



20th Century Ghosts

Joe Hill , Christopher Golden (Introduction)

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A collection of short stories.

Imogene is young and beautiful. She kisses like a movie star and knows everything about every film ever made. She's also dead and waiting in the Rosebud Theater for Alec Sheldon one afternoon in 1945....

Arthur Roth is a lonely kid with big ideas and a gift for attracting abuse. It isn't easy to make friends when you're the only inflatable boy in town....

Francis is unhappy. Francis was human once, but that was then. Now he's an eight-foot-tall locust and everyone in Calliphora will tremble when they hear him sing....

John Finney is locked in a basement that's stained with the blood of half a dozen other murdered children. In the cellar with him is an antique telephone, long since disconnected, but which rings at night with calls from the dead....

The past isn't dead. It isn't even past...

20th Century Ghosts Details

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From Reader Review 20th Century Ghosts for online ebook

Peggy says

I love Fall. Football has returned to the airwaves. The leaves are changing colors, and there's a cold snap in the...oh, who am I kidding. This is Texas. If we're lucky, it will only be 85 degrees with 95% humidity as you're reading this. Still, I really do like the *idea* of Fall, though, and if I have to make my own chill, well, then, so be it. The best way I know of to bring a chill to the air is to break out the scary stories. Luckily for us, one of the finest collections of contemporary horror stories has just been released in the US.

Some of you may have picked up a debut novel this past Spring called *Heart-Shaped Box* by Joe Hill (If you didn't, go ahead and grab one now. I'll wait.). It was a terrific book: fast-paced, subtle, surprisingly touching, and truly creepy. But you might not know that way back in 2005 a British publisher called PS Publishing took note of a spate of award-winning stories by a new American author and collected them all together into a book called *20th Century Ghosts*. The book garnered many award mentions and landed on numerous best-of lists, but it was only available in Britain. Darn greedy Brits. Lucky for us, an American version is finally available, just in time to add some spice to our Fall. As a bonus, because we had to wait so long, we get an extra story not included in the British edition. Take that, greedy Brits!

Joe Hill is a mighty-fine writer, and this collection really showcases his talent. Are you looking for a sweet and subtle ghost story with some cogent points to make about aging and regret? Look no further than "20th Century Ghost." Did you ever wonder what it would be like if you introduced Franz Kafka to the Nuclear Age (or just have a fondness for giant bugs)? Check out "You Will Hear the Locust Sing." Maybe you favor a meditation on friendship and persecution? Take a look at "Pop Art," which Christopher Golden (rightly) called transcendent. But wait a minute. I was talking about chills, wasn't I? Maybe that's what you want; the hard stuff. Like "Black Phone," where a small child trapped in a very bad place receives phone calls from the dead. Or "Last Breath," which starts out creepy and then sinks into downright disturbing. No, I know. You need a harsh story. A modern story. A story that actually uses your knowledge of horror conventions to build its atmosphere. You need "Year's Best Horror."

20th Century Ghosts is a terrific collection, and one that really makes use of Joe Hill's talents. The stories differ in tone but share a style and subtlety and emotional impact – Hill weaves a web of such dark beauty that you long to be ensnared.

Char says

4.5 stars!

My favorite stories were:

Pop Art
20th Century Ghost
Better Than Home
My Father's Mask
Voluntary Committal

My thought on this collection cannot possibly make a dent in all of reviews already written about this book.

Suffice it to say: I loved it and it gets my highest recommendation.

Crystal says

I did it
I finished
the only story I couldn't make it through was the cockroach one.
I much prefer his full length novels

Kelli says

Joe Hill makes me feel like I'm seven again. More specifically, I'm seven and he is the nine-year-old kid down the street hanging out with me in my tree fort telling me scary stories and urban legends that he *swears* are true. His voice is hushed, as if he is letting me in on a little known secret and I'm not quite sure whether to believe him but I'm mesmerized and a little afraid.

Joe Hill gets the underdog and the misunderstood. He also writes childhood well, but it is when writing that mislabeled person that he truly shines. One story called Pop Art was not scary in the traditional sense. It was its own kind of brilliant, somehow age-old and refreshingly new.

This short story collection is quite good. I listened to the audio and the narrator is perfect, which adds an important element in this genre. As with any collection of shorts, I liked some more than others but I give this extra credit for variety and interesting endings. 3.75 stars.

