

= Randall Flagg =

Randall Flagg is a fictional character created by Stephen King . Flagg has appeared in at least nine of King 's novels , either as a major or very minor character . He has a variety of names , usually initialed " R.F. " but with occasional exceptions , such as Walter o 'Dim (originally envisioned by King as a separate character) in The Dark Tower series . Flagg is described as " an accomplished sorcerer and a devoted servant of the Outer Dark " , with supernatural abilities involving necromancy , prophecy , and influence over animal and human behavior . His goals typically center on bringing down civilizations through destruction and conflict .

Flagg first appeared in The Stand as a demonic figure who wreaks havoc after a plague kills most of the population . He makes his second appearance in The Eyes of the Dragon as an evil wizard trying to plunge the fictional medieval city of Delain into chaos . Flagg was a primary antagonist in King 's epic series , The Dark Tower , who tries to keep protagonist Roland Deschain from reaching the Tower (the linchpin of existence) so he can claim it for himself and become a god . The Dark Tower expanded on Flagg 's background and motivation , linking his previous appearances . Aside from King 's novels , Flagg was featured in a television miniseries adaptation of The Stand (played by Jamey Sheridan) and appeared in Marvel Comics ' adaptations of The Dark Tower and The Stand .

King initially cited Donald DeFreeze , primary kidnapper of Patty Hearst , as his inspiration for Flagg . Later , he attributed Flagg to an image of a man walking the roads in cowboy boots , denim jeans , and a jacket , a notion which " came out of nowhere " when he was in college . Flagg 's character and the nature of his evil have been the subject of considerable critical attention .

= = Appearances = =

= = = Novels = = =

= = = = The Stand = = = =

Randall Flagg makes his first appearance in King 's 1978 apocalyptic novel , The Stand , where he tries to construct a new civilization in the United States after a plague kills most of the population . Flagg is described as a " tall man of no age " in old blue jeans , denim jacket and old cowboy boots . He wears an old Boy Scout knapsack , and his jacket pockets are stuffed with pamphlets from dozens of fringe splinter groups . Flagg ? s background is vague , even to him ; he says that at some point he just ? became ? , although he remembers being a Marine , a Klansman , a Viet Cong member and having a hand in the kidnapping of Patty Hearst . In Las Vegas Flagg attracts people drawn to destruction , power and draconian rule , using crucifixion , torture and other punishments on those disloyal to him . His followers reorganize society , rebuilding the city . Flagg plans to attack and destroy a rival emerging civilization (Mother Abigail 's Free Zone in Boulder , Colorado) to become the dominant society in the former United States .

After two of Flagg 's followers fail to kill the leaders of the Free Zone , the Boulder community sends a group of men to Las Vegas to stop him . After being taken prisoner , the men are brought before the city for a public execution . Before Flagg can kill them , one of his most loyal and devout followers (the Trashcan Man) arrives with a nuclear warhead . As Trash dies of radiation poisoning the Hand of God appears , detonating the warhead (which annihilates Flagg 's followers and the two remaining prisoners) . The novel was re @-@ published in 1990 in an expanded edition , with text cut from its original edition . This edition has Flagg reappearing on a beach , with a new group of people to control .

= = = = The Eyes of the Dragon = = = =

Flagg later appears in *The Eyes of the Dragon* (1986) as an evil wizard wreaking havoc in the medieval country of Delain . He is described as a " thin and stern faced man of about 50 [years of age] " , despite being much older . He hides himself under a dark cloak , and most of his magic comes from spells , potions and poisons . He is described as a " sickness " which seems to reappear in Delain when there is something worth destroying . In this novel , Flagg schemes to throw the kingdom of Delain into chaos by poisoning the king and framing Prince Peter (legitimate heir to the throne) for the crime . Thomas (Peter 's naive , resentful younger brother) becomes king instead ; Flagg , whom he sees as his only friend , becomes his royal advisor . Due to his youth and inexperience , Thomas allows Flagg great power and is easily manipulated by the wizard . Flagg becomes the de facto ruler of Delain , plunging the kingdom into a dark age . Years later Thomas confronts Flagg about his father 's murder , which he witnessed as a child but suppressed the memory out of fear . Thomas shoots Flagg in the eye with an arrow , and Flagg disappears from the kingdom . Peter is given his rightful throne ; Thomas and his butler , Dennis , leave the kingdom in search of Flagg . In the novel Thomas and Dennis find Flagg , but the nature of their encounter is never revealed and Flagg survives to engender chaos in later stories .

