
PENTACLE: A SELF COLLECTION

By Tom Piccirilli

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Meet the Author

Tom Piccirilli is the author of over twenty novels including SHADOW SEASON, THE COLD SPOT, THE COLDEST MILE, and A CHOIR OF ILL CHILDREN. He's won two International Thriller Awards and four Bram Stoker Awards, as well as having been nominated for the Edgar, the World Fantasy Award, the Macavity, and Le Grand Prix de Pentacle - A Self Collection L'imagination.

Book List:

NOVELS:

A Choir of Ill Children

A Lower Deep: A Self Novel

Coffin Blues

Cold Comforts

Dark Father

Grave Men

Headstone City

Hexes

Nightjack

November Mourns

Shadow Season

Shards

Sorrow's Crown – A Felicity Grove Mystery

The Cold Spot

The Coldest Mile

The Dead Letters

The Dead Past – A Felicity Grove Mystery

The Deceased

The Fever Kill

The Last Kind Words

Pentacle - A Self Collection

The Last Pentacle - A Self Collection Whisper in the Dark

The Midnight Road

The Night Class

NOVELLAS:

All You Despise

Cast in Dark Waters (with Ed Gorman)

Clown in the Moonlight

Frayed

Fuckin' Lie Down Already

Loss

Short Ride to Nowhere

The Last Deep Breath

The Nobody

The Walls of the Castle

Thrust

You'd Better Watch Out

COLLECTIONS:

Futile Efforts

Pentacle – A Self Collection

Tales From the Crossroad, Vol 1

UNABRIDGED AUDIOBOOKS:

All You Despise – Narrated by Brett Barry

Loss – Narrated by Chris Patton

Nightjack – Narrated by Chet Williamson

The Fever Kill – Narrated by Scott Slocum

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AN EXORCISM OF “SELF”

It's troublesome to think about just how quickly the sands of time spill around us. Sitting Pentacle - A Self Collection here, trying to recollect just how it all started, I find it nearly impossible to admit that four and a half years have passed since publishing the first “Self” tale in *Terminal Fright #6*. This marked the beginning of a period when many TF readers measured Pentacle - A Self Collection the passing of days by the appearance Tom Piccirilli's demon-busting duo in the now dormant, but very Pentacle - A Self Collection restless magazine. Every three months, Pentacle - A Self Collection from issue #6 through issue #10, Tom's mysterious Necromancer, along with his even more mysterious “Self” familiar, appeared as reliably as the moon ascends through darkened skies.

Since those early days, I've had many occasions to ponder just why it is that I, and so many others, like these stories so much. After all, we don't even know the name of this Necromancer who roams the world battling demons and gods, all the while pining for his dead love, Danielle, with only Self as a companion. It takes a lot of balls, I think, to speak nothing of confidence in one's writing, to leave out such Pentacle - A Self Collection Pentacle - A Self Collection an important fact. Tom scorns one of the golden rules of character development and teases the readers with only the occasional hint into his protagonist's past. A writer can more easily get away with such liberties in a single short story. But to pull it off so effectively with a *series* character is *nearly* unheard of in the print medium. Disclaimer number one: I claim no expertise in all Pentacle - A Self Collection areas of genre fiction. Surely there are those who can add to this, but I would guess Bill Pronzini's “Nameless Detective” heads an extremely short list of *exceptions*.

Not only does Tom forego the necessity of providing the Necromancer a name, Pentacle - A Self Collection but descriptions, when they exist at Pentacle - A Self Collection all, are purposely vague at best. We are never *shown* the protagonist or his excitable little familiar. Tom's never felt the need to put them inexplicably before a mirror so they might describe themselves to us. As a result, it's really left to us to picture these characters in our own minds, making it highly unlikely that we will ever see two artists' visions of the Necromancer and Self which appear similar. This works surprisingly well, though perhaps it shouldn't be surprising at all. The images created in our mind's eye are often more vivid and less disappointing than seeing the characters as viewed through another's.

Well, that Tom Piccirilli is an exceptional writer is without question or debate. Even if you haven't read him before, which is also highly unlikely, you couldn't have made it to this point in the book without already arriving at the same conclusion.

