



Some of Your Blood

Theodore Sturgeon , Steve Rasnic Tem (Introduction)

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Named one of the Top 40 Horror Books of All Time by the Horror Writers Association, *Some of Your Blood* begins with a confidential folder belonging to army psychiatrist Philip Outerbridge. Inside this folder are the letters, memos and transcripts for a young soldier named George Smith, a quiet young man with a terrible past and a shocking secret. As Outerbridge conducts George's therapy, he gradually discovers the truth about George's traumatic childhood, his twisted romance with an older woman named Anna, and the unusual obsession George keeps hidden from the world. With the masterful touch that earned him the Hugo and Nebula awards, Theodore Sturgeon creates a character capable both of unsettling violence and irresistible humanity.

Some of Your Blood Details


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Author : Theodore Sturgeon , Steve Rasnic Tem (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Some of Your Blood for online ebook

Steve says

Written in 1961, Theodore Sturgeon's *Some of Your Blood*, is both a unique take on the vampire story (which is damn near impossible) as well a product of its times. But that doesn't mean it's dated. Generally, the story holds up quite well. References to Korea, Masters and Johnson, Havelock Ellis, human sexuality studies, and various breakthroughs in psychiatry keep coming up. And for good reason, since the story of "George Smith," a disturbed American soldier, is basically an unofficial case history, revealed via a series of letters primarily between Smith's doctor and his commanding officer. The main letter however, and longest section of the book, is told by Smith himself. It's a remarkable piece of writing, and one where you have to pay close attention. "Smith's" condition is both revealed and cloaked at the same time. To my mind it's quite a high wire act. "George Smith" is an original wild child of the hills, but one who has had a horrible childhood. How he copes and adapts to this brutal phase is, well, the sad story of his life. The economy of the writing is remarkable, but what mars the performance is how Sturgeon bookends the tale with a silly message to the "reader." Also, the ridiculous real name for "George Smith," which is revealed late in the book. It's like Sturgeon couldn't resist a wink at the reader. In something this lean, it simply breaks a compelling spell.

Riju Ganguly says

There are some books which just can't be reviewed. Anything that a reader tries to say about them either becomes spoiler, or turn out to be more of self-exploration than actual assessment of the book.

THIS is one such book.

I can only say two things:

1. The Millipede Press Edition does justice to this book. In it, Steve Rasnic Tem candidly describes how disturbed he had felt, once he had read this book. I can feel it. Even in these days when humanity surpasses bestiality in its treatment of fellow human beings, I felt almost violated by the slow unfolding of the horror in this book.

2. The book incorporates a supposedly related short story named "Bright Segment" that's otherwise difficult to find. It's not connected to the main novel, but has a stunning impact nevertheless.

If you were looking for a brief description of the plot, the characters, and the strength & weaknesses of the narrative, I'm sorry for failing you. Frankly speaking, I don't think I can do such a thing.

But you can. Perhaps.

So my humble suggestion:

PLEASE READ THE BOOK. ASAP.

Tom LA says

Superb work. Like any other novel by Theodore Sturgeon that I've read, this is a literary masterwork, original, dark and deeply unconventional. Sturgeon wrote more with his guts than with his mind, and he was able to create dream-like stories that spoke straight to your subconscious, whether simply weird dreams or flat-out terrifying nightmares. However, he never lost a great sense of balance, an elegance in his writing, and a sense of beauty.

Sturgeon has often been expressing his annoyance with social mores and conventions, and in this story he is at it again, through a main character who is a prototype of the pure, natural man, clean of social rules and acquired behaviors or pre-fabricated thoughts. This love for the uncommon is typical Sturgeon. A writer of the greatest originality, and an anticonformist to his bones. An example? He used to walk around naked in his LA house, because "why wear clothes, if they are purely a useless habit imposed by society?" and apparently he would ask that his whole family would do the same, too.

"Some of Your Blood" was written in 1961. It's about a soldier, George Smith (not his real name), who is locked up after a brief scuffle with a superior officer. George undergoes a psychiatric evaluation where Dr. Phil Outerbridge learns about his life and the horrible, hidden secret that shaped it.

An interesting premise, to be sure, but the appeal of the book is in Sturgeon's application of the craft, in other words: the execution. And it works SO well.