= = = Hearts in Atlantis = = =

In *Hearts in Atlantis* (1999) , Raymond Fiegler is identified near the novel 's end as leader of an activist group when he prevents Carol Gerber from retrieving an unexploded bomb on a college campus . King never identifies Fiegler as Flagg , but Christopher Golden and Hank Wagner suggest in *The Complete Stephen King Universe* that there is little doubt Fiegler is Flagg . Golden and Wagner cite evidence such as Fiegler 's ability to make himself appear " dim " (an ability shared by Flagg in *Eyes of the Dragon*) , his manipulation of Carol Gerber and her activist friends and Flagg 's frequent use of aliases (usually with the initials " R.F. ")

= = = The Dark Tower series = = =

Flagg makes his next several appearances in King 's *Dark Tower* series , which follows gunslinger Roland Deschain as he travels in search of the Dark Tower . Flagg 's presence is felt in the opening sentence of the first book : " The man in black fled across the desert and the gunslinger followed " . In this series , Flagg assumes the guise of several individuals . He first appears as Walter o 'Dim , chased across the desert by Roland . In flashbacks Flagg assumes the identity of Marten Broadcloak , a wizard who conspires with the Crimson King to cause the fall of the Dark Tower . In the original Marten is a separate person from Walter , who is also not known to be Flagg , but Marten and Walter are ret @-@ coned into one character in later editions . In the original edition Walter speaks derisively of Marten , implying Marten would not be able to handle the vision that Walter showed Roland .

When Roland was young , Marten had an affair with Roland 's mother , Gabrielle , using the affair to provoke Roland to take the gunslinger test early . He hoped Roland would fail (so he would be exiled) but Roland passed the test . Eventually , Roland catches Walter ; they have a long discussion about Roland 's destiny and the Tower which causes him to slip into delirium . He awakens to find a pile of bones in Walter 's place . In the original edition Walter and Marten are separate characters , with Walter dying at the end of the novel . When King published an expanded edition of the novel Walter and Marten are portrayed as identical , and Walter fakes his own death .

Flagg appears briefly in a flashback in the second installment of the *Dark Tower* series , *The Drawing of the Three* . Roland recalls seeing two men named Thomas and Dennis pursuing a man named Flagg , who was almost certainly a demon . These are implied to be the same characters from *The Eyes of the Dragon* . This is the first example of the *Dark Tower* series crossing over with one of King 's other novels .

Flagg makes his next full appearance in the series ' third installment , *The Waste Lands* . In the city of Lud , Flagg saves Tick @-@ Tock Man Andrew Quick (an enemy of Roland 's ka @-@ tet , left for dead in an earlier confrontation) . Quick becomes Flagg 's devoted servant , and Flagg assumes

the name of Richard Fannin . The character returns in the fourth book , Wizard and Glass , as Marten Broadcloak . Also identifying himself as Flagg , he warns Roland and his ka @-@ to abandon their quest for the Dark Tower . In flashbacks the reader learns that Flagg (as Walter o 'Dim) was an emissary for John Farson , one of those responsible for the destruction of Roland 's home Gilead .

The " Argument " (a summary of the series thus far) beginning Wolves of the Calla ? the fifth novel in the series ? notes that Flagg is known as Broadcloak , Fannin and John Farson , depending on the world in which he lives . In Wolves of the Calla , Flagg makes a brief appearance (as Walter o 'Dim) when Father Callahan arrives in Roland 's world . Flagg gives Callahan Black Thirteen , a dangerous crystal ball , hoping it will kill Roland on his way to the tower . In this encounter , Flagg is described with " the face of a human weasel " , and " the same welling red circle " on his forehead as the Can @-@ toi . His appearance in The Song of Susannah is via a flashback revealing that Flagg bargained with the succubus Mia ; this resulted in the birth of Mordred Deschain , son of both Roland and the Crimson King .

