



Gwendy's Button Box

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The little town of Castle Rock, Maine has witnessed some strange events and unusual visitors over the years, but there is one story that has never been told... until now.

There are three ways up to Castle View from the town of Castle Rock: Route 117, Pleasant Road, and the Suicide Stairs. Every day in the summer of 1974 twelve-year-old Gwendy Peterson has taken the stairs, which are held by strong (if time-rusted) iron bolts and zig-zag up the cliffside.

At the top of the stairs, Gwendy catches her breath and listens to the shouts of the kids on the playground. From a bit farther away comes the chink of an aluminum bat hitting a baseball as the Senior League kids practice for the Labor Day charity game.

One day, a stranger calls to Gwendy: "Hey, girl. Come on over here for a bit. We ought to palaver, you and me."

On a bench in the shade sits a man in black jeans, a black coat like for a suit, and a white shirt unbuttoned at the top. On his head is a small neat black hat. The time will come when Gwendy has nightmares about that hat...

Journey back to Castle Rock again in this chilling new novella by Stephen King, bestselling author of *The Bazaar of Bad Dreams*, and Richard Chizmar, award-winning author of *A Long December*. This book will be a Cemetery Dance Publications exclusive with no other editions currently planned anywhere in the world!

Gwendy's Button Box Details

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From Reader Review Gwendy's Button Box for online ebook

Jason says

Gwendy's Button Box was a fun story, but I'm glad I only spent 9\$ on the eBook and not \$30 for the hardcover copy. First, it's short - novella short. Second, the overall story wasn't developed well enough to justify asking someone for \$30 in exchange for it.

The first half of the story is good. It's quick paced with its snappy little chapters. Gwendy herself is fine as a character, and the premise of the story is kind of interesting. But it ultimately falls flat. And frankly, I have no idea what the hell they were trying to accomplish with the ending (the only thing I can guess is that there might be a sequel that tells us just what the hell all those buttons were actually for...?). In many way, King should have just written this himself and fleshed the story out into an actual novel. There is enough to work with, and it would have had more impact.

There are definitely metaphors all over the pages in this book, especially relevant with the political unrest we're seeing globally. But the story lacked punch. The gaps were too large and I felt like it was missing substance - it was like eating a pizza with no toppings, only the dough. The foundation was there for something amazing, but it turned out bland.

Ultimately, I was somewhat entertained. It was so-so. Gwendy's Button Box was a novel trying to be a novella. The thing I'm most happy to take away after reading this: the \$20 extra bucks I didn't spend on the hardcover.

Ron says

Like the good ones often do, Gwendy's Button Box succeeds by planting questions in your mind. First the little questions, which of course lead to those bigger, more important kind. The stuff of life – and the stuff of...hmm. Well, many came to my mind that were the same Gwendy asked along the way. Why was this given to me? Could a simple wood box have such power suggested? And what could it possibly do if I pushed this little button? What...would...it...do? The scary in this story is not in the tangible, the things we see. It's not up your face like that. The scary in this story is in the what ifs. The possibilities we think about, but don't quite know. If Gwendy looses that box. What could happen then?

Gwendy knows she the safekeeper of the button box. What she doesn't know, is why Mr Farris made her so. He told her she was different. Eight buttons on top of this beautiful, mahogany box. A button for each continent, plus one. A hidden pull on its side revealed a magic chocolate, in the shape of a cute little bunny that day Gwendy met Mr Farris above the suicide stairs. A pristine, Morgan silver dollar from the other end. Good things begin to happen for Gwendy in those first days that lead into the years that follow. What's not to love about this box?

Surprisingly, the writing style feels very simplistic here, like something for preteen readers. The message of the story is anything but that. Works for a big range of age groups, and those constant readers out there, myself included.

Sr3yas says

3.5 Stars

If you had the power to destroy worlds, what would you do?

This brand new novella written by King and Richard Chizmar asks this very question to a twelve-year-old girl. Gwendy is a smart and nice kid living in Maine with her parents. On one fine day, she meets a peculiar man: A man in black who presents her a box of ultimate power for safe keeping.

An odd stranger giving a mysterious box to a 12-year-old girl. I mean, if that's not setting off alarms in your head, what would?!

It's a nice story. A bit on the safe side maybe. We got a lot of likable characters, generic bully/ bad guy and a cozy mystery. Basically, it's like what might have happened (view spoiler)

By the way, my favorite moment had nothing much to do with the main characters. It involves minor characters, but the whole scene reminded me of something..... specific!

They watch her go, and then Frankie and Jimmy turn back to Lenny. "It's two on one. I like those odds, old-timer."

