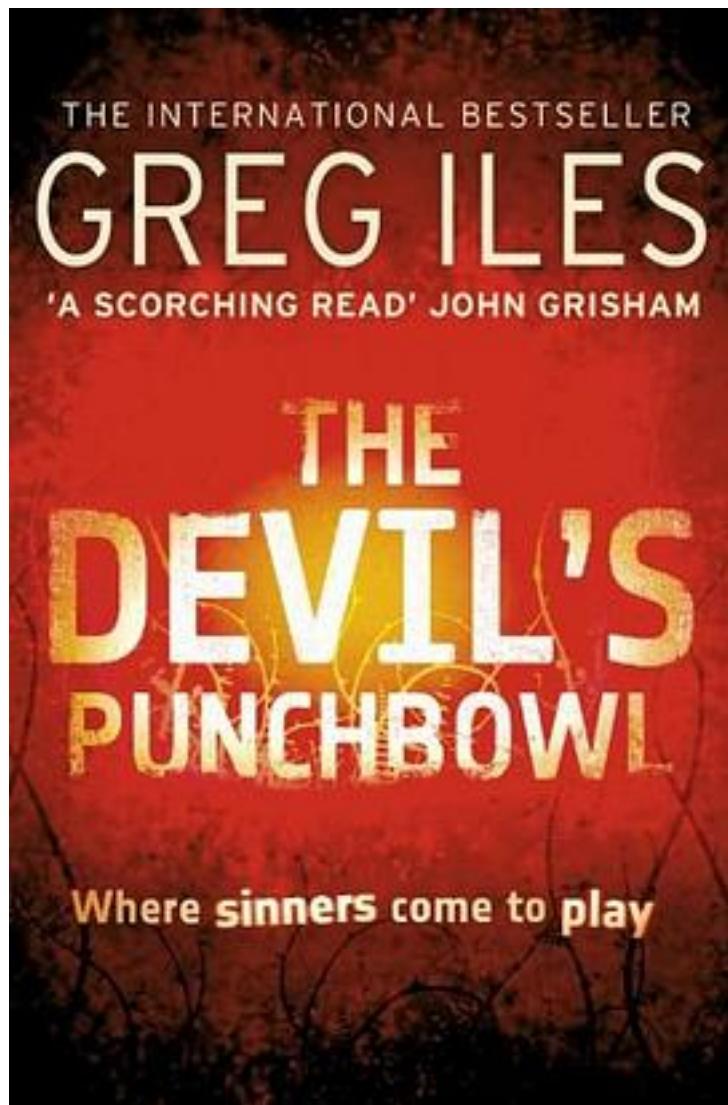


The Devil's Punchbowl



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The disturbing new thriller from the king of southern gothic. When he was a prosecuting attorney Penn Cage sent hardened killers to death row. But it is as mayor of his hometown - Natchez, Mississippi - that Penn will face his most dangerous threat. Urged by old friends to restore the town to its former glory, 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. Five fantastical steamboats float on the river beside the old slave market like props from *Gone With the Wind*. But one boat isn't like the others. Rumour has it that the Magnolia Queen has found a way to pull the big players from Las Vegas. And with them comes an unquenchable taste for one thing: blood sport, and the dark vices that go with it. When a childhood friend of Penn's who brings him evidence of these crimes is brutally murdered, the full weight of Penn's failure to protect this city hits home. So begins his quest to find the men responsible. But it's a hunt he begins alone, for the local authorities have been corrupted by the money and power of his hidden enemy. With his family's life at stake, Penn realizes his only allies in his one-man war are those bound to him by blood or honour.

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