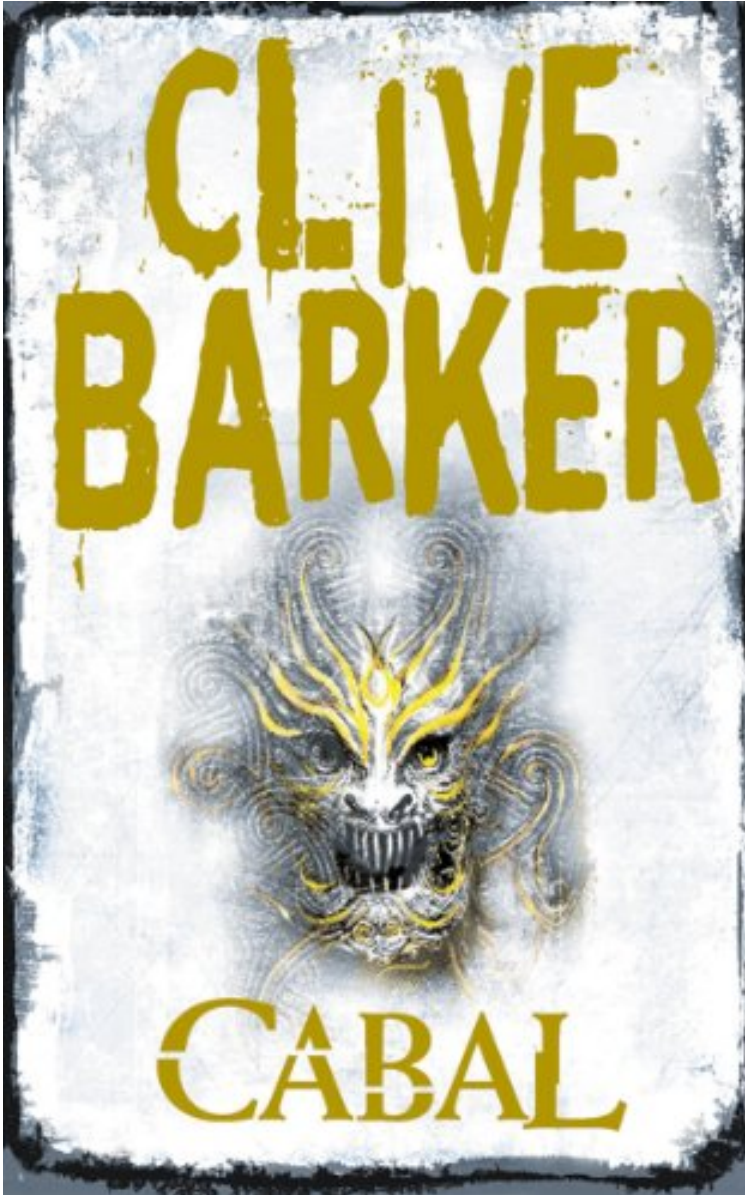


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Cabal



Par Clive Barker
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA fabulous journey through the mind of the master of dark imaginative fiction, Clive Barker.The nightmare had begun.Boone knew that there was no place on this earth for him now; no happiness here, not even with Lori. He would let Hell claim him, let Death take him there.But Death itself seemed to shrink from Boone. No wonder, if he had indeed been the monster who had shattered, violated and shredded so many others lives.And Decker had shown him the proof the hellish photographs where the last victims were forever stilled, splayed in the last obscene moment of their torture.Boones only refuge now was Midian that awful, legendary place in which gathered the half-dead, the NightbreedExtraitChapter One:

The TruthOf all the rash and midnight promises made in the name of love, none, Boone now knew, was more certain to be broken than "I'll never leave you."What time didn't steal from under your nose, circumstance did. It was useless to hope otherwise, useless to dream that the world somehow meant you good. Everything of value, everything you clung to for your sanity, would rot or be snatched in the long run, and the abyss would gape beneath you, as it gaped for Boone now, and suddenly, without so much as a breath of explanation, you were gone. Gone to hell or worse, professions of love and all.His outlook hadn't always been so pessimistic. There'd been a time -- not all that long ago -- when he'd felt the burden of his mental anguish lifting. There'd been fewer psychotic episodes, fewer days when he felt like slitting his wrists rather than enduring the hours till his next medication. There'd seemed to be a chance for happiness.It was that prospect that had won the declaration of love from him, that "I'll never leave you," whispered in Lori's ear as they lay in the narrow bed he'd never dared hope would hold two. The words had not come in the throes of high passion. Their love life, like so much else between them, was fraught with problems. But where other women had given up on him, unforgiving of his failure, she'd persevered, told him there was plenty of time to get it right, all the time in the world. I'm with you for as long as you want me to be, her patience had seemed to say.Nobody had ever offered such a commitment, and he wanted to offer one in return. Those words -- "I'll never leave you" -- were it.The memory of them, and of her skin almost luminous in the murk of his room, and of the sound of her breathing when she finally fell asleep beside him -- all of it still had the power to catch his heart, and squeeze it till it hurt.He longed to be free of both the memory and the words, now that circumstance had taken away any hope of their fulfillment. But they wouldn't be forgotten. They lingered on to torment him with his frailty. His meager comfort was that she -- knowing what she must now know about him -- would be working to erase her memory; and that with time she'd succeed. He only hoped she'd understand his ignorance of himself when he'd voiced that promise. He'd never have risked this pain if he'd doubted health was finally within his grasp.Dream on!Decker had brought an abrupt end to those delusions, the day he'd locked the office door, drawn the blinds on the Alberta spring sunshine, and said, in a voice barely louder than a whisper:"Boone, I think we're in terrible trouble, you and I."He was trembling, Boone saw, a fact not easily concealed in a body so big. Decker had the physique of a man who sweated out the day's angst in a gym. Even his tailored suits, always charcoal, couldn't tame his bulk. It had made Boone edgy at the start of their work together; he'd felt intimidated by the doctor's physical and mental authority. Now it was the fallibility of that strength he feared. Decker was a Rock; he was Reason; he was Calm. This anxiety ran counter to all he knew about the man."What's wrong?" Boone asked."Sit, will you? Sit and I'll tell you."Boone did as he was told. In this office, Decker was lord. The doctor leaned back in the