*Lenny reaches into his pants pocket and comes out with a flick knife. Engraved on its silver side are the only two words of Latin these boys understand: **Semper Fi**. His gnarled hand does a limber trick and presto, there's a six-inch blade glittering in the sunlight. "Now it's two on two".*

Nailed it.

Matthew says

King is back! . . . and he brought a friend . . .

A very nice novella indeed! A story of choices and mystery. Questions about what a person might do with almost God-like power. Would you choose to be merciful or would you let your inner demons make you the ultimate destroyer?

Whatever you decide, if you like a good thriller (and, perhaps in this case, don't have a lot of time to dedicate to a big book), I suggest you choose Gwendy's Button Box for a good dose of "what-ifs".

Side note: the version I read includes an additional short story called "The Music Room". A minor anecdote, really. Not much too it and not really worth hunting down unless you are a King completist.

Matt says

A wonderful collaboration between 'King of Horror' Stephen King and Richard Chizmar, who have been long-time friends but meshed their literary ideas into a single piece. This story is peppered with the New England flavour for which King is so well known and an innocent story that turns on a single item, something Chizmar surely influenced after being handed control of the story. Gwendy Peterson is an energetic girl who seeks to change herself before heading into middle school, where the teasing she has undergone will only get worse. When a mysterious man, Richard Farris, engages her in conversation, Gwendy soon realises that this is not a man who seeks to do her any harm. Rather, he has a special gift for her, a mahogany box affixed with eight buttons, their convex surfaces and varied colours quite alluring. Farris explains the importance of each button, warning her away from pressing the red, unless she is sure of what she wants, as it packs quite the punch. With that, Farris is gone and Gwendy is left to fend for herself. She hides the box from everyone else, pulling it out only to feed off the delectable sweets that are compartmentalised along one side. As the story progresses and Gwendy ages, she becomes tempted by the buttons, or at least the red one, and seeks to experiment. The result is anything but peaceful, but Gwendy knew that was a distinct possibility. With events around her playing out, Gwendy is left to wonder, could she be solely responsible? An interesting novella that pulls the reader in from the start and posits some interesting theories. A wonderfully entertaining read for any who enjoy some of the less macabre King work with this new spin that Chizmar brings to the writing process.

I have long been a King fan and can only hope that there will be more stories like this. King and Chizmar took on a seemingly innocent plot and allowed it to evolve and take shape, to the point that the reader is left to wonder just who Gwendy Peterson might be. She has moments of teenage naïveté that are contrasted nicely with some darker thoughts, especially when she knowingly uses the 'red button'. However, there is little attempt by the authors to turn her into anything sinister. The same goes for Richard Farris, who balances precariously on the fence from being that creepy 'man in the shadows' to an innocent stranger who seeks to offer up something interesting, akin to the magic beans that Jack received for his cow. King and Chizmar take the story from there and allow Gwendy to apparently control her destiny, while also placing much burden at her feet. Did her pressing the button lead to various newsworthy calamities? Without going too far off the beaten path, King and Chizmar force the reader to wrestle with destiny and the influence of choices on the larger scale. Call it The Butterfly Effect through the eyes of a teenage girl. A wonderful story that packs a punch and offers up much entertainment, one can only hope that King has more of these ideas rumbling around and that Chizmar is on hand to help spin them, in the years to come.

Kudos, Messrs. King and Chizmar for this wonderful novella. I am impressed and the early hype is right; you two are a wonderful team!

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Hannah Greendale says

Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, *From Beginning to Bookend*.

Gwendy Peterson lives in Castle Rock, Maine. Every morning, she jogs up the suicide stairs. One day, she reaches the top of the stairs and meets a strange man dressed in black. He offers Gwendy a gift, something he says is *hers*. The man in black produces a canvas bag and reveals a button box. Gwendy is drawn to the button box and gleefully accepts it, unaware of the power it holds.

On a bench in the shade, close to the gravel path leading from the stairs into the Castle View Recreational Park, sits a man in black jeans, a black coat like for a suit, and a white shirt unbuttoned at the top. On his head is a small neat black hat. The time will come when Gwendy has nightmares about that hat.

Though the story begins with Gwendy Peterson as a middle-grader and follows her into adulthood, her story arc is infinitesimal.

One of the primary villainous characters in the book is yet another one-dimensional bully. When Gwendy spurns his advances, his response is explosive:

“Just like the rest of the stuck up bitches,” [he] says. “I thought you were different, but you’re not. Think you’re too good for everyone.” [. . .] “Fuck your father, and fuck you, too. I knew you when you were nothing but an ugly fuckin’ chubber.” [He] points a finger gun at her and smiles. “It’ll come back, too. Fat girls turn into fat women. It never fails.”

At crucial moment, a problematic scenario is partially resolved by a woman exposing her breasts – a befuddling resolution.