Nandakishore Varma says

When I read NOS4A2, I had pegged Joe Hill as a horror writer of the calibre of his celebrated father. When I started this book, I expected much of the same fare: however, I was pleasantly surprised. "20th Century Ghosts" is less about ghosts than other sorts of boogeymen: more subtle, more scary, and all definitely weird.

It starts off with a traditional story ("Best New Horror") about a horror anthology editor trapped in something like one of his own tales: despite the story-within-the-story structure of the first part, this tale becomes highly predictable towards the end and falls rather flat. In fact, all the stories using familiar tropes in this collection ("The Black Phone" about a serial killer, and the novella "Voluntary Committal" about an idiot savant and tunnels to distant dimensions) suffer from predictability. Joe Hill comes into his own, I think, when he throws away the manual and drifts off into the territory of the weird.

Take "Pop Art", a story of an inflatable boy – no, not a toy but a living being born to flesh and blood parents, in an alternate universe where such things are possible: or "My Father's Mask", where the goofy family game played by a family slowly slides into reality: or "The Cape", where the superhero myth takes a violent twist. None of these can be called horror, but we are definitely in the land of Kafka. Speaking of whom, there is a sort of tribute to one of his all-time great stories, *The Metamorphosis* – in "You Will Hear the Locust Sing", a youngster in the same dilemma as Greg Samsa decides to take his life in hands, with true American fortitude.

The question “what happened after Count Dracula was defeated?” is answered in “Abraham’s Boys”, but it may not be everyone’s cup of tea to see this negative take on a classic of the horror genre. I found it powerful, however – especially how the author depicts the tortured world of the Van Helsing children with such cruel clarity. Indeed, the disturbed and often terrifying world of misfit children and broken homes is a common theme in this collection – it permeates eight of the sixteen stories. Is it so bad in America now, one wonders.

There are a stories without any element of horror (“Better Than Home”, “The Widow’s Breakfast”, “Bobby Conroy Comes Back from the Dead”) which are still unsettling because of the human misery left unsaid underneath the bland narration. This is one thing that Joe Hill does beautifully; his prose is sometimes so prosaic and unemotional, almost Hemingway-esque, still it conveys a depth of feeling.

Among all these stories, the title story stands out as the only one where a traditional ghost appears. But there is nothing frightening about this ghost – in fact, she is rather endearing and sexy. Through her, the author manages to convey what the magic of movies was before television forced itself into our living rooms.

If you are a connoisseur of the unconventional, a fan of the disturbing and likes your literature to keep you awake than put you to sleep, this is the book for you.

Lisa says

This was the most awful grueling book to get through. The stories had great starts (some of them anyways) but then just ended with no warning, and not even at a place that really made much sense. Some of these stories I think could have made an excellent book on their own had they been fully completed. It was very difficult to make my way through these stories. I kept hoping they would get better or I'd find one really great story in the mess. Some really grabbed my interest in the beginning but then just went dead...like a dud firecracker. Quite disappointed.

Bill Kerwin says

Seldom does a collection of weird stories feature a style so accomplished, a range of tone and mood so broad, or a generosity so profound. Hill, the son of Stephen King, inherits his father's empathy for the ordeals of childhood as well as his artfulness in constructing a tale, but he also possesses a warmth and an elegance all his own.

At times his stories are chilling and gripping like the horror fiction of King ("The Black Phone"), but at other times they are gentle and elegiac like Bradbury ("Better Than Home") or quirky and humorous like Vonnegut ("Bobby Conroy Comes Back from the Dead"). And then there are times when Hill's writing is so good that comparisons don't arise. There is the self-aware, post-modernist work in which a well-known anthologist gets savagely schooled by a contributor about what constitutes "The Best in Modern Horror," the unsettling tale about the effect of family disguises and games on a son ("My Father's Mask"), the powerful, sustained novella about an autistic brother who can construct marvelous, imprisoning labyrinths, a story which never loses its horror or its humanity ("Voluntary Committal"), or the masterpiece--I do not use the term lightly--about an "inflatable" childhood friend ("Pop Art") that has something to teach every reader about disability and transcendence.