The book is organized into a series of letters, memos and transcripts that chronologically detail the story. The first half of this book is essentially George's seemingly innocent biography. The second half is correspondence between doctors about George's condition. Slowly, the persistent Dr. Outerbridge uncovers George's horrifying secret.

P.S. Many reviewers here happily gave away this secret in their review without calling out the spoiler, so if you haven't read the book yet and plan on reading it, do not read the reviews here.

P.S. this edition has the absolute worst cover that I've ever seen.

Cheryl Anne Gardner says

I read a lot. I have never consciously sat down to consider the numbers, but I can safely say: It's a friggin' lot. Even while I am working on my own fiction and reviewing for the peeps, I read. I try to keep the idiot box turned off as much as possible in order to get a good 1-2 hours of reading in every night. I think it keeps the brain sharp when it comes to abstract concepts. Reading requires visualization, which requires thinking.

have been asked fairly often, "What do you read besides review books?" Well, I have a Goodreads page and an Amazon page where I review and rate traditionally published books, but I thought I might share some of that over here as well. We are all readers as much as we are writers, and discussing literary technique is one of the many things we do here at the peeps.

At the moment, I am in between review books. I have a review that posted last Friday and another book to begin next week. In the between time, I am reading *Some of Your Blood* by Theodore Sturgeon. It's different and very disturbing. As of the initial writing of this post, I was about 30 pages in, and while the corn-pone dialect is bothersome for me, I liked where the story was going, so I decided to stick it out. Here is the Blurb:

Theodore Sturgeon's dark and foreboding look at the vampire myth was an instant classic when originally published in 1956. When George Smith is arrested for assaulting a senior officer, a military psychiatrist is assigned to the case. The secret of George's past is unearthed, and a history of blood lust and murder. Innovatively told through letters, interviews, and traditional narrative, Some of Your Blood effectively portrays the tragic upbringing of George Smith to his attempts at a stable life and the great love of his life to

his inevitable downfall. Millipede Press is proud to present this masterpiece of macabre literature in a brand new edition.

Over the weekend, burdened with a particularly heinous bout of insomnia, I finished the book. The take on vampirism was indeed unique, one of the best I have read, but that wasn't what struck me most about the "story." This was as far from traditional storytelling as one can get, and would probably have lesser experienced literary critics up in arms. There is only one traditional *scene* to speak of and that doesn't appear until the very end of the book, which is only 143 pages in total. Dialog is practically non-existent for the exception of two interviews between patient and psychologist, and the remaining narrative is completely exposition. As far as character arc goes, well, don't look for growth here. The monster is created and subsequently remains a monster.

There are a lot of different *telling* techniques used here to great effect. The book begins with a series of letters back and forth between a couple of Army psychologists who have initially conflicting views on a patient by the name of George Smith. Smith was thrown into lock-up for punching an officer who had become alarmed by a letter Smith had attempted to send home to his girlfriend. The book then flows into a third person narrative of George's life, written by George as instructed in the course of this therapy. Everything seems pretty standard fare for an abused backwoods undereducated -- possibly mentally retarded -- child. But ... nothing should be taken at face value here. Intuition plays a huge role in this story. The intuition of one psychologist who wouldn't give up digging until George's pathology, in all it's horror, is finally laid bare. We don't even know what the letter to his girlfriend said until the very end of the book. Every move each character makes is based on gut instinct. Everyone is speaking in code, hiding and yet revealing their intent at the same time. This is what gives the book its brilliance, not the gripping action, of which there is almost none, but the characterization. The style is very reminiscent of Stoker's Dracula, and George Smith was nothing less than Frankenstein.

Put all your notions of storytelling aside and pick this one up. Its nature is entirely subliminal versus visceral, and it strikes to the core. Very frightening, and yet in the end, disgusted, our sense of humanity shattered, we can't help but feel for George.

Bark says

This is an older short story that GR says was first published in 1956. Admittedly, I haven't read much in the way of classic horror and I wasn't sure the story would work for me. I guess I was expecting it to be dry and slow. What I found instead was a deeply disturbing story with many images that will linger with me for months to come.

