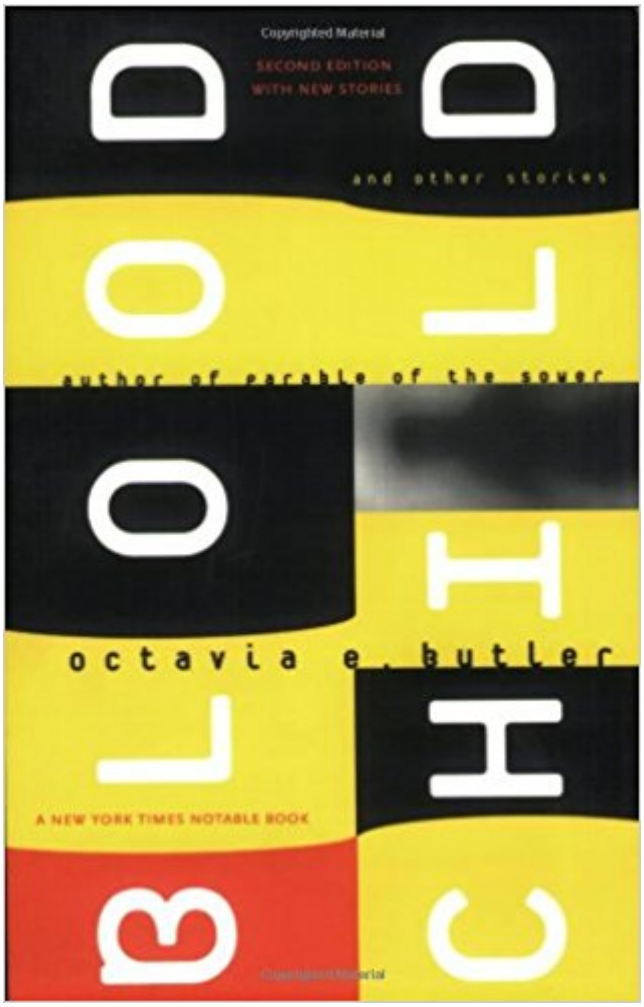
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Bloodchild And Other Stories



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Synopsis

A perfect introduction for new readers and a must-have for avid fans, this New York Times Notable Book includes "Bloodchild," winner of both the Hugo and the Nebula awards and "Speech Sounds," winner of the Hugo Award. Appearing in print for the first time, "Amnesty" is a story of a woman named Noah who works to negotiate the tense and co-dependent relationship between humans and a species of invaders. Also new to this collection is "The Book of Martha" which asks: What would you do if God granted you the abilityÃ¢â ¬â •and responsibilityÃ¢â ¬â •to save humanity from itself?Like all of Octavia ButlerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s best writing, these works of the imagination are parables of the contemporary world. She proves constant in her vigil, an unblinking pessimist hoping to be proven wrong, and one of contemporary literatureÃ¢â ¬â„¢s strongest voices.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Seven Stories Press; 2nd ed. edition (October 4, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1583226982

ISBN-13: 978-1583226988

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 164 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #13,352 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 inÃ Â Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Short Stories #30 inÃ Â Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Anthologies #97 inÃ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Anthologies

Customer Reviews

A writer who darkly imagined the future we have destined for ourselves in book afterÃ Â book, and also one who has shown us the way toward improving on that dismal fate,Ã Â OCTAVIA E. BUTLER (1947Ã¢â ¬â œ2006)Ã Â is recognized as among the bravest and smartest of contemporaryÃ Â fiction writers. A 1995 MacArthur Award winner, Butler transcended the science fictionÃ Â category even as she was awarded that communityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s top prizes, the Nebula andÃ Â Hugo Awards. She reached readers of all ages, all races, and all religious and sexualÃ Â persuasions. For years the only African-American woman writing science fiction,Ã Â Butler has encouraged many others to follow in her path.

