that the actual followup to the series would solve the problem a bit, at the very least making all of these tie-ins worthwhile. "Wolves of the Calla," then, is something of a mixed experience. For the first time, a Dark Tower book feels like it's being written long after previous installments. References to the previous books in the series feel forced, almost of a "hey, remember when *that* happened?" sort; if one follows Mr.

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