In The Dark Tower , Flagg indicates that he is not John Farson , but served under him until the latter 's downfall . Flagg reveals his plans to climb the Dark Tower , see the room at the top and become the god of all . His ultimate goal is to kill Roland Deschain : " ... most of all for the death of his mother , whom I once loved . " Flagg believes that he can only achieve these goals by killing Mordred and taking his birthmark @-@ stained foot . Although he tries to befriend Mordred and pledge allegiance to him , Mordred telepathically senses Flagg 's true motives and eats him , forcing him to rip out his eyes and tongue first .

The Dark Tower reveals more of Flagg 's background , relating that he was born Walter Padick in Delain to Sam the Miller of Easter ? d Barony . At age 13 Walter set out for a life on the road , but was raped by a fellow wanderer (Bev Vincent hypothesized in The Road to the Dark Tower that Flagg 's later actions towards Delain in The Eyes of the Dragon may have been revenge for the abuse he suffered as a child) . Resisting the temptation to crawl back home , Padick instead moves towards his destiny ; he learns various forms of magic , achieving a quasi @-@ immortality . After centuries of wreaking havoc Flagg attracts the attention of the Crimson King , who adopts him as his emissary .

In 2013 , King published a new story from The Dark Tower entitled The Wind Through the Keyhole . Here Flagg is depicted as the Covenant Man : central villain of the book 's story @-@ within @-@ a @-@ story , " The Wind Through the Keyhole " , a legend from Mid @-@ World set years before the series ' beginning . He is the Barony 's " tax collector " from Gilead , attempting to collect taxes from residents of the small town of Tree . The Covenant Man sends the story 's protagonist (a young boy named Tim) on a perilous quest through the Endless Forest to save his mother ; unbeknownst to Tim , the Covenant Man is supplying him with false prophecies and misinformation as part of a cruel practical joke . However , Tim succeeds in his journey ; he saves his mother after encountering the wizard Maerlyn , who has been imprisoned in the form of a " tyger " . While the Covenant Man is not explicitly identified as Flagg , with only the initials " RF / MB " in his signature as identification and at one point being referred to as ' the man in the black cloak ' , Stephen King confirmed in an interview with Bev Vincent for his book The Dark Tower Companion that the two are one and the same .

= = = Film and TV = = =

King was influential in deciding who would play Flagg in the television adaptation of The Stand . He felt Flagg was the best villain he had ever created , and wanted the actor playing him to be right for the part . Director Mick Garris and the studios wanted to give the role to an established star such as Christopher Walken , James Woods , Willem Dafoe or Jeff Goldblum . King himself had suggested Robert Duvall in his introduction to the novel . Miguel Ferrer , who played Flagg 's henchman in the film , was interested in playing the villain .

King 's idea for the role was someone who " would make the ladies ' hearts go pitty pat , that looked like the type of guy you would see on the cover of one of those sweet , savage love paperback romances " . He eventually persuaded the decision @-@ makers to cast a lesser @-@ known actor

as Flagg , which turned out to be Jamey Sheridan .

Sheridan 's performance was generally well received . Entertainment Weekly 's Ken Tucker wrote that the best acting came from Sheridan , who gave the character a "grim intensity" . He commented that Sheridan had "leading @-@ man looks" with the hair of a "dissolute heavy metal star" , making him "unsettling" even when not wearing makeup that makes him look like a devil . Douglas E. Winter of Fangoria magazine believed that Sheridan might have been a bit young and "zany" for the part , but gave a credible performance ; he said that Sheridan attacked the role "with the swagger of Elvis , the sway of David Koresh and as much craziness as your heart desires (and network TV allows)" .

In February 2011 , Warner Bros. announced plans to produce a new feature film adaptation of The Stand . King commented that he would like to see Dutch actor Rutger Hauer in the role of Flagg , but said that he may be too old for the part . In August 2014 it was reported that Warner Bros. wanted actor Matthew McConaughey for the role .