The 2005 expanded edition of Butler's only collection of short fiction contains the original five stories and two essays, plus two additional stories published in 2003. Each story is remarkable for its succinct, raw power, and the collection, while slight, is impressive for its variety. There's more going on here in seven stories than many more prolific writers offer in a lifetime. Two of the earlier stories are not science fiction; one is a "sympathetic [that is, non-judgmental] story of incest" inspired by various biblical examples; the other is a story about a working woman "turning to alcohol." And Butler wrote an afterword for each selection, explaining its inspiration, meaning, and place in her oeuvre. In one of the two essays, she recalls how an exasperated writing teacher asked her, "Can't you write anything normal?" The answer, happily, is no.Although the most famous piece is "Bloodchild" (Butler's "pregnant man story"), for my money the gem of the book is "Speech Sounds," about a woman who has mysteriously retained her functions of speech after a deadly disease has robbed nearly all the surviving population of the ability to communicate. (The basic set-up reminds me a little of Saramago's "Blindness," which was of course written much later.) The mute survivors attack the healthy for their "superiority" and so even those who can speak are forced to be silent and armed. The woman struggles to survive in the anarchic violence of a world "where the only likely common language was body language."The final selection, "The Book of Martha" (one of the stories written in 2003), also shows why, five years after her death, Butler continues to be regarded as one of the best of science fiction writers. An extended dialogue between a woman and God, it is Butler's "utopia story," but her take on the perfect world explains much about why the ironies in her fiction still resonate: "I don't like most utopia stories because I don't believe them for a moment. It seems inevitable that my utopia would be someone else's hell." There is some version of heaven or hell for every reader in each one of these stories, but all of them are immaculately rendered.

After reading a portion of "Bloodchild" in a Hugo Award "snippet" book earlier this year, I picked up Octavia E. Butler's "Bloodchild: And Other Stories." For an author who claimed to hate writing short stories, her talent at sharing glimpses into a possible future shine through in this collection.From stories about a post-alien landing on Earth to humans who have traveled to other universes themselves, we see the desperation and drive that is ever-present in history and will continue into the future. This collection of short stories really drives home the fact that humans will always BE human and will always shine through no matter how difficult or dark the circumstances are. Our compassion may be hidden in some, but there will always be someone caring. One of my favorites stories is "Speech Sounds," where we see a woman struggling to hide a secret while protecting

herself from the world surrounding her. "The Book of Martha" is the last tale told, highlighting how impossible it is to make a Utopia that everyone will be happy with... and a unique solution discovered along that way.About halfway through the collection, we take a look into the past as we see a young Octavia struggling to make her way as an author... not only a science-fiction author, but a black female science-fiction author. As a young girl born black, in the south, poor, and in the 1940s, we see the determination of a woman who wouldn't take NO for an answer. She should be an inspiration to all aspiring authors.Overall, I was very happy with this collection. It was great to view the world through Octavia E. Butler's eyes, and I can see why she won both Hugo and Nebula Awards. When she passed away in 2006, the science-fiction community lost a wonderful and talented storyteller, though her dreams will follow us into the future.

I am repeatedly amazed by Octavia Butler's wit and wisdom. She is courageously tender. She is brilliantly timid. She is the best in her genre. And she just happens to be, sadly, dead. I never knew her but I miss her. I never even learned of her until she'd been dead for several years. I think to myself as I read her books, what an astronomical loss humanity has quietly experienced.Our tale begins with several short stories included in this small, black, red, and yellow-covered book. The first story is the well-studied title read, "Bloodchild." I LOVED IT!!! From the moment that I read it as a college requirement, I loved this story. It is a Sci-Fi love story and I won't give anything away. I will say that Butler introduces the dynamics of the altogether otherworldly yet vaguely familiar creations of her head with the brilliance of Michelangelo's best hewn marble. There is never a moment's rest - never a moment that doesn't have you drooling and begging for more. This story is amazing and I LOVED IT! Oh ... I said that already. OK, moving on.The next story is "The evening and the Morning and the Night." I wish I could just give you the first page so that you could get some sense of what this woman does when she puts pen to paper.After I'd read the one story that I'd purchased the book for, I planned on putting the anthology to the side. I happened to just glance at the pages of the next story and I never put the book down again until I had read all four of the remaining stories.If you enjoy science fiction, or utopian/dystopian reading, this is the book for you!There was a story that I didn't like in the book, I think because it was totally outside of what I was used to reading from Butler. See if you can determine what that was and then post a comment to this review.Enjoy this great read!!!

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