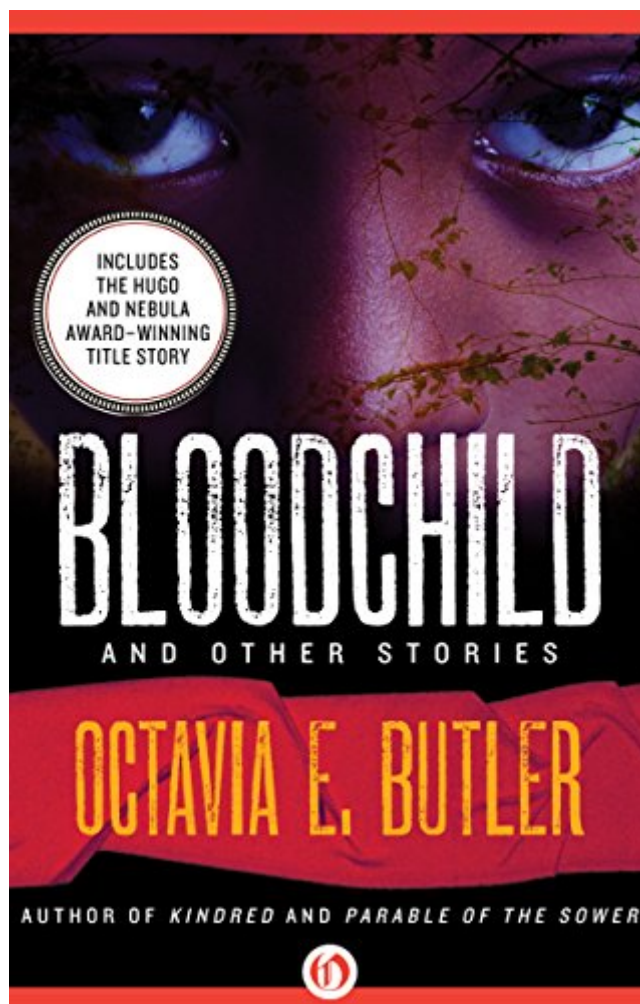


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Bloodchild: And Other Stories



Synopsis

Six extraordinary stories from the author of *Kindred*, a master of modern science fiction—“including a Hugo and Nebula award-winning novella. Octavia E. Butler’s classic *Bloodchild*, a winner of both the Nebula and Hugo awards, anchors this collection of incomparable stories and essays. *Bloodchild* is set on a distant planet where human children spend their lives preparing to become hosts for the offspring of the alien Tlic. Sometimes the procedure is harmless, but often it is not. Also included is the Hugo Award-winning *Speech Sounds*, about a near future in which humans must adapt after an apocalyptic event robs them of their ability to speak. *The Evening and the Morning and the Night*, another esteemed title in this collection, is a Nebula Award finalist. In these pages, Butler shows us life on Earth and amongst the stars, telling her tales with characteristic imagination and clarity. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Octavia E. Butler including rare images from the author’s estate.

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Customer Reviews

Bloodchild is a collection of short stories by the famous science-fiction writer Octavia Butler. The problem with short story collections is that they are usually a mixed bag, populated with mostly

mediocre stories speckled with a few stinkers and a few gems. Well, I am happy to report to you that *Bloodchild* is not like that at all. Every single story in this collection is captivating, intelligent, and written in a style that is clear and accessible without losing any of its sophistication. What really struck me about *Bloodchild* was the sheer emotional impact of each story. Because each story is such a perfect little world, and because the characters are so well realized, every story really packs a punch. I put down the book between each story, incapable of doing any real thinking because I was so blown away by what I had just read. I think the effectiveness of the stories comes from a mix of excellent writing and characterization and the way Butler uses those characters to explore complex ideas. One of Butler's strengths is in never letting her work become preachy or one-sided. Butler's ideas are as complex as her characters, and that makes her stories resonate in a very real and powerful way. Usually, this would be the part of the review where I would tell you which stories were my favorite and which ones to skip, but I can't really do that with this collection, because they are all absolutely worth reading. I believe that Butler's most famous stories are *Bloodchild* and *Speech Sounds*, both of which are in this collection and both of which are absolutely mind-blowing. *Bloodchild* actually left me speechless and shaking by the time I finished it. Her other stories are more subtle, but are still incredibly well-written.

Besides her exceptional novels, Octavia Butler has published a collection of her short fiction entitled *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. The opening story in the collection is her Hugo and Nebula award winning story, the title story, "Bloodchild". This is what she has called her "male pregnancy story" and it features an Earth which has been taken over by some sort of alien creatures who form symbiotic relationships with humans, but who also use humans to breed their young and usually males because impregnating females means fewer humans will be born which means fewer young of their own kind. It was an interesting story. My favorite of the collection, however, is her Hugo winning story "Speech Sounds". Some sort of cataclysm has hit our planet, one which has robbed humanity of the ability to speak and in some cases regressed the mental development of humanity to a more base level. Set in Los Angeles, "Speech Sounds" shows the loss of communication and what that does to society and we see it through the eyes of one woman who was on a bus when an incident occurred. "The Evening and the Morning of the Night" is a story which sticks with the reader, though with me it was for the wrong reason I believe. This story features a hereditary disease which causes some people to lose their mind and try to dig their way out of their own skin and it is that image of people trying to do that to themselves that sickened me a bit, even though all that action occurred off camera, if you will. Interesting as a concept and well written, it is also one I would rather

forget. "Near of Kin" is Butler's one non-science fiction story and it is a story about family and perceived family. Quite good, but it would belong more in another collection than in a genre collection like this.

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.

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