It was confirmed in 2016 that Matthew McConaughey would be playing the role of Walter o 'Dim , Flagg 's alter @-@ ego , in the film adaptation of The Dark Tower . Nikolaj Arcel , the film 's director and co @-@ writer , said " Matthew is an incredible actor who can do anything . That 's how I feel about [Walter] . He could do anything . " Arcel described Walter as having " a very interesting way of seeing the world . He sees it with a sort of delight , even though he is obviously on the wrong side of the light @-@ and @-@ dark spectrum . He 's someone I 've been having a lot of fun with . "

The 2016 miniseries 11 @.@ 22 @.@ 63 , based on King 's novel 11 / 22 / 63 , incorporates numerous references to other King stories , including an appearance by Randall Flagg , who is seen cycling through the Dallas throngs just before the assassination of John F. Kennedy in the final episode .

= = = Comics = = =

Beginning in 2007 , Marvel Comics released a series of comics which were a prequel to the Dark Tower novels . Randall Flagg , appearing as Marten Broadcloak and Walter o 'Dim , plays a significant role in the series .

In April 2009 Marvel released a single @-@ issue comic written by Robin Furth and illustrated by Richard Isanove entitled The Dark Tower : Sorcerer , which focused on the character of Marten Broadcloak @-@ Walter o 'Dim . Sorcerer provides an origin for the character different from the one King initially wrote , explaining that Walter was the son of the wizard Maerlyn and Selena (Goddess of the Black Moon) . Walter was left at the home of a mill owner , Sam Padick , " to learn the ways of men " . At age 13 , Walter burns down his adoptive father 's mill before running away to find his true father (Walter 's rape is not mentioned) . Furth wrote in the afterword that the idea of Maerlyn being Walter 's father came from King . The comic also reveals that Marten had poisoned Roland 's infant brother . Furth introduced the idea that the Bends o ' the Rainbow , 13 magic spheres created by Maerlyn in the distant past , are sentient beings able to project personifications which can interact with other characters . Marten has a sexual relationship with the female personification of Maerlyn 's Grapefruit (one of the spheres) . This is described as incestuous , since the beings were given life by Maerlyn (Walter 's biological father) ; Marten and the Grapefruit repeatedly call each other as brother and sister . The siblings also refer to the Crimson King as their " cousin " , indicating that Maerlyn is related to him . In her afterword Furth says that although she conceived these ideas , King approved them . According to the comic , Marten 's romantic feelings for Roland 's mother trigger jealousy in the Grapefruit (who influences Roland to unwittingly kill his mother) . (In Wizard and Glass , the witch known as Rhea of the Cöos orchestrate Roland 's matricide as revenge for his killing of her pet snake .) Enraged , Marten imprisons his " sister " in the Grapefruit and vows revenge on Roland for his involvement in his beloved 's death . Addressing inconsistencies between the novels and the comics , Furth stated that the comics exist on another level of the Tower : " a spinoff world , one which is very similar to , but not exactly the same as the one where [the Dark Tower novels] take place " .

On the character of Marten , Furth noted that " [he] is one of the scariest characters that Stephen

King has ever created . He moves from book to book , bringing chaos and anarchy with him ... He is quite a demonic figure , and as such he is one of the great anti @-@ heroes of contemporary popular fiction " and that " [j] ourneying into Walter 's mind is a pretty wild experience and at times a little frightening . You have to travel to very dark places " . To find Walter 's voice , Furth went to John Milton 's Paradise Lost , William Blake 's Proverbs of Hell , the Biblical Song of Solomon and the writings of Aleister Crowley for inspiration .

