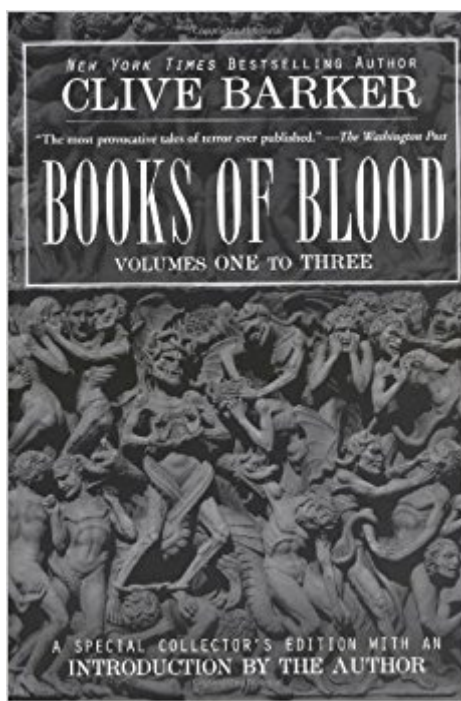


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Books Of Blood, Vols. 1-3



Synopsis

With the 1984 publication of *Books of Blood*, Clive Barker became an overnight literary sensation. He was hailed by Stephen King as "the future of horror," and won both the British and World Fantasy Awards. Now, with his numerous bestsellers, graphic novels, and hit movies like the *Hellraiser* films, Clive Barker has become an industry unto himself. But it all started here, with this tour de force collection that rivals the dark masterpieces of Edgar Allan Poe. Read him. And rediscover the true meaning of fear.

Book Information

Paperback: 507 pages

Publisher: Berkley; unknown edition (October 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0425165582

ISBN-13: 978-0425165584

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (126 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #24,146 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Horror #378 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Short Stories #1351 in Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Horror

Customer Reviews

Clive Barker did not want his *Books of Blood* broken up into individual volumes when they were published, yet that is what happened. Now, the first three volumes are available in one book, serving as the perfect introduction to Barker's unique style of horror. There are some really groundbreaking stories included here, alongside of a dud or two from Volume Two, but each and every story exhibits the genius and originality of its author's dark vision. The initial offering, *The Book of Blood*, stands out as a unique ghost story, but it also serves as a provocative abstract for everything Barker sought to accomplish with these stories. After this enticing introductory tale, we head below the streets of New York to sneak a ride on *The Midnight Meat Train*. This story is vintage Clive Barker, full of blood and gore. Barker isn't trying to drown the reader in blood as a means to hide any lack of skill on his part, though, because the skill is undeniably there for all to see. In *The Yattering and Jack*, a dark comedy farce, a poor demon does everything he can think of to make the unshakeable Jack miserable, driving himself almost mad in the process. I think of *The*

Yattering and Jack as an amusing sort of Barker bedtime story. Pig Blood Blues forces the casual reader to once again don hip hugger boots for a trek into gore and depravity. At a certain school for wayward boys, the other white meat is not pork. Sex, Death and Starshine is a good story, touching upon the needs of the dead to be entertained every once in a while, but it lacks a certain oomph. Dread is a somewhat sadistic tale of one man's obsession with death.

Years ago, around '86 or '87 a friend of mine in High School turned me on to a then unknown Englishman by the name of Clive Barker. I was a complete Stephen King junkie at the time and this friend of mine said, dude, you gotta read this guy's stuff...he's un-f*cking-real! I kinda wrinkled my nose and shook my head. Read some no-name's book...please. But I trusted this friend with his opinions and while browsing around one day at a local B. Dalton bookstore I came across a hardcover copy of In The Flesh by Mr. Barker on the under \$5.00 table. What the heck. It bought it and read it and....Jeezus! The Forbidden still haunts me to this day. But that small dose of Barker was only the beginning. A few months later I had the luck of finding (on the same under \$5.00 table in the same bookstore) a hardcover copy of The Books Of Blood. Now, in England, The Books Of Blood were arranged in volumes I through VI by a little outfit called Sphere Ltd, but Stateside, they were broken up into Volumes I through III, The Inhuman Condition, In The Flesh and finally at the end of the novel Cabal. Anyway, I took the book home and started to read the short stories represented there one by one. Astonishing. Nothing I had ever read before would prepare me for what Clive Barker was up to. Never before had I witnessed such abominations, such cruelties, such acts of horrifying and engrossing carnal aberrations. He scared me more than a little. Great God, where had this guy come from? Stephen King was praising him on the jacket of every book he printed and rightly so. This guy was the new messiah of the modern horror story. Nowhere had I read such raw, brutal and fresh ideas. Nothing cliché here.

Some books are guideposts, planes upon which your (writing/reading) life refracts, shifts, changes course. Books that have done this for me, not only to my writing/reading life, but to my life: The Shining (King), a collection of poems (e.e. cummings), Generation X (Coupland), The Great Gatsby (FSC), The Hours (Cunningham), Ninety-Two in the Shade (McGuane), A Prayer for the Dying (O'Nan), Winter's Bone (Woodrell). Now: add to this list: Books of Blood, Vols. One to Three (Barker). What a revelation this book was for me. It came out in 1984. I love horror. I'm a Constant Reader of (mostly vintage) King. But I just finally got around to reading this. Wow and wow. Deeply affecting stories, superbly written. Not flawless, no. No such thing, and for risk-taking stories like

these, there's no way one can limn to the standard of flawless. Barker is known for films to the general public. However, these stories got him started and they are brilliant. The writing is sublime. He has such a lovely touch, though maybe sometimes he could dial it back a bit, cut a bit more. But I'm not complaining. There are many point-of-view shifts mid-story, even mid-scene, but Barker's so talented, he doesn't jar you out of the story with it--you find yourself going with it and shaking your head in awe. All of these long-to-novella-length stories are quality. Of course, some work better than others. None are weak. The ones that really pierced deepest: "Pig Blood Blues" - my favorite; just scary and resonant and so well-written and executed. "In the Hills, the Cities" - this story, a not exactly subtle allegory about collectivism and The State, got to me in such a way that I had to put it down as I read into the night, needing the sober light of day to get me through. Truly creeped me out.

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