This story is about a soldier who calls himself "George". George is being held in a crowded military psychiatric ward for assaulting a superior. It seems he's been forgotten there though and they really need his bed for another patient. Psychiatrist Dr. Phil is tasked with going over his case before his release. What he discovers is bizarre and chilling.

George's story is told in various ways. He writes his own biography for the doctor which takes up a large chunk of the book. This part explores George's sad, desperate childhood growing up poor with a sick mom and a mean ass drunkard father. I listened to this on audio and narrator Malcolm Hillgartner does an amazing job with these characters, especially George. Initially, I found George's section sad but as he revealed more

tidbits about his past, I could see that he was developing some very dangerous tendencies and a simmering anger that turned my feelings of sympathy into repulsion. The narrator gives him the perfect backwoods voice that wasn't over the top but yet remains vastly different from the more cultured tones he gives to the psychiatrists. The rest of the book consists of interviews with the doc and George and letters between the doctors as they pick and prod into George's past in order to figure him out. These two doc's are quite the characters. The witty back and forth banter between them added some much needed humor and I found them both highly amusing despite the dark subject matter they were discussing.

George's affliction is bizarre, to say the least, and I refuse to think about it too much because it freaks me out. I highly recommend listening to this on audio, if you can, because the narrator adds so much life to the words.

I will leave you with my favorite quote from George:

"The world would be a whole lot less trouble for everybody if most people would just not talk so much."

And with that I am shutting up!

Randolph says

Theodore Sturgeon's brilliantly chilling and plausible twist on the vampire novel. He sheds most of the vampire genre tropes, often thumbing his nose at them in the process: the protagonist's real name is "Bela," his parents are from "Eastern Europe," the novel has a large epistolary content like Dracula, and the army psychiatrist stands in for Dr. Van Helsing, even as he gives us a vampire that requires almost no suspension of disbelief. Its almost as if Sturgeon bet that he could write a better vampire novel without using any of that hackneyed crap.

Hillbilly Army chump "George Smith" gets himself in trouble by punching an army officer when questioned about something the military censors found in a letter to his sweetheart back home in Podunk. Through a bunch of typically Kafkaesque Army mix-ups ol' George gets himself shipped back home to isolation in a rubber room and a straitjacket for three months. When the Army figures out it has made a huge mistake and may have taken a guy who was already having some problems and put him completely off the rails by shoving him in a padded cell, they decide to just do whatever they can to get the guy discharged and sent home. The overworked psychiatrist in charge of tying up these loose ends and getting rid of the guy makes the big mistake of actually caring about his job and starts to dig into George's case. He just can't figure out what made a classic "do what you're told and never volunteer" kind of Army guy punch that officer unprovoked. The censored letter is lost and the offended officer is dead. It just keeps bothering him. He can't just shovel this guy out the door like he is told to.

We can tell George is a weirdo from the get go, but Sturgeon brilliantly layers on details through letters, anecdotes, therapy notes, interviews, statements that gradually lead us to begin to believe that the padded cell is exactly the right place for George.

Ultimately Sturgeon even manages to make us feel empathy for a guy that we wouldn't want to be in the same room with.

Sturgeon also plays with the reader by intentionally breaking the fourth wall and telling us that, after all, this is just a piece of fiction, even as he knows he is drawing us a vampire we can all REALLY believe is waiting outside once the lights are back on. He ultimately even invites us to write our own happy ending, if that is what we want...

A little page turner that just keeps on giving as we gradually suspect and then know.

Char says

Wow! I loved this book! Let me tell you why.

I always have had a respect and love for older horror stories. I find it fun to read them and then speculate on what modern tales might be based upon these older works. In this case, I can see an even older story (Dracula) within. But what this book does is turn that classic tale upside down. In fact, I don't even consider this to be a true horror story.

This short book, originally written in 1956, is told mostly through letters back and forth between an overworked Army psychiatrist, (Doctor Phil!), and his superior. The letters discuss one "George Smith" who was arrested and thrown into the psych ward for punching an Army officer in the face after the officer questioned him about a letter he mailed. No one knows exactly why because that officer is now dead and no one knows what happened to the letter. Unfortunately, George is forgotten for about three months and now Dr. Phil's boss wants him to be released before anyone finds out about the Army's neglect.