In his interview with Bev Vincent , Isanove opined that Walter was his favorite character to draw ; " Jae [Lee , the original artist for the series] established him as almost androgynous . He 's always got this bare chest , and he 's very feminine in the way he moves , with his hands raised . He 's always moving his hands around . He 's got this weird face , with a broken nose and greasy hair . He 's starting to bald , but he 's always got a very white separation in the middle of it . He 's just so greasy , he 's great to draw . And he still has to be seductive at the same time , so you can 't make him repulsive ... He 's such a great character . "

Marvel later released an comic book adaptation of The Stand , which began in September 2008 and ran for thirty issues . Writer Roberto Aguirre @-@ Sacasa described Flagg as " The man of nightmares . Or , put another way , our nightmares given human (more or less) form . The dark side of the American Dream ... King 's ' Walkin ' Dude ' may not be the Devil , himself , as Mother Abigail says , but he comes pretty damn close ... " Initially , artist Mike Perkins said he felt " Flagg needed to be designed less as a man ? more as a force of nature . His hair will obscure his features , his face will be almost always in heavy shadow . This is the creature lurking under your bed , in your wardrobe , in your nightmares . Slightly familiar but wholly terrifying " . Roberto Aguirre @-@ Sacasa later commented on the original idea of hiding Flagg 's face : " ... the further into the book and the adaptation you go , the less feasible that becomes . Stephen spends so much time describing [Flagg] 's features and smiles , you need to show those things " .

= = Concept and creation = =

King initially named Donald DeFreeze , lead kidnapper in the Patty Hearst case , as his inspiration for Randall Flagg . According to King , he remembered the Patty Hearst case when he began to write a description of DeFreeze : " Donald DeFreeze is a dark man " . He remembered that in photographs of the bank robbery in which Patty Hearst participated that DeFreeze was only partially visible , hidden under a large hat . What he looked like was based on guesses made by people who only saw a portion of him . This inspired King , who then wrote " A dark man with no face " . After reading " Once in every generation the plague will fall among them " , King began writing The Stand and developing the character of Randall Flagg .

In 2004 , King said that Flagg had been a presence in his writing since the beginning of his career , with the idea coming to him in college . He first wrote a poem , " The Dark Man " , about a man who rides the rails and confesses to murder and rape ; written on the back of a placemat in a college restaurant , the one @-@ page poem was published in 1969 , but the character never left King 's mind . To the author , what made Flagg interesting was " the idea of the villain as somebody who was always on the outside looking in , and hated people who had good fellowship and good conversation and friends " .

= = Characterization = =

Characteristic of Randall Flagg is his embodiment of evil . When King created the character , he based him around what he believed evil represented . To King , Flagg is ? somebody who ? s very charismatic , laughs a lot , [is] tremendously attractive to men and women both , and [is] somebody who just appeals to the worst in all of us ? . This idea carries over into The Stand , in which Flagg first appears as the personification of evil opposing Mother Abigail (the personification of good) . Character Tom Cullen ascribes to Flagg the ability to kill animals and inflict cancer at will , referring to him as the demon Legion , while character Glen Bateman refers to him as the Lovecraftian entity Nyarlathotep (among other ancient names) . King wanted Flagg to embody a "

gigantic evil ", although he intended the character to weaken by the end of *The Stand* . He said , " I think the Devil is probably a pretty funny guy . Flagg is like the archetype of everything that I know about real evil , going back all the way to Charles Starkweather in the ' 50s ? he is somebody who is empty and who has to be filled with other people 's hates , fears , resentments , laughs . Flagg , Koresh , Jim Jones , Hitler ? they 're all basically the same guy " . Although Flagg was not intended to represent Satan , this did not detract from what King sees as his ultimate goal . He notes that no matter who sees him or how he is seen (Flagg appears differently to different individuals) , his message is the same : " I know all the things that you want and I can give them to you and all you have to do is give me your soul " .