leather chair and inhaled through his nose, his mouth sealed in a downward curve."Tell me..." Boone said."Where to start.""Anywhere.""I thought you were getting better," Decker said, "I really did. We both did.""I still am," Boone said.Decker made a small shake of his head. He was a man of considerable intellect, but little of it showed on his tightly packed features, except perhaps in his eyes, which at the moment were not watching the patient, but were fixed on the table between them."You've started to talk in your sessions," Decker said, "about crimes you think you've committed. Do you remember any of that?""You know I don't." The trances Decker put him in were too profound. "I only remember when you play the tape back.""I won't be playing any of these," Decker said. "I erased them.""Why?""Because...I'm afraid, Boone. For you." He paused. "Maybe for both of us."The crack in the Rock was opening and there was nothing Decker could do to conceal it."What are these crimes?" Boone asked, his words tentative."Murders. You talk about them obsessively. At first I thought they were dream crimes. You always had a violent streak in you.""And now?""Now I'm afraid you may have actually committed them."There was a long silence while Boone studied Decker, more in puzzlement than anger. The blinds had not been pulled all the way down. A slice of sunlight fell across him, and onto the table between them. On the glass surface was a bottle of still water, two tumblers, and a large envelope. Decker leaned forward and picked it up."What I'm doing now is probably a crime in itself," he told Boone. "Patient confidentiality is one thing, protecting a killer is another. But part of me is still hoping to God it isn't true. I want to believe I've succeeded. We've succeeded. Together. I want to believe you're well.""I am well."In lieu of reply Decker tore open the envelope."I'd like you to look at these for me," he said, sliding his hand inside and bringing out a sheaf of photographs to meet the light."I warn you, they're not pleasant."He laid them on his reflection, turned for Boone's perusal. His warning had been well advised. The picture on the top of the pile was like a physical assault. Faced with it a fear rose in him he'd not felt since being in Decker's care: that the image might possess him. He'd built walls against that superstition, brick by brick, but they shook now, and

threatened to fall. "It's just a picture." "That's right," Decker replied, "it's just a picture. What do you see?" "A dead man." "A murdered man." "Yes. A murdered man. Not simply murdered: butchered. The life slashed from him in a fury of slices and stabs, his blood flung on the blade that had taken out his neck, taken off his face, onto the wall behind him. He wore only his shorts, so the wounds on his body could be easily counted, despite the blood. Boone did just that now, to keep the horror from overcoming him. Even here, in this room where the doctor had chiseled another self from the block of his patient's condition, Boone had never choked on terror as he choked now. He tasted his breakfast in the back of his throat, or the meal the night before, rising from his bowels against nature. Shit in his mouth, like the dirt of his deed. Count the wounds, he told himself, pretend they're beads on an abacus. Three, four, five in the abdomen and chest: one in particular ragged, more like a tear than a wound, gaping so wide the man's innards poked out. On the shoulder, two more. And then the face, unmade with cuts. So many their numbers could not be calculated, even by the most detached of observers. They left the victim beyond recognition: eyes dug out, lips slit off, nose in ribbons. "Enough?" Decker said, as if the question needed asking. "Yes." "There's a lot more to see." He uncovered the second, laying the first beside the pile. This one was of a woman, sprawled on a sofa, her upper and lower body twisted in a fashion life would have forbidden. Though she was presumably not a relation of the first victim, the butcher had created a vile resemblance. Here was the same liplessness, the same eyelessness. Born from different parents, they were siblings in death, destroyed