



The Blood of Before

Scott Hale

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The Blood of Before
by
Scott Hale

is an anthology of six interconnected horror stories that take place before The Bones of the Earth series.

A mother, called across the Victorian countryside, to return to her family estate and the violent lineage she left behind.

The writings of a supernatural investigator sent to explore a village where people die day by day, and the dead refuse to stay buried.

A college graduate, recently fired and drowning in debt, who agrees to babysit her former professor's child—unaware she might become the boy's new favorite plaything.

The egotistical writer of a self-published, self-indulgent horror magazine who follows a lead to a house where a family was murdered, and the murderer who still resides there.

In the depths of a swamp, children are seen carrying body parts to an island covered in satin, and the woman who lies at its center, gorging herself on their fleshy tributes.

A family fractured by hate and distrust come to discover that the grandfather clock they've purchased is chiming out madness at the midnight hour, causing their love and hate to come together in one hideous, parasitic union.

From the darkest violence to the blackest humor, The Blood of Before is a glimpse into the horrors that led up to the Trauma and continue to affect the world of The Bones of the Earth.

If The Blood of Before doesn't make your heart stop...
you're already dead.

The Blood of Before Details

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From Reader Review The Blood of Before for online ebook

F.D. Gross says

A ghoulily good time of blood, gore, death and destruction. A well spring of back story set in the world of "The Bones of the Earth." This third installment in the series brings forth a wealth of information told through the eyes of many different characters. Hale continues to weave stories through his unique voice and skillfully connects each individual short story that relates to the next. A look into the past before the Trauma took place, light is shed upon certain characters you may have wondered about. Totaling six stories to be exact, they leave their own unique mark on the reader as they traverse this well paced anthology. Hale continues to impress with his exact descriptions in the genre of horror. There is no doubt his craft is honed. He uses the sharpest knives to carve dread and despair out of his readers and he is relentless. There are no happy endings here, but such is the theme of the book. With warning labels of explicit content and a synopsis that simply states "If The Blood of Before doesn't make your heart stop, you're already dead," it should come as no surprise this book will leave you thinking of grim thoughts.

Some of my personal notes: the reader may learn about the origins of ghouls and flesh fiends which are some of my favorite concepts in Scott Hales world building. There are six short stories, each marked with their own unique art piece at the beginning. Two of my favorite stories were—That which walks behind the graves, and, Black occult Macabre. And watch out for The Black Hours, it's a doozy. I found that I was losing myself within Scott's realm of torture and death, but this a good thing. This particular book, easily comparable to the writings of Neil Gaiman and HP Lovecraft, carries similar vibes from that of Sleepy Hollow, Childs Play, and Arkham Horror. Also, if you ever played The Evil Within, this is exactly how I would picture this particular novel's unfolding scenes. Psychotic madness. Dreams of blood and war. After reading The Blood of Before, I felt quite drained as if a vampire had sucked the very essence of my soul. Devoured. I'm excited to read the other stories in this series. 5 out of 5 stars.

Author F. D. Gross
Greldragon@hotmail.com

karen says

a wonderful, horrible collection of stories spread out across time and place, stuck together with blood and other bodily fluids. they are linked in the broad view by the fact that they all depict circumstances contributing to "how the world is" at the start of the first book in hale's trilogy, The Bones of the Earth, with references to characters or situations that fans will recognize (♥ mosquito!! ♥), but they are further linked within the collection with recurring characters and more intrinsically - by giving either endings or explanations to previous stories. i was scratching my head over the super-glue thing at the end of *Black Occult Macabre Vol. 1 Issue 7** until *The Black Hours* kindly showed me the light, while black occult, etc explained what became of beatrice after her story ended.

in short: wonderful, gross, funny, but mostly gross.

in long:

The House of a Thousand Hearts

"Death tends to make most things more agreeable, so close your eyes if you'd like, because I'm going to kill you now. Then we'll talk."

this was my least favorite story in the collection, and i don't know why. it certainly wasn't poorly-written, but it took me a while to get into it - maybe i just wasn't in the mood for a short story because of distract-o-mind. i read it twice, and i liked it more the second time, but it still got sixth place. which is fine - that just means i liked the stories more as i went forward into the collection. spooky house, family curse, monsters & murders; the chronological beginning of the Trauma.