Critics also note Flagg 's penchant for evil . Tony Magistrale sees Flagg as a Shakespearian villain (comparing him to Iago , Edmund and Richard III) , contending that Flagg is an antihero . Magistrale believes that Flagg 's evil is based on his ability to replace peace with conflict and unity with destruction ; although he seeks power , it is merely a resource to achieve a greater level of destruction . Heidi Stringell finds Flagg ? an embodiment of pure evil ? , contending that King sees good and evil as ? real forces ? ; Flagg 's embodiment of evil is confirmed by the fact that ? he is a killer , a maker of mischief , a liar , and a tempter ? . To Stringell , Flagg 's disappearance at the end of *The Stand* shows that ? evil ultimately leads nowhere ? . The author calls Flagg a ? generic hybrid ? of the archetypal ? Dark Man and the Trickster ? . To her , the combination of these two characteristics (found in different cultural realms) forces people to face their ? flawed humanity ? with the ? amorality ? Flagg represents . Jenifer Paquette writes that " Flagg 's horror is that he looks like an ordinary man , and his behavior is a mockery of humanity ? a terrible insight into the human psyche . King suggests that the thing to fear the most is inside ourselves . "

Douglas Winter believes that Flagg epitomizes the Gothic villain ? an ? atavistic embodiment of evil ? ? since his appearance is indistinct , malleable and a ? collection of masks ? . Flagg symbolizes ? the inexplicable fear of the return of bygone powers ? both technological and , as his last name intimates , sociopolitical ? . Like other Gothic villains , Flagg 's plans seem to fail at every turn as he seems to need to convince others of his importance . Winter asserts that Flagg is a Miltonic superman who receives his strength from a dark , mysterious source . He compares him to J. R. R. Tolkien 's Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings* : both collapse when directly confronted . Alissa Stickler describes Flagg as a ? contemporary medievalist interpretation on the themes of evil , magic and the (d) evil figure ? . She likens Flagg to Merlin , whispering in the ear of Arthur . Stickler notes that Flagg is politically powerful in *The Stand* and *The Eyes of the Dragon* ; he uses his power differently in each novel , challenging depictions of evil and witchcraft common in medieval times . She explains that there does not appear to be a higher power to which Flagg ? must appeal to his abilities ? (as there is with traditional evil) . Flagg is more of a ? humanesque evil ? , which works against him as much as it does for him . His supernatural knowledge is fallible , and the customary black @-@ and @-@ white depiction is replaced with an ? acceptance of a shadowy gray area ? . Stickler says that although Flagg appears ? terrifying and supernatural ? as depicted by King , there are no absolutes . She concludes that Flagg represents the medieval monster both past and future , which challenges (yet supports) the literary Middle Ages .

Flagg 's character has its detractors . In his essay " The Glass @-@ Eyed Dragon " , author L. Sprague de Camp criticizes Flagg in *Eyes of the Dragon* , saying that he is one of the least @-@ believable characters in the book and too evil to be credible . According to de Camp , absolute evil is hard to envision ; whereas Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin believed they were improving the world , Flagg only enjoys causing destruction and chaos . De Camp notes that Flagg fails to see that there is no advantage to his actions .

Flagg 's embodiment of evil is not the only characteristic seen by critics . Joseph Reino commented that the character 's presence in *The Stand* was " Stephen King 's version of a pestilential Big Brother " . Tony Magistrale revisits the character in a second book , this time comparing him to Norman Mailer . Here , Magistrale states that in *The Stand* Flagg gives the reader an ? illustration of King 's jaundiced perspective of modern America ? as he presents the consequences of technology @-@ worship and the sacrifice of ? moral integrity to the quest for synthetic productivity ? .

Flagg 's background as a rape victim and its impact on his character have also been explored . Patrick McAleer argues that Flagg 's situation is the most sympathetic of all of King 's characters , and his evil may be retribution : " [I] n suspending any disbelief in the possibility that reprisal is a reaction to rape , the life of Flagg becomes one that looks to strike a balance for the sexual crime committed against him . And although Flagg 's possible search for justice and balance is that which becomes imbalanced and even prejudiced , the mitigating factor here is that Flagg is not an originator of evil - he is just caught up in its web as another wronged individual seeking justice " . McAleer compares Flagg to Satan in *Paradise Lost* , suggesting that he may be another " fallen angel who has a valid case supporting his devilry " . While agreeing that Flagg can be seen " relishing in evil deeds at almost every juncture " , he contends that no judgement can be made without the full story and context for his actions .