by the same hand. And am I their father? Boone found himself thinking. "No," was his gut's response. "I didn't do this." But two things prevented him from voicing his denial. First, he knew that Decker would not be endangering his patient's equilibrium this way unless he had good reason to do so. Second, denial was valueless when both of them knew how easily Boone's mind had deceived itself in the past. If he was responsible for these atrocities, there was no certainty he'd know it. Instead he kept his silence, not daring to look up at Decker for fear he'd see the Rock shattered. "Another?" Decker said. "If we must." "We must." He uncovered a third photograph, and a fourth, laying the pictures out on the table like cards at a tarot reading, except that every one was Death. In the kitchen, lying at the open door of the refrigerator. In the bedroom, beside the lamp and the alarm. At the top of the stairs, at the window. The victims were of every age and color: men, women, and children. Whatever fiend was responsible, he cared to make no distinction. He simply erased life wherever he found it. Not quickly, not efficiently. The rooms in which these people had died bore plain testament to how the killer, in his humor, had toyed with them. Furniture had been overturned as they stumbled to avoid the coup de grace, blood prints left on walls and paintwork. One had lost his fingers to the blade, snatching at it perhaps; most had lost their eyes. But none had escaped, however brave their resistance. They'd all fallen at last, tangled in their underwear, or seeking refuge behind a curtain. Fallen sobbing, fallen retching. There were eleven photographs in all. Every one was different, but also the same: all pictures of a madness performed, taken with the actor already departed. God almighty, was he that man? Not having an answer for himself, he asked the question of the Rock, speaking without looking up from the shining cards. "Did I do this?" he said. He heard Decker sigh, but there was no answer forthcoming, so he chanced a glance at his accuser. As the photographs had been laid out before him, he'd felt the man's scrutiny like a crawling ache in his scalp. But now he once more found that gaze averted. "Please tell me," he said. "Did I do this?" Decker wiped the moist purses of skin beneath his gray eyes. He was not trembling any longer. "I hope not," he said. The response seemed ludicrously mild. This was not some minor infringement of the law they were debating. It was death times eleven, and how many more might there be, out of sight, out of mind? "Tell me what I talked about," Boone said. "Tell me the words --" "It was ramblings mostly." "So what makes you think I'm responsible? You must have reasons." "It took time," Decker said, "for me to piece the whole thing together." He looked down at the mortuary on the table, aligning a photograph that was a little askew with his middle finger. "I have to make a quarterly report on our progress. You know that. So I play all the tapes of our previous sessions sequentially, to get some sense of how we're doing..." He spoke slowly, wearily. "...and I noticed the same phrases coming up in your responses. Buried most of the time, in other material, but there. It was as if you were confessing to something, but something so abhorrent to you even in a trance state you couldn't quite bring yourself to say it. Instead it was coming out in this...code." Boone knew codes. He'd heard them everywhere during the bad times. Messages from the imagined enemy in the noise between stations on the radio, or in the murmur of traffic before dawn. That he might have learned the art himself came as no surprise. "I made a few casual inquiries," Decker continued, "among police officers I've treated. Nothing specific. And they told me about the killings. I'd heard some of the details, of course, from the press. Seems they've been going on for two and a half years. Several here in Calgary, the rest within an

