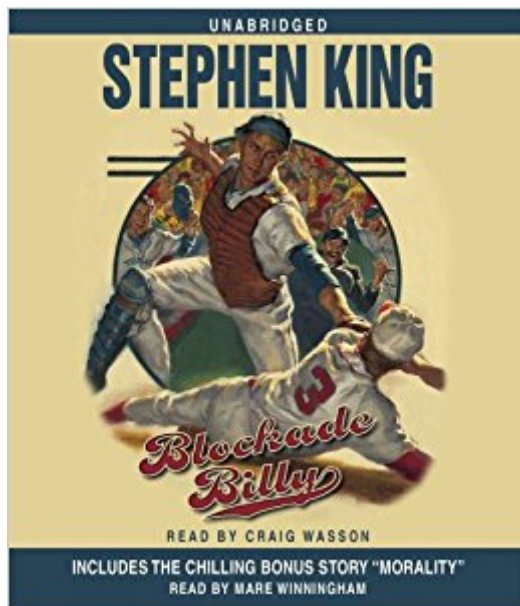


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Blockade Billy



Synopsis

From "New York Times" bestselling author Stephen King comes the haunting story of "Blockade Billy," the greatest Major League baseball player to be erased from the game. Even the most die-hard baseball fans don't know the true story of William Blockade Billy Blakely. He may have been the greatest player the game has ever seen, but today no one remembers his name. He was the first--and only--player to have his existence completely removed from the record books. Even his team is long forgotten, barely a footnote in the game's history. Every effort was made to erase any evidence that William Blakely played professional baseball, and with good reason. Blockade Billy had a secret darker than any pill or injection that might cause a scandal in sports today. His secret was much, much worse... and only Stephen King, the most gifted storyteller of our age, can reveal the truth to the world, once and for all. Originally published through Cemetery Dance Publications on April 20, 2010 as a \$25.00 limited-edition hardcover, Stephen King and Cemetery Dance have made an arrangement with Scribner to make available a less expensive hardcover edition of "Blockade Billy," "with an on-sale date of May 25th, the same date the audiobook goes on sale. The Scribner edition will be available in all U.S. and Canadian retail outlets. Both the Scribner book and the Simon & Schuster audiobook will feature a bonus short story ("Morality")."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A quirky baseball player with a past shrouded in secrecy is the tragic hero of this macabre tale from the dark side of the all-American sport. In the voice of George Granny Grantham, retired third-base coach of the New Jersey Titans, King (Under the Dome) recalls the spring of 1957, when Billy

Blakely, a catcher called up from the Titans' Iowa farm system, helped to boost the team out of the basement and add some excitement to the national pastime. Billy hits with such power and guards the plate with such determination (hence his eponymous nickname) that teammates are willing to forgive such eccentricities as his frequently addressing himself in the third person, or bloodying runners who collide with him. Of course, these kinks are clues to a shocking pathology that King coaxes out in a narrative steeped so perfectly in the argot of the game and the behavior of its players and fans that readers will willingly suspend their disbelief. As King's fiction goes, this suspenseful short is a deftly executed suicide squeeze, with sharp spikes hoisted high and aimed at the jugular on the slide home. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

Reviewers tended to dismiss *Blockade Billy* when they compared it to the sum of King's oeuvre, but they appreciated the book as a better-than-usual attempt to fictionalize the world of baseball. Readers with a more nostalgic take on the game will particularly enjoy King's evocation of the way it was played in 1957. And baseball-stats wonks will likely salivate over the mystery of what event could be so horrible that the Majors would efface the scorecard for all time. But other readers may wish to start with one of King's classics. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

First, allow me to make a disclaimer. I am not a baseball fan. I don't understand why people are attracted to the game at all, but I do accept that the sport has devoted fans, and many a reader of this book might find my 2 star rating harsh, but this is my review and reflects only my take on the story. I found the premise of the story as revealed near the end of the book both uninspired and unimaginative. Please forgive the lack of detail. I don't want to spoil the story. Like a few of King's other works - been there, done that. We've seen it all before, Steve. Could you please make up a new, imaginative and more inspired premise? Back in the day, you used to do that quite well. The narrative is done in the style of an elderly person who must include every detail and personal take on the story as it is being told. While that does have some charm, we've been down this road with Stephen King also. It's formulaic at this point. I don't know if Steve was trying to convey a love of baseball through this yarn, but with me, he succeeded only to the extent that he made it clear that devotion for the sport is possible. There was nothing at all that I found inspiring about the way the sport was played or the attitudes and behavior of the players, fans and other participants. The detailing of the history of the game during the late fifties was yawn-worthy to me. I'm sure, however, that a baseball fan would be likely to enjoy all of that. *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* was a much

better story in my humble opinion. At least in that novel, you didn't get beat over the head with a baseball bat. Read *Blockade Billy* at your own risk.

Though I consider this "book" to be a minor addition to Stephen King's vast literary canon, I found myself enjoying it. Some of King's books could be a bit of a slog trying to get through. This novella is definitely not one of those. I enjoyed the descriptions of the old time baseball scenarios. The story centered on the super-talented catcher "Blockade" Billy Blakely, whose name was inexplicably removed from the records book (the constant reader does not learn why until near the end of the story). It is a fairly straightforward baseball fantasy up to the time it arrived to its Stephen King trademark twist ending. I really enjoyed it for the fast reading and the thrills. I also read this story from the standpoint of being a potential movie script. I was able to see this story fitting nicely as a cinematic offering. If handled correctly by the right director and actors, it will be a viewing experience that few will forget.

"Blockade Billy" is a story of quirky, eccentric baseball players on a fictional 1950's professional baseball team, and one quirky, eccentric player in particular (the title character). More a longish short story than the novella it might appear to be at first glance, you'll have to decide whether it's worth the current price on . Myself, I was absorbed by this colorful tale of how a tragic, sad situation can often result when one's talent, even a great talent, simply can't overcome unfortunate personal circumstances. In the end, you might feel sorry for poor Billy, despite his undeniably horrific actions.

Baseball is the all-American sport, and little boys still dream of making it to the majors. To get there, you have to start out in the minors, the farm leagues, and hope to God that you're not so far out in the boonies that a scout for the big leagues can't find you. William Blakely is one of those kids from one of those farm leagues and he does indeed make it to the "Show". Made to prove his mettle, the kid has a surprisingly great first game, but an injury to a player on the other team calls his actions into question. Although he's new, his team is quick to come to his defense, even though some of them have questions bouncing around in their own heads about this "not too bright" boy. Billy is quiet, not in a "speak when you're spoken to" kind of way, more in a way that makes you wonder what's going on in his head, but he's a great ballplayer. As the season continues, Billy is starting to get quite a cheering squad and has earned the name "Blockade Billy" for the way he can block runners from scoring at home plate and he's getting a lot of notice in the press. Billy's strange behavior is starting to raise some eyebrows on the team and off as well. He repeats what's told to

him, doesn't seem to have any thoughts of his own, but there's something going on behind those eyes. His queer actions raise some suspicions and after some digging by a detective, things take a turn for the weird. The days that follow and the truths that come out stun the baseball world and call into question just how this kid could get away with what he's done, and how a great season can make people look the other way just because the team is winning.

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