(view spoiler)

Gwendy’s Button Box is a pointless tale. Aside from the surface-level examination (view spoiler), any deeper meaning to the story is not readily apparent.

Alejandro says

Engaging reading!

THE WEIGHT OF A BOX

Gwendy Peterson is a normal teenager in the (not-so normal) Castle Rock town, she is looking to lose some weight (mainly due the meanness of fellow schoolmates), and to do that she has been running on the “Suicide Stairs”, one of the colorful places in the town, until one day, when she reached the high point of the stairs, she meets a strange man with a black hat which knows too much about Gwendy’s personal life and he gives her a gift, a powerful and enigmatic gift,...

...a button box.

So, Gwendy may lose personal weight but now she is gaining a responsibility weight way beyond of her wildest dreams...

...or nightmares.

The button box has various buttons (duh!) and two levers (that I won't spoil what they do, since it's part of the fun and thrill of the tale), and Gwendy soon enough will realize that while of the features of the box seem not only harmless but even rewarding in different areas of her life, other features will be without a doubt a burden with tremendous repercussions.

The box is power...

...and there isn't power without responsibility (ask Peter Parker if you don't believe me!) and consequences.

And something else about power is that even in the inaction, when you have power and you don't do something about it, there are consequences too.

Trivial gifts are innocent, even pointless in a practical view, but...

...powerful gifts are life-changing, for better or worse, you'll never be the same after receive them...

...and guarding them.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"She approaches the button box with as much stealth as she can muster. When she's within a few feet of it, the image of a wild animal asleep in its lair flashes in her head, and she thinks: *The button box doesn't just give power; it is power.*"

'But I won't,' she mutters. Won't what? 'Won't give in.'"

It all begins with daily summer exercise on the cliffside stairs. Gwendy Peterson is 12 years old in 1974 and chubby. She will be going to middle school in the fall, and she does not want her nickname, Goodyear, tagging along with her from elementary school. At the top of the cliffside run sits a man on a bench in a black bowler hat, black jeans, black coat, and a white shirt. He has been there every day. She has ignored him. He has looked at her with an intensity that would make anyone uncomfortable, but especially a self-conscious girl who thinks everyone is only looking at her flaws when they look at her.

Of course, he could be a perv.

There is always that.

He is, after all, reading a book called *Gravity's Rainbow*, which frankly sounds like something a perv would read.

Richard Farris (he does introduce himself) convinces her to have a harmless conversation with him. He has brought a gift that he wants to intrust to her. A button box, but not just any button box; one that dispenses chocolates with one lever and silver Morgan coins with the other. In exchange for the box, her only job is to keep it safe.

It doesn't take long for her to discover that the chocolates have some magical element that allows her to be good at...well...everything.

The buttons themselves have power beyond anything she can conceive, but with that power comes great responsibility. Farris is cryptic in his explanations, which makes one wonder if even he knows the true power of all those buttons. The black button can not be pushed under any circumstances. The red button is a wild card. Each of the other buttons are tied to specific geographical regions. If the chocolates weren't so mouth watering amazing, a smart girl like Gwendy would have excused herself and broke into a fast trot back to the life that the fates had already strung for her.

Temptation is always swathed in alluring wrappings.

Stephen King and Richard Chizmar combine forces to return readers to Castle Rock, Maine. Castle Rock has provided the setting for many King books over the years and is a home away from home for many of his dedicated fans. The book is a quick read. I finished it in an afternoon. The button box is a conundrum, and I had no problems lurking in the shadows, observing events, and waiting for that black bowler hat, that appeared in many of Gwendy's most disturbing dreams, to show up again with, hopefully, some much needed insight. This book quickly went into a third printing so copies are moving as fast as Cemetery Dance can print them. A book that will have you pondering...what would I do?...can I resist the urge to use the power that is at my fingertips?...when do I intercede and when do I turn a blind eye?

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at:<https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Dan Schwent says

When Gwendy Peterson meets a mysterious man in black on top of Suicide Stairs, he gives her the button box. One lever gives her a candy, one lever gives her a silver dollar, and the buttons give only death...

I've been a Constant Reader for a long time. This showed up on my BookGorilla email one morning and I gave it a shot. The writing was vintage King. It felt like putting on a favorite T-shirt.

Castle Rock and a character with the initials RF are back! A middle schooler winds up with a device of unimaginable power and with great power, everybody now, comes great responsibility. Gwendy's Button Box is a coming of age tale. Gwendy Peterson goes from middle school to high school with a monkey on her back in the shape of a box studded with eight buttons and two levers.