That Which Walks Behind the Graves

"It will take years to wash the blood from the headstones."

this story introduces herbert north to the mix; a character the perfect blend of affable, capable, and formidable. he is a monster hunter by trade, called to the english marsh-town of cairn to investigate some unseemly dismemberments. it's like splatterfilm meets x-files meets nick cave murder ballad. really fun, really bloody.

The Easiest Job in the World

For now, for once, her character flaws would become strengths. Too stubborn to die, too irrational to wait. If she had to kill, she'd kill, and if she had to dig her way out, she'd dig her way out. Of all things, Beatrice was a scavenger, and if she had to fight for the last scraps of life, then she would.

this one is my very favorite story, featuring the angry, down-on-her-luck, admirably badass and lamentably-named beatrice bacchus. when she unexpectedly runs into her former professor (and subject of many lustful daydreams) and he offers her a job watching his kid, she takes him up on it, because babysitting is easy money, right?

pause for laughter.

but it's a great story - reaaaallllyyyyy gross and also occasionally funny:

The papers crumpled beneath her weight as she moved like a beast along the floor. Most of them could be disregarded and subsequently discarded, but there were a few she couldn't part with. They were of a heavy paper, comprised of cruel fibers that cut the flesh subtly for sustenance. They were folded three times to give an air of professionalism and burned when held. They were relentless, seemingly endless; torn pages from the tome of the Leech God, written with the blood of its whore, Academia.

They were student loan statements.

because the best horror is relatable horror. but (hopefully) that's the last part that is relatable to you. if you have experienced the things that happen later in this story, i give you my profoundest sympathies.

Black Occult Macabre Vol. 1 Issue 7

"I told you there was a doll missing."

the return of herbert north! and the first “real” appearance of connor prendergast, creator of the true crime/horror fiction zine from which the story takes its name. banter, dog boner, carnivorous tree, bloodbath horrorhouse, and yes - a spooky doll.

Nights in White Satin

"If they wanted us dead, we'd be dead. No grand scheme, Herbert. Just monsters doing what monsters do, and people like us making sure they don't do it as much as they'd like."

more herbert north! and this time we get to meet his oft-mentioned but only briefly glimpsed partner seth, in the Case of the Horribly Underestimated Wife! fun fact - if you queue up the moody blues song of the same name to begin at the exact moment you begin this story... you will have a pleasant soundtrack to a pretty bloody story. and you'll probably need to start it over again, because it's not a very long song, flute solo aside.

The Black Hours

"This is nice," she said, squeezing them closer to her, eyes wide and nothing but pupil. "All it took was for one little clock to make us a family again."

at about a hundred pages, this is the longest story in the collection, and in many ways, the most upsetting. not because of the imagery, although - ew. (particularly for the fellas - remember, oral hygiene is very important. just make sure you do it right) but because the family dynamic, both before and after the arrival of a spoooooooky clock, is so toxic, and in a way that isn't necessarily horror-toxic, just plausibly manipulative/neglectful/selfish. it's horror that kind of makes you sad. it's more like a metaphor for the ways in which families can destroy themselves with carelessness and resentment. but also a metaphor for the ways in which they can destroy themselves by listening to a haunted freaking clock. this story also features a stuffed bat named scram, whom i love. and a dusting of herbert north.

i am very excited for the final(?) book in the series!

