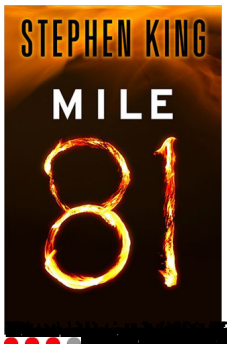
Stephen King isn’t short on plaudits for his many diverse achievements, but fans with short memories may have forgotten that the author was an early adopter and champion of on-line publishing. Over cries of “fad” from many in print media, King years ago lent name-brand credibility to the e-book by releasing his unfinished novel THE PLANT and short tale RIDING THE BULLET as on-line exclusives. King’s story UR made its debut in glowing liquid crystal, and he recently granted visitors to his website a number of free downloadable chapters from an early version of UNDER THE DOME called THE CANNIBALS. That fearless, forward mindset earned King a 2000 Time magazine cover and feature article praising his vision, so it’s no surprise to see King continuing his Internet infatuation, with his new e-novella MILE 81 (Simon & Schuster) speeding across unwary computer screens everywhere.

With this tale offered so soon after the riled rattlesnake called FULL DARK, NO STARS, readers might be bracing themselves for something comparably harsh and dour. Instead, MILE 81 reads like a ricochet from King’s early short-fiction period, a time when he sold his terse supernatural thrillers to whichever magazine editor valued lurid shock over good taste. If not for the inclusion of modern touchstones like iPads and Justin Bieber, MILE 81 could easily tuck inside King’s 1985 collection SKELETON CREW and not disrupt the tenor of that classic book one smidgen.



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