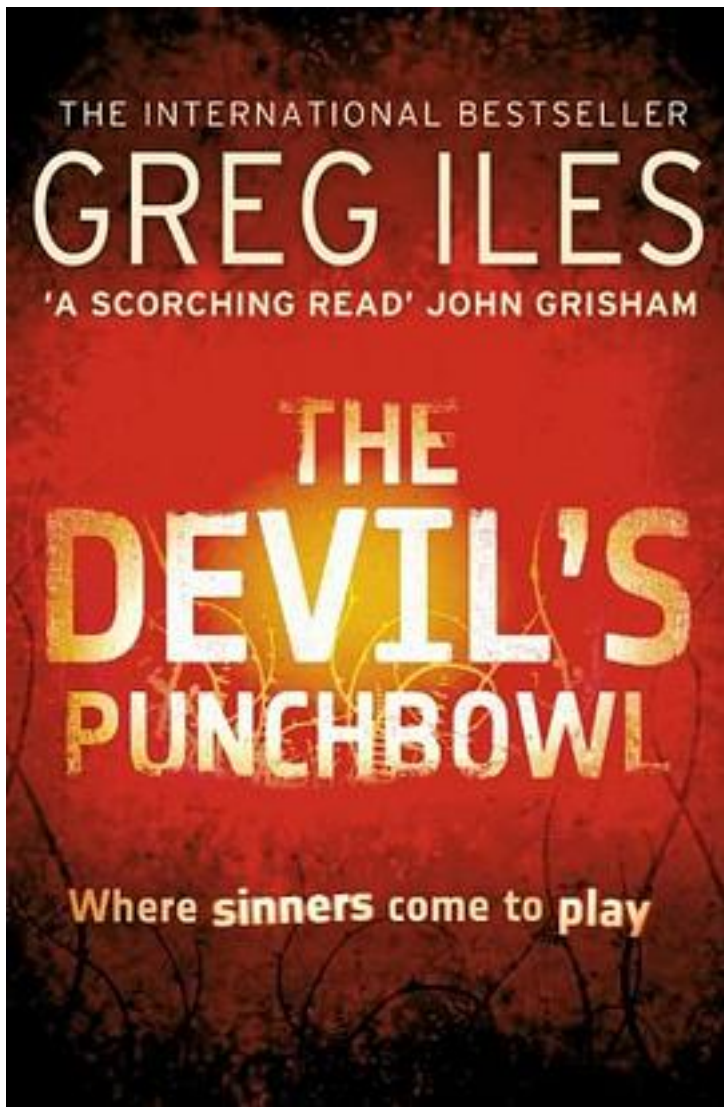


The Devil's Punchbowl



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As a prosecutor in Houston, Penn Cage sent killers to death row. But as mayor of his hometown a " Natchez, Mississippi a " Penn will face his most dangerous threat. Urged by old friends to try to restore this fading jewel of the Old South, Penn has ridden into office on a tide of support for change. But in its quest for new jobs and fresh money, Natchez has turned to casino gambling, and now five steamboats float on the river beside the old slave market, like props from Gone With the Wind. But one boat isna (TM)t like the others. Rumor has it that the Magnolia Queen has found a way to pull the big players from Las Vegas to its Mississippi backwater. And with them a " on sleek private jets that slip in and out of town like whispers in the night a " come pro football players, rap stars, and international gamblers, all sharing an unquenchable taste for one thing: blood sport a " and the dark vices that go with it. When a childhood friend of Penna (TM)s who brings him evidence of these crimes is brutally murdered, he begins a quest to find the men responsible. But the local authorities have been corrupted by the money and power of his hidden enemy and, with his familya (TM)s lives at stake, Penn realizes his only allies are those bound to him by blood or honor. Together they must defeat a killer who has an almost preternatural ability to anticipate a " and counter a " their every move. Ultimately, victory will depend on a bold stroke that will leave one of Penna (TM)s allies dead a " and Natchez changed forever.

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