Doctor Phil needs to find out a little something about the patient before releasing him, so he begins by having him write out a bio in the third person. This is where things get very interesting. The patient uses the name George Smith in his bio which consists of not only horrible grammar, but also horrible tales from George's past. From there this story takes off in a completely different direction.

That's all I'm going to say about the plot. However, I will make a few observations here, that you can take or leave at will. First off, there is a lot of humor in the letters between Dr. Phil and his superior. I think their discussions were very subtle, but added a lot to the tale. Some readers might get bored with their exchanges; I did not.

Second -A lot of readers call this a vampire story. I don't believe it is. I think it's a story of a sociopath in the making. There are several clues to which I could point to support my theory. Of course, there are lots of clues pointing to the vampire theory as well. (George's real name is Bela, for one.) Which theory do you support? I would love to find out after you've read this fantastic story. Look me up and we'll talk about it. :)

Highly recommended!

Nancy Oakes says

Sleepless nights are perfect for reading and since this book was close at hand, and because I couldn't fall asleep last night, I started it. Then after reading the first few paragraphs, I got up, went downstairs with pen

& notebook in hand because I knew this was going to be something intensely different than normal and notebook-worthy, and sat and read slowly for hours before I absolutely had to stop. Then I picked it up again today and finished it.

I have to digest what I've just read before posting about it, but quite frankly, it blew me away. Sheesh!

more later.

Stephen says

4.5 stars. Sturgeon's classic take on the vampire myth as only he could do it. Original, provocative and disturbing.

Wayne Barrett says

Big George didn't have fangs, nor did he sleep in a coffin. But big George did like to drink blood. It is discovered by an Army psychiatrist that this soldier has some serious issues and that he has a deadly past. George had an abusive, drunken father and developed an unnatural taste for blood from his mama's breast. Aside from this upbringing I get the feeling that Big George was probably still going to grow up a few clowns shy of a full circus, but the overall combination was one that created a mindless monster that might be a combination of Frankenstein and Dracula.

The most disturbing part of this story was a scenario in which, it wasn't the details, but rather what was not said. That poor boy in the snare. Theodore Sturgeon left us to our imaginations with that one.

This is an old classic, and good, but don't approach it with any stereotypical vampire ideas or you will be disappointed.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

This is a very disturbing book. A backwoods, undereducated kid is raised in a miserable, shabby home with a mean drunk of a father and an abused, arthritic mother. Life is hellish, but it's all George Smith (not his real name) knows. There are days with no food on the table, and days when he hides in the woods to escape his father's drunken rages. His life is so meager and mean that when he is sent to a troubled children's 'prison' for two years for burglary, he feels really pleased with the clean bed, the three meals a day, and that he actually finds school a joy since the teachers take the time to bring him up to speed. Eventually, his mother dies and then his father, but the damage is done. He goes to live with his aunt and uncle.

George was always a terrific hunter of small animals, and when hunting one day, he meets a woman. So, he, at age 16, secretly begins to date an equally unloved and unlovely 24-year-old neighbor, but he really needs her when he is upset by feelings of being lonely. From his story, it is clear he's a sociopath, but he made a

decision to never talk unless he must, so he is an unknown mystery except to the locals who know his parents. But even they know nothing of his hunting. When he impregnates Anna, the neighbor woman, he decides to enlist in the Army, another place he feels safe, until after two years in the service, he had to unload a plane of dead soldiers. It shakes him up and he writes a short letter to Anna, which reveals a dreadful secret. He is unaware that all letters are read by officers, and when confronted, he attacks his CO. He is distinctly murderous and strange, so he ends up in a psychiatric hospital.

The story is told in epistolary exchanges between two Army psychiatrists, along with paperwork revealing the results of a battery of tests. Following a hunch, the psychiatrist testing him decides to use hypnosis, and uncovers not only deaths, but the horrific secret that caused George to snap.

This is very short and can be read in one day. Most readers either know the secret because the book has been out since 1961 and is a classic, or have read it, but I'm not going to reveal it anyway. (Even though the cover blurbs give it away as well.) it is a very well-written book, but unfortunately it is dated. I'm sure sensitive readers, if they make the error in judgement to read this, will be affected by the horrific story, but for those of us into horror or hardcore detective novels it's not a startling or unique read for the 21st century. I should mention it is not paranormal in any way, but it is written as if it were a true story from a real case.