Edward Lorn says

I first heard of Joe Hill after winning a bundle of used hardcovers on Ebay. Among the books in the lot were several King, some limited edition Laymon, a Straub or two, and two first editions by an author of which I had never heard. Heart Shaped Box and 20th Century Ghosts were in fantastic condition, and seemed to have never been read. I threw these two books on my shelf and forgot all about them. Later that year, I found a book at my local BAM entitled Horns. The premise piqued my interest, so I bought the hardcover, devoured it over the course of three days, and then went to place the book on my shelf in alphabetic order by author. Low and behold, I laid eyes on two other books by the same writer, the aforementioned ones I'd won in the bundle, which I had forgotten all about. It wasn't until I finished Heart Shaped Box (which was in slightly less perfect condition in comparison to 20th Century Ghosts) and went in search of more Joe Hill goodness on Amazon that I found out that Hill is Stephen King's son. Surprise, surprise! The following year, Hill released NOS4A2 and cemented his place as one of my new favorite authors. Still, I hadn't read 20th Century Ghosts. You may be asking yourself why, and the answer is one that all book collectors can sympathize with: my hardcover copy is a first edition AND it is in pristine condition. I wouldn't crack that book open if you put a gun to my head. But I had to read it, of course I did, so I bought the ebook and added the audio book as a companion purchase. And let me tell you, the audio book is the way to go.

Notes on the Audible Edition: David Ledoux has a unique narrative voice. Every story herein is worth a read, but David's narration gives them that little something extra that just makes 'em pop. On the down side, the music, while thoroughly creepy, was produced at an entirely different volume than the spoken word. I had to turn down my device every time a story ended for fear of rupturing my ear drums when the musical intro for the next story began. Other than that, I recommend the Audible version.

Now, I will not be reviewing each and every story because they're all above average. I will warn that some of these tales have no ending. They are not open endings, or bad ending, but the stories of which I speak are completely devoid of any closing scene. They simply STOP. A perfect example of this is the opener, "Best New Horror", which is also one of the best stories in the collection. My absolute favorite story in the collection is "Pop Art", and that's because of the sheer originality of the tale. Going into 20th Century Ghosts, I knew nothing about "Pop Art", and I hope you have the same option. Even giving you a brief, vague synopsis would ruin the experience, so I will move on. Other notable tales are "20th Century Ghost", "The Black Phone", "The Cape" (which has one of the best endings I've ever read where short stories are concerned), and the uber imaginative "Voluntary Committal". The only story I disliked was "Abraham's Boys". Hill tried too damn hard to breathe new life into overused, out-of-date characters, and it resulted in the book's only failure. That one story slowed the book down and gummed up the collection's works so badly I was compelled to knock off a full star from the overall rating. Yes, it was that bad. If I had to rate "Abraham's Boys" on its own, I would give it two stars. Everything else gets fours and fives.

You should know that these are not short stories; not technically anyway. Hill suffers the same what-ails-him as his father. Neither man seems to grasp the concept of "short", but they write so damn well that you barely notice that their outings are more along the line of novelettes and novellas than they are short stories.

In summation: A terrific collection of longer short stories, and far more literary in scope than your average horror anthology. If you're a fan of Stephen King's Skeleton Crew or Neil Gaiman's Smoke and Mirrors, you should enjoy 20th Century Ghosts.

(A Note to Completionists: Hill hides a short story in the afterward, so make sure you don't skip the acknowledgment section. You're welcome.)

Franco Santos says

Todos tenemos distintos silencios. ¿Acaso su marido tiene el mismo silencio cuando está contento que cuando está enfadado? Sus oídos son capaces de discernir entre clases específicas de nada.

Buenos relatos, en general. Hay algunos que son extraordinarios, como *La ley de gravedad*, *Madera muerta* y *Reclusión voluntaria*. Otros, muy buenos: *Último aliento*, *La capa* y *Oirás cantar a la langosta*. Los demás son regulares y tiene varios que no lograron atraparme. Pero los que más me gustaron me dejaron cicatrices; no los voy a olvidar fácilmente. Son excelentes.

Desde fantasmas hasta una amistad mágica, Joe Hill me llevó de recorrido por unos relatos maduros, muy bien escritos, que son como tienen que ser: besos fríos que lentifican la corriente sanguínea. Son pequeñas obras que te dan tanto como lo que te sacan.

Es obvio que lo recomiendo. Los mejores cuentos hacen valer la pena a todo el libro. Y una aclaración: no se esperen solo terror; hay para reír, llorar y gritar.

Chris says

Wow. What better word to start this review? Joe Hill has a true gift for the short story.