* although a closer reader/someone not reading this on their commute, subject to the necessary reading-pauses brought on by subway stops, would not have missed chekhov's super glue.

note to self: do not play an "all gross adjective" version of scrabble with this author.

review to come

bobbydylan says

Wow, what a deliciously terrifying set of short stories. This is perfect to read on blustery cold winter evenings and right around Halloween! Although these stories are interconnected to the other novels Hale has written, they act as stand alone stories as well. They are perfect for the horror fanatics out there. Some stories are set in modern day others in the past. Each story is jam packed with ghoulish fiends, weird and strange protagonists, and lore that will keep you up at night. Loved it!

Sherry says

This is an interlocked series of horror stories which take place before the Bones of the Earth series. The stories are woven together by plot and characters like a demented pot holder.

You know those pot holder looms that we played with as kids with the many colored cotton loom pieces that you stretch and wove on the loom and then tied off into a glorious many colored pot holder to protect your hand from burning on the hot pots and pans.

Well, take bloody pieces of fabric made up of people's lives and bodies weave them on a metal torture case in a haphazard and grotesque non pattern of chaos with a clock ticking in the background and horrible gurgling, sucking sounds playing the theme music in the background, throw in continuity with plot and characters, have the "pot holder" fail spectacularly and for everyone to be burnt, maimed, or destroyed and you have this book. Enjoy!

Jody Ellis says

A handy 0.5 to fill in the gap waiting for The Cults of the Worm (book three in the bones of the earth series) and honestly I felt it was even better than book 1 or 2. It gave a taste of the history before what one can assume is the end of the world happens. The dread clock obviously plays a pivotal roles and there are a few cameo appearances from characters in the series too.

Scott Hale did not disappoint in his third book, a prequel if you will. It was better than all those before because we got illustrations for each section and I am a massive fan of pictures. I like to see the authors vision of characters in the book and see if my minds eye is close to their vision.

Scott delivered and superseded his trade-mark gore and horror, and as someone with kids I can say it really dug it's claws into my very heart and soul. I really felt I was living it moment by delicious moment.

As I have said before, Scott doesn't cringe away from sensitive topics or horror themes. He embraces them and that enables him to present original genuine horror. Was the bar raised on horror this time? I'd say it was on par and I had sections where I wanted more and didn't get the more but I think that just added to a thirst

for more pages as I devoured the book.

As before, I struggle to place Scott's writing style. Still clear with enough info for you to form your own versions, it's almost poetic and it's never boring. Not a traditional story line just like the first and each and every word used carries meaning and purpose.

Scott is a master of his genre and you fall that more in love with the story. I've found myself almost feeling sad because I know the story will have to end eventually. Will there be side stories? Will we see books dedicated to support characters stories like Mr Hameo?

Bradley says

This is the first short story collection, all leading up to the events in *The Bones of the Earth* and *The Three Heretics*.

I was surprised to find that the ones that I had already read were smoother, but here's the best part: The ones I hadn't read were great. :) It's really nice having geeky kids and hardened investigators and hapless family members slowly discover that the world they live in is not their own. Objects and objects of horror often have a lot more life than anyone guesses.

But before you think that these are regular horror stories, check your premises at the door and read these. What always appears to be steadfast and true usually turns into truly nightmarish surrealism brought on by the actual warping of reality or mind or both.

The scale? Get out of here... you wouldn't believe the scale.

My favorite of this bunch was the new one I hadn't read yet, but I did get a very nice glimpse of in *Three Heretics*. *The Black Hour* has the fabled Dread Clock. :) Again, check your premises. What Scott Hale does with a simple grandfather clock boggles all expectations. :) This is the truly gruesome and extreme horror I've come to know and love and expect.

I can't tell for sure whether I'd recommend these stories before or after the novels, but they would be an interesting "regular life" exploration of the kinds of powers that completely overwhelm and fracture the world later. :)

Honestly, I think anything can be read in any order without any issue, with the novels before or after these stories. Characters and objects are persistent and show up in the strangest of ways. It's like piecing together a tapestry of events and people among an enormous horrorshow of epic proportions. :)

And golly, is it fun! :)