hour's drive. The work of one man. "Me." "I don't know," Decker said, finally looking up at Boone. "If I was certain, I'd have reported it all -- " "But you're not." "I don't want to believe this any more than you do. It doesn't cover me in glory if this turns out to be true." There was anger in him, not well concealed. "That's why I waited. Hoping you'd be with me when the next one happened." "You mean some of these people died while you knew?" "Yes," Decker said flatly. "Jesus!" The thought propelled Boone from the chair, his leg catching the table. The murder scenes flew. "Keep your voice down," Decker demanded. "People died, and you waited?" "I took that risk for you, Boone. You'll respect that." Boone turned from the man. There was a chill of sweat on his spine. "Sit down," said Decker. "Please sit down and tell me what these photographs mean to you." Involuntarily Boone had put his hand over the lower half of his face. He knew from Decker's instruction what that particular piece of body language signified. His mind was using his body to muffle some disclosure, or to silence it completely. "Boone, I need answers." "They mean nothing," Boone said, not turning. "At all?" "At all." "Look at them again." "No," Boone insisted, "I can't." He heard the doctor inhale, and half expected a demand that he face the horrors afresh. But instead Decker's tone was placatory. "It's all right, Aaron," he said, "it's all right. I'll put them away." Boone pressed the heels of his hands against his closed eyes. His sockets were hot and wet. "They're gone, Aaron," Decker said. "No, they're not." They were with him still, perfectly remembered. Eleven rooms and eleven bodies, fixed in his mind's eye. The wall Decker had taken five years to build had been brought down in as many minutes, and by its architect. Boone was at the mercy of his madness again. He heard it whine in his head, coming from eleven slit windpipes, from eleven punctured bellies. Breath and bowel gas, singing the old mad songs. Why had his defenses tumbled so easily after so much labor? His eyes knew the answer, spilling tears to admit what his tongue couldn't. He was guilty. Why else? Hands he was even now wiping dry on his trousers had tortured and slaughtered. If he pretended otherwise he'd only tempt them to further crime. Better that he confessed, though he remembered nothing, than offer them another unguarded moment. He turned and faced Decker. The photographs had been gathered up and laid facedown on the table. "You remember something?" the doctor said, reading the change on Boone's face. "Yes," he replied. "What?" "I did it," Boone said simply, "I did it all." Copyright 1965, 1995 by Clive Barker Revue de presse The New York Times Book [Cabal] demonstrate[s] why the gleefully gory Mr. Barker is at the top of his genre. Endlessly inventive, he takes familiar themes a step or two farther...dazzling, captivating stuff...The Washington Post In the hands of a lesser writer this could be just another tale of nightmarish evil...[what] lifts Barker from common craftsman to the rarefied and chancy domain of artist is his profound awareness of the alienation and aloneness of man. And he brings these insights into dramatic focus through the innocence of his monsters...Elle Simultaneously repels and spellbinds the reader...Literature in the tradition of Poe, Shelley and Hawthorne. Washington Times [Clive Barker] is a mapmaker of the mind, charting the furthest reaches of the imagination....His ambition and audacity are unparalleled; we know that we are in the presence of a vision that is genuine, unique, and lasting. Publishers Weekly The most ambitious dark fantasist of our time. The Boston Herald Barker's work reads like a cross between Stephen King and...Gabriel Garcia Mrquez. He creates a world where our biggest fears appear to be our own dreams. People Barker's dark, powerful imagination -- and his skill in pacing to keep his stories surprising -- make the horror grisly and effective. Armistead Maupin [Barker writes] with the easy confidence of a tribal storyteller, and elder who has seen everything and committed most of it to scripture. Atlanta Journal-Constitution Clive Barker is back from yet another excursion into his dark and fertile imagination, bearing sinister fruits of fine horror fantasy. Locus The premier metaphysicist of contemporary fiction.