All short story collections are somewhat hit and miss with me. Some stories are great, some good, some okay, and some meh. That's pretty much the standard with even my favorite short story authors: Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, George R.R. Martin. But I'm definitely putting Joe Hill on that list now. His stories vary as well between excellent and meh, but even the "meh" category stories are written with his subtle flare. It cannot be denied that his stories flow smoothly, and this goes for the best as well as the worst of the lot.

There really aren't any bad stories in this group. Some are better than others, and a few left me unsatisfied. But even those were engaging. Even the two page "Dead-Wood" was beautifully crafted and left me feeling like I had gained something. And the best of the lot? Oh, man. Those were solidly awesome. "Pop Art", "Abraham's Boys", "Bobby Conroy Comes Back from the Dead", "My Father's Mask", "Voluntary Committal", and "Better Than Home" were stories that will stick with me for a long time indeed.

Often when I read a collection, certain stories make me wonder if I've wasted my time. 20th Century Ghosts did not. In fact, it made me want more. Luckily, Joe's new novel is due out tomorrow.

Miriam says

"Best New Horror" - Fun concept and well executed for most of the story, but my interest tanked when the editor finally tracks down the author. Maybe I was supposed to laugh at the cliché-ness? 4 stars for the 1st half, 2 for the second = 3

"20th Century Ghosts" - There was a delicacy to this haunted movie theater story that I appreciated, although I felt it ran too long (or rather, too wordy) for what it was. 3 stars

"Dead-wood" - Instances of ghostly trees. You know, Joe, it would be okay to write non-fiction if you felt like it. You don't have to force there to be a story. 3 stars

"Widow's Breakfast" - solid descriptive story about a poor young hobo. Not horror, no reason for the inclusion of the slightly-creepy daughters that I could see, weak last line. 3 stars

Okay, so having read 4 stories and 3-starred all, I feel like I don't need to read the remainder. I didn't dislike any of them, but I did not particularly enjoy them, either. I feel like this collection is not-onerous task rather than a pleasure, and I have better things to read.

Paul O'Neill says

A fantastic collection of stories, tightly written (like a certain family member). Short stories aren't usually my thing but between this and his more recent collection of four novellas, *Strange Weather*, Joe Hill has maybe changed my mind.

Some stories were better than others but there wasn't a single dud in this collection. My favourites were *Pop Art* (boy makes friends with Art, a balloon), *Better Than Home* (a nice Father-Son story) and the longer story at the end of the book, *Voluntary Committal* (em... can't really describe without spoiling). I'd go as far to say that *Pop Art* is one of the best things I've read all year and is up there with *Loaded* which is one of Hill's stories in *Strange Weather*.

Most of these stories are horror stories, although they are not blunt but rather subtle and scary as hell. I think I read the scariest thing ever in *Best New Horror*:

'He made holes in my eyes and he said after he did it he saw my soul rush out. He said it made a sound like when you blow on an empty Coke bottle, real pretty. Then he put these over my eyes to keep my life trapped inside.' As he speaks, Jim touches the smiley-face buttons. *'He wants to see how long I can live without a soul inside me.'*

Although mostly horror, Hill has some nicer stories in this collection and all of the stories are about the people in them and not just an excuse for some horror porn like other collections.

You get an astronaut's life whether you want it or not. Leave it all behind for a world you know nothing about. That's just the deal.

A worthwhile read from one of my favourite authors.

Sandi says

Short story collections can be hit or miss. Some stories may be wonderful, others may be clunkers. Every story in "20th Century Ghosts" is wonderful, some are even superlative. While Hill is a horror writer, not all of the stories in this book are horror. And, some of the ones that deal with the typical subjects of horror are not horrific. To me, the best stories in this collection are:

"20th Century Ghost", a touching story about a haunted movie theater.

"Abraham's Boys", a tale about teen-age rebellion in unusual circumstances.

“Better than Home”, a sweet story told from the perspective of the autistic son of a baseball coach. It really tugged at my heart.

“My Father’s Mask”, a very creepy warped, fairytale-like story that left me with the shivers.

“Voluntary Committal”, an indescribable fantasy/horror story about brotherly love.

Be sure to read the acknowledgments at the end. Hill throws in a terrific little story as an encore.

I have to admit that I am now a Joe Hill fan and will be on the lookout for his next book. His work isn’t formulaic; and, as some of his short stories prove, he leans more towards psychological horror than blood & gore. His work is rich and complex. His characters are multidimensional and realistic. I highly recommend Joe Hill’s work for anyone who wants a good read.