Lyn says

A dark and creepy novella.

Theodore Sturgeon's 1961 psychological thriller reminds me of the films *Birdy* (Alan Parker 1984) and *Vampire's Kiss* (both featuring Nicholas Cage) because of the subject matter; but this never goes over the top and Sturgeon's great ability to produce an understated and minimalistic page-turner is in rare form. Presented in epistolary novel form, written as a series of documents – was this a tribute to Bram Stoker?

This is also reminiscent of the *The Great God Pan* in its subtle, almost peripheral, introduction of horrific elements.

Alondra says

Review to follow.

I will have to think about this one

Ben Loory says

theodore sturgeon has always fascinated me, although i've never really liked any of his books. i love his short story "the man who lost the sea," but the longer stuff always kind of bored me. it always gave me the sense that he'd rather be writing short but felt he had to pad the thing out so he could make some money off it. which, hey, is probably true. and i can't really say that i blame him.

anyway, this book didn't feel that way at all, which is strange because it is transparently padded. it's the story of a (perhaps) psychotic man told through an exchange of letters between army psychiatrists, discussing the case files, some of which are written by the subject in question as the "my life story" part of the exam. it's only 140 pages long and much of that is comprised of salutations, closing remarks, and editor's interjections. there's an experimental feel to the novel, a patchwork-cubist kind of aspect, but sturgeon keeps everything moving relentlessly forward and as a result it's a page-turner... an epistolary freudian mystery-suspense novel about a guy named bela who, maybe a spoiler, drinks blood. it's also a love story on multiple levels. i've really never read anything like it. (i mean, there's a Child of God thing happening, and also a jim thompson-esque feel... but it's way beyond either of them in terms of surprises, both in subject matter, plotting, and emotional scope. i mean, this is one disturbing book (it's routinely listed as one of the best horror novels ever written, despite the fact that it's not a horror novel) but somehow you come out of it feeling strangely good and hopeful about the human race.)

some facts i like about theodore sturgeon:

- 1) he changed his name to theodore to match his nickname ted (his actual name was edward).
- 2) he wrote the first (though unproduced) star trek episode to ever mention the prime directive.
- 3) he's the guy who said "90% of everything is crap." (hemingway said "the first draft of anything is shit.")
- 4) he's the guy vonnegut modeled kilgore trout after.
- 5) he was a relative of ralph waldo emerson.

Charles Dee Mitchell says

Theodore Sturgeon wrote some of the best and most formally inventive sf of its day. But remember, Sturgeon's Law states. "90% of everything is crap." This book is by no means crap, but it has a couple of stylistic choices that put it pretty far down on the Sturgeon list as far as I'm concerned.

Letters between doctors, transcripts of psychiatric sessions, journal entries -- these are Sturgeon's nod to Bram Stoker's epistolary construction of *Dracula*. And it all works well except for a long, narrative section that is supposed to be the patient, George, writing his life story in the third person. George turns out to be an excellent writer, a natural storyteller, and Sturgeon requests an enormous willing suspension of disbelief on the reader's part if we are to find this conceivably the work of the character. The exposition is necessary, and maybe there was really no other way to handle, but George is quite the stylist. What works much better is the psychiatrist's ability to take his story, detect the gaps and lies in it, and pull those from George using hypnosis, that tried and true technique certainly practiced more and with better success in fiction than anywhere else.

George drinks blood. I don't think that's a spoiler given the book's title and references to vampires all over the back cover. Further details, on the other hand, are genuinely creepy and convincing as pathology. George is not well. He is glad that his doctor is going to fix him up, but I doubt that he will be leaving the institution anytime soon. Or I would hope not.

Some of Your Blood is a quick read that effectively presents some really disgusting material in such clinical format that some of it takes a moment to really sink in. George is a kind of innocent, but one that you would want to keep locked up for life.

Sturgeon's other stylistic blunder is a prologue and epilogue in which he addresses the reader and frames the novel in what sounds like one of Boris Karloff's commentaries on *Thriller*, It's beneath him, or maybe i'm pretending that the novel doesn't have the pulpy origins it does.