In some ways, the story reminded me of that Richard Matheson Twilight Zone episode that later became the movie The Box. Giving Gwendy the button box sounds like a fantastic act of destructive mischief on behalf of King's go-to bad guy. As I wolfed down the pages like a hungry billybumbler, I envisioned the horrors that were sure to wait for me at the end of the book.

Yeah, there was an ending but it wasn't the one I was picturing or anything near that Path of the Beam. It was letdown, not unlike the ending of The Colorado Kid. Lots of build up with not much of a payoff in this Constant Reader's opinion. While King's high up in my pantheon of writers, he's not lofty enough for me to pretend I enjoyed the last 10%. 3.5 out of 5.

Later: I found a PDF of Button, Button, the Richard Matheson short story/Twilight Zone episode this reminded me of:

<https://www.greensburgsaalem.org/cms/1...>

Mandy says

I really, really loved this. It is a very short read but still packs a good punch. I've said it before I know, but I find it impossible to be objective when it comes to Stephen King. He is my favourite author, I grew up reading his books, and I still love reading his stories.

As for this one, it did not disappoint, if I have any complaints it's that I wish it was longer!

This is the story of Gwendy, who we meet when she's twelve years old, on the day she makes the acquaintance of Richard Farris. To say much more would give away some of the plot, which I think takes away from the reading of this book. I didn't read any details at all, just opened the book and started reading. I think that's the best way.

Carol says

4+ Stars

Foiled me.....not at all the ending I was expecting....And guess what....we're back in Castle Rock, Maine....as is **The Man in Black**.

Anyway....Richard Farris (RF) sits watching and waiting for 12 year old Gwendy Peterson to finish her run up and down the suicide stairs. She absolutely **does not** want to be called *Goodyear...like the blimp...* when school resumes this year....so when the mysterious man offers up his button box of powerful...dangerous...and life changing ...tricks and treats, the temptation is just too much and Gwendy succumbs to the task and risks of its safekeeping.

In **GWENDY'S BUTTON BOX**, as the years fly by, you'll find the usual school time relationships and activities to keep things light added to horrors from the dark side of life that result in tragic loss and heartbreak....**and oh the ever present pressure** for Gwendy to make use of the evil in the little box of tricks!

Stephen King has taught us to beware the man in black, but I found nothing here to give (*me*) chills or nightmares....just a fast paced read and most entertaining novella.....with a quick look at author, Richard Chizmar.

Ginger says

I absolutely love Stephen King and "Gwendy's Button Box" was okay. I think I was expecting a bit more at the end since the plot was so interesting to start with.

So with that said, I'm going with 3 stars on this one.

The book wasn't bad but it didn't blow me away either.

Recommended for Stephen King fans.

Recommended for someone looking for a quick novella on morality or questions on being given infinite

power and how you would handle this "gift".
Is it really a gift though?
Read this book to find out!

Alondra says

Pre-Read: YES!! The man in black.... oh, shit!

Read: Such a lovely Novella.... muhahaha

Post-Read: Excellent novella about being responsible for what essentially could be a "Pandora's Box." What would you do with the Red Button???

Melissa ♥ Dog/Wolf Lover ♥ Martin says

I listened to the audio version of this book through the library Overdrive but I'm going to buy a copy from Audible. Maggie Swift from Sons Of Anarchy was the narrator and she was awesome!

I loved that there was a little talk with Stephen King and Richard Chizmar at the end. Just listening to them was cool.

There is also a short story at the end of the first book called, "The Music Room." This is a tiny short story by Stephen King. Just a little tad bit of horror to add to your day.

I also have to say how much I love the cover of the book. When I first saw it I never really paid much attention to it. When I was listening to it I started to really look at the pictures and noticed all of the wonderful things that are added. You can see the suicide steps, the town, Gwendy talking to the man in the black hat. I just think it's lovely.

This isn't some big ole horror story. It's just a story of Gwendy and how she comes across the button box that she owns for a good portion of her life. There are secrets about the box. I thought they were pretty awesome. In some ways I could see how the box would be a terrifying thing to have in your possession for a few different reasons that I won't say.

I just fell in love with the story. I fell in love with Gwendy's character. And I hated one ole jerk in the book. I hated him really bad. Karma dude, karma.

I'm going to get a physical copy of the book too because there are just some books you love for whatever reason and you want to own them. It's just that simple.

Enjoy ♥

MY BLOG: Melissa Martin's Reading List

Jon(athan) Nakapalau says

This story reminded me of the Twilight Zone episode "It's a Good Life" with Billy Mumy as Anthony Fremont. But in this case Gwendy Peterson is a good person who tries to distance herself from a power that can consume her. The ability to control desire while wielding absolute power is a sad story that has been told time and time again and written in blood. This novella is well written and (for the first time I can remember) gives us the perspective of a young girl as she grows up with a box that seems to contain limitless power.