Wil Wheaton says

Absolutely wonderful book. This is a collection of stories that will have you crying, checking for monsters under the bed, and wondering how the hell Joe Hill came up with that.

Comparisons to Joe's dad will be unavoidable, especially from those of us who read *Night Shift* and *Skeleton Crew* at a certain age ... and though I believe Joe has more than earned the right to be far, far out of his father's shadow, I say with love that the comparisons are well-deserved. This is a sensational collection, and very much worth your time.

Ron says

More often than not, Joe Hill characterizes the child’s life within these stories. I think that’s where our imaginations and fears are strongest, and when things scare us the most. When we are grown, most of that is gone...until we pick up a certain book. Shit, I love the way Hill writes. It is so utterly readable. He makes me believe in ghosts and the supernatural, but even more in the power of a simple story. I say that because not even half of the stories included here are meant to be frightening. Some are just about people, like you and me. So, I have no qualms in giving 5 stars to *20th Century Ghosts*. There were a few lesser-than-great short stories in here, but others were like shining lights, out of the park homeruns. Following is a short take on each:

Best New Horror - Includes a story within the story called the Buttonboy, written by a truly creepy amateur writer named Kilrue, whose inspiration is very real. In this one, the getting there may be better than the finish.

20th Century Ghost - Very much a character-driven piece about a young woman who haunts the Rosebud theatre, and Alec Sheldon the man who spends his life there because of it. Not meant to be frightening, although I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. A satisfying climax.

Pop Art - Such a wildly different kind of story. I didn’t know at first if it was all in the kid’s head, or some

sort of magical realism. I grew to care and wanted to defend this boy made of plastic and air. Such good stuff with a lesson for life. I wanted to effing cry. Is this the best of the bunch? A++++

You Will Hear the Locust Sing - An Ode to Franz Kafka and The Metamorphosis, but far darker and insidious. Didn't think I would like it, but I surely did.

Abraham's Boys - Is their father a vampire hunter, or simply an abusive man who found an excuse to kill? A different take on a vampire tale. One that I enjoyed, but the story could have been stretched with a few more pages. I want to know more.

Better Than Home - Some of this is summed up in the title. It's a lovely, short analogy for one dad's relationship with his boy. I had to think a bit about this one at the end. Baseball, fathers. Then it hit me. Gosh this was exceptional and beautifully understated.

The Black Phone - A boy is abducted by the fat man with the black balloons. Just the right amount of tension and paranormal in here. I am always more scared for the young and innocent characters. Also, looking back on childhood, I remember the belief in the supernatural that vanishes with age.

In the Rundown - The tables are turned in a very different sort of way for a young guy who doesn't realize he's judgmental a bully. I wasn't sure about the meaning, or the point. Maybe there isn't one for some situations.

The Cape - Did the lucky blanket that became his cape make this boy fly? Now an adult, does any of that child's wonder remain in Eric's life? What I thought would be an introspective piece became the unexpected. Has a wow ending that had my mouth hanging open!

Last Breath - Enter a museum that collects the last breaths sounds (or silences) people make. High creep factor. Short and not sweet.

Dead-Wood - The runt of the litter.

A Widow's Breakfast - A straight tale with a hint of darkness, but really more literature than horror. I'll call it a parable. A mourning vagrant (really sounds like too harsh a word) finds the gift

Bobby Conroy Comes Back from the Dead - Bobby bumps into his high school flame as zombie-extras on a film shoot at the local mall. Harriet is now married and Bobby was the "most-likely-to-succeed" bound for Hollywood. Things don't always work out as we hope. Hill writes about life in so many different ways. Simple yet deep. *"Everyone wants a do-over"*

My Father's Mask - Super weird tale told from the viewpoint of a 13-year old with parents I could not fathom. Not without its moments of realness.

Voluntary Committal - The longest of the book at 50 pages, and in some ways it is the most disturbing. Nolan tells the story of his younger, autistic brother Morris, his friend Eddie, and how they both went missing. It makes believe that holes can be made that lead to somewhere else. A place from where there is no return. Good from start to finish, and one of the best in this collection. If I had to judge, I'd give top honors to Pop Art and Better than Home, but this is almost too close to call.

PS. Do not skip the acknowledgements.

Tim says

The title seems false and the stories are lame. 0 of 10 stars

Kostas Papadatos says

Το βιβλίο είχε τα πλνώ του και τα κ?τω του. Κ?που στη μ?ση η βαθμολογ?α.

Mauoijenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

Loved it!!! Loved it!!!! Loved it!!!!!

These stories have got to be the best in any collection I have ever read. Hill's imagination is a wild ride I would stand in line for all day. I can't get enough from this man! Spooky, scary, frightening and just down right crazy... I love it all.

Nikoleta says

Τα διηγήματα του Hill σ'γούρα δεν τα κατατάσσω σε αυτ? του κλασικο? τρ?μου. Ε?ναι γραμμ?να απ? την οπτικ? γων?α εν?ς συγκεκριμ?νου ?ρωα, κ?θε φορ?. Μ?χρι πριν το τ?λος, συν?θως ,δεν γ?νεται τ?ποτα. Παρακολουθο?με την καθημεριν?τητα του ?ρωα και περιμ?νουμε να γ?νει κ?τι. Αυτ? το κ?τι το οπο?ο συμβα?νει και κορυφ?νει το κ?θε δι?γημα, δεν μας προκαλε? αγων?α, φ?βο κ.λ.π. αλλ? στην δικ? μου περ?πτωση σοκ, ξ?φνιασμα και μια δυσ?ρεστη α?σθηση... Δεν π?ρασα καλ?, στον τρ?μο ψ?χνω π?ντα την ανατριχ?λα, εδ? β?ωσα μια μουντ?λα, μελαγχολ?α και ?να μ?ζερο α?σθημα, που κ?θε φορ? που ?κλεινα μια ακ?μη ιστορ?α, για να μου περ?σει, ?τρωγα απ? μ?α σοκολ?τα.

Το αποτ?λεσμα ?πειτα απ? κ?θε τ?λος, ?να ξαφνιασμ?νο ?φος αγελ?δας, το ερωτηματικ? «τι δι?βασα μ?λις τ?ρα;» και προφαν?ς 1-2 κιλ? παραπ?νω... (ευτυχ?ς που δεν ε?ναι καλοκα?ρι). Απ? την ?λλη πλευρ?, να πω ?τι ο τ?πος ξ?ρει να γρ?φει. Προφαν?ς και δεν ?θελε να μου μεταδ?σει ανατριχ?λα, προφαν?ς και στοχε?ει στο σοκ! Αυτ? τα κατ?φερε 100%. Σε πηγα?νει β?λτα με βαρκο?λα σε γαλ?νια θαλασσο?τσα και εκε? που γλαρ?νεις αμ?ριμνα, σου αναποδογυρ?ζει την β?ρκα.

?τιμε Hill... ?χεις πολλ? θ?ματα! Και καλ? κ?νεις! Keep going!

Brandon says

For a long time, this book was my “white whale”. Up to recently, I had three of Joe Hill’s novels (Heart-Shaped Box, Horns, NOS4A2) in hardcover and although 20th Century Ghosts was easily accessible in paperback or for download on my Kindle, I felt I needed to match my existing format and seek out the rare hardbound edition.

With every second-hand bookstore I entered, this illusive short story collection was front and centre in my mind. Unfortunately, I just couldn’t find it. A few months ago I had all but given up until my lovely girlfriend surprised me with a copy for Christmas! Did I mention it was signed? My name might not be “Tom” but who cares? Close enough.

20th Century Ghosts is a collection of short stories dealing with the subjects of death, loss and fear. Although Joe Hill is an accomplished horror novelist, not everything in here will give you the willies. In fact, although

one of the better stories - the collection's namesake, 20th Century Ghost - features a spooky specter, it's more nostalgic and sweet rather than scary.

There are some great ones in here that I really enjoyed. "Best New Horror" tells of a magazine editor who has fallen into a rut - both professionally and personally - before coming across a new story so enthralling that it sets him on a quest to find its reclusive author. "Pop Art" did a real number on me and is probably my favourite of the bunch. It is a sad, coming of age tale about two friends who experience profound loss - did I mention one of them is an inflatable human?

I still struggle with short story collections in that I'm so accustomed to long-form fiction that reading several tales in one session tends to burn me out a lot faster. I need to process a story after I finish one and then refocus on another. Maybe they're better read in short bursts. I should probably adapt this strategy in the future.

20th Century Ghosts is a glimpse into Hill's past as several of the stories were written just as he was starting out as a published author - a time when he was relatively unknown and people didn't know he was Uncle Stevie's boy. It's worth checking out for die hard fans and genre fiction enthusiasts alike.