So what is it? Why do these stories you are about to read succeed when so many other writers have fallen flat on their perplexed faces?

Part of the answer may be the blistering pace, which is a trait distinguishable Pentacle - A Self

Collection in all of Tom's fiction. It's quite impossible to find any large stretch of pages—or even paragraphs—where some sort of action isn't Pentacle - A Self Collection taking place. These stories are fraught with confrontation and resolution, tension and release, mystery and answer. These stories keep you on the edge of your seat, and leave you with an insatiable need to continue reading.

Oddly, a good analogy for “Name” versus pace may be found in the sport of boxing. Heavyweight fights are notoriously slow, at times even boring to watch. Announcers and promoters counter this by creating “Names”; providing listeners with much of the boxer's life outside the ring. Incidents involving heavyweights often make front page news. *Knowing* the heavyweight boxers makes it easier to watch these fights. Patiently we wait for that one punch which will suddenly end it. Whereas in a featherweight fight, the action is often so fast and furious that the names become unimportant to spectators. We watch because the frenzied pace makes it fun to do so. Not necessarily because we feel we know them, or are even pulling for one boxer in particular. The action draws and holds our attention, creates the fascination. Tom's “Self” series is akin to a featherweight fight. The action and tension continually punch us in the gut and jab us in the head, until we finally succumb not to a single, well-placed blow, but a daunting succession of smaller ones which leave us beaten, sometimes demoralized and mentally inflamed, but ready for another round just the same.

Action can't explain the entire riddle, however. Part of the answer can also be found in the subject matter Tom chooses to write about. Personally, I have Pentacle - A Self Collection always been fascinated by the idea of old gods and mythology, demons and witchcraft, the different perceptions of Hell and redemption. Tom catalogs these things for us in his work and presents us with them in such fascinating ways. He arrogantly borrows from a multitude of religious beliefs and meshes them with different majik systems—old and new—to do battle with demons from every Hell known to man. Pentacle - A Self Collection Tom's “Self” tales are often apocalyptic, or nearly so; hinting at the end-game all the while dancing cautiously with evil and death. Bringing us ever so slowly, through these torrid tales, to ... *something* ... which I suspect, and hope, even he doesn't know at this time.

Closely related to the subject matter, these stories succeed because of the authenticity with which they are written. I've had readers actually write to ask if Tom was a *practitioner*. And I've Pentacle - A Self Collection had readers disbelieve me when I told them the answer was “no.” His secret is really no secret at all. Tom's authenticity stems from the fact he is a laborious researcher. He records information on the occult and uses this data liberally when it fits Pentacle - A Self Collection into the scheme of a story. It's a very difficult thing, to say the least, to write about ideas which are at once met with such skepticism and giggles, and to come across so realistic. Again, confidence in his writing plays no small role in this air of authenticity.

Personally, I find it fascinating to think that the demons Tom's nameless Necromancer faces down might exist. Not from the point of view of some toady who thinks they're a devil-worshiper because they invert crosses and throw stones through church windows, or even from a devil-worshiper's POV at all—though there are those who believe writing or reading about such things is Pentacle - A Self Collection evidence to the Pentacle - A Self Collection contrary. Which doesn't seem to pass muster. Disclaimer number 2: I am also not an authority on religious

doctrine. But I know of no religion which professes of a Heaven which doesn't also profess of a Hell, even if that Hell happens to be in the form of a lower-attained Heaven. So it seems to me that one can't really discuss one with any seriousness without considering the other. And let's face it, unless you're of the type who sees Pentacle - A Self Collection good everywhere, who thinks that the death of an Pentacle - A Self Collection innocent child or the rise of a new pestilence is somehow part of God's plan for the betterment of man, evidence of evil, if you believe in such things at all, is much easier to find than evidence Pentacle - A Self Collection of a higher-order goodness. Seems to me the existence of demons would be a very good thing. Because it would affirm that the opposite does indeed exist, and that our time on earth really isn't the end-game. Fascinating stuff to think about.

Pentacle A Pentacle - A Self Collection Self Collection

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