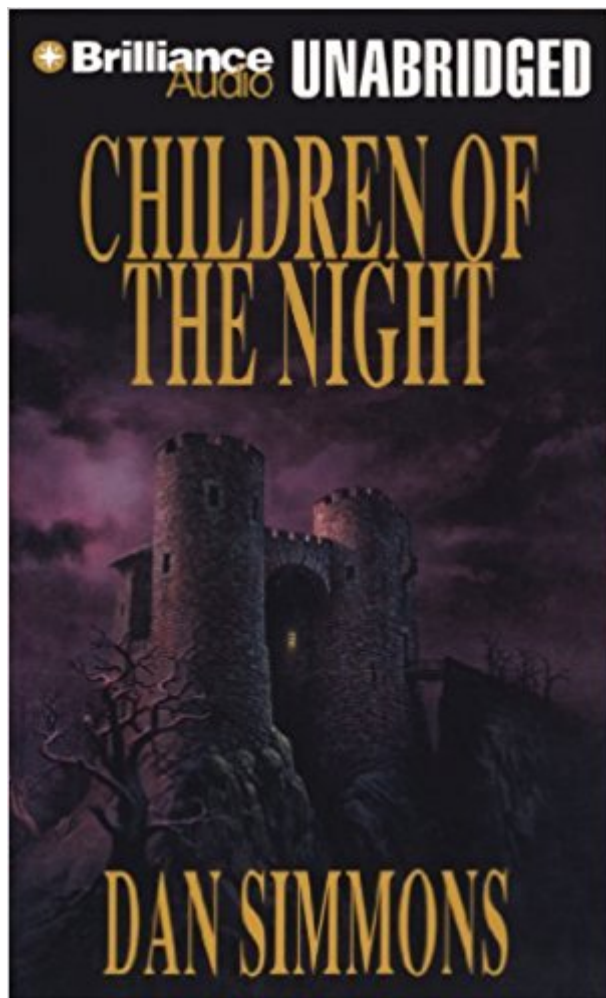


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Children Of The Night



Synopsis

In a desolate orphanage in what remains of post-Communist Romania, a desperately ill infant is given the wrong blood transfusion - and flourishes when he's supposed to die. The discovery of his unique immune system may hold the key to the long-awaited cure for cancer and AIDS. For a dedicated American doctor, he promises the medical breakthrough of a lifetime, as well as a very special love she's never been able to find. But he also conceals a shockingly intimate link to a clan of vampires and their legendary leader - the fiend the world calls Vlad Dracula, who, for centuries, has triumphed over countless rival tyrants, including death itself...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Count Dracula kicks off the coffin lid again in this updated vampire tale, ready to stalk through the rubble of post-Communist Europe. This time, however, the count's sanguinary tipping habits may hold the cure for both AIDS and cancer. The key lies with a Romanian orphan adopted by American hematologist Kate Neuman; the infant, Joshua, has a series of rare diseases, and can survive only because his body extracts and processes genetic material from blood transfusions. If the virus in his system responsible for this ability can be isolated, his diseases could be remedied and medical marvels would be within Kate's grasp. The drawback is that Joshua has inherited his talents from the decrepit but murderous Vlad Dracula, and this patriarch of an accursed clan of blood-drinkers is more interested in perpetuating his power than in providing miracle cures for the masses. Simmons (*Song of Kali*) makes Children 's fantastical scientific claims easy to swallow, although the medical jargon in some of the American scenes is thicker than Bela Lugosi's accent (try out

"hypogammaglobulinemia"). Still, the book offers a mesmerizing tour through the ghostly, gray tatters of Romania. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

While studying diseases of the blood in present-day Romania, hematologist Kate Neuman adopts an orphaned infant with an unusual immune system. Upon her return to the States, the baby is kidnapped and returned to its homeland. Aided by an American priest and a Romanian medical student, each with his own interest in the child, Kate traces it to a mysterious group linked to the legendary Dracula. Her attempts to discover the motive behind the kidnapping and to reclaim the baby form the heart of this thrilling and wonderfully diverting novel. Simmons (*Summer of the Night* , LJ 1/91) gives a chilling description of post-Ceausescu Romania and neatly ties the vampire legend into political history to create a new and clever twist to the idea of the vampire's craving for blood. The ending seems a bit too Indiana Jones-like, but the overall result is satisfying. An excellent choice for popular fiction collections. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 2/1/92.- Eric W. Johnson, Teikyo Post Univ. Lib., Waterbury, Ct. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dan Simmons is certainly one of the most inventive and literate writers of horror fiction today, and *Children of the Night* is without question a solid horror novel. Set in Romania just after the fall of Ceausescu's communist regime, Simmons presents a backdrop for this vampire novel that is appropriately chaotic, confusing, and corrupt. Hematologist Kate Neuman has been working in a Romanian hospital, tending to the astounding number of orphaned children deposited there when she encounters a sickly young child who has a remarkable genetic abnormality that might just lead to a cure for AIDS and other blood pathogen diseases. Unfortunately an ancient secret society, led by the still-living Vlad Tsepes (better known by his formal name Count Dracula) has its own sinister plans for the child. A globe-spanning race ensues as Kate and renegade Catholic priest Mike O'Rourke set out on a grim mission to save the child and bring Dracula and his followers to their demise. Simmons's writing here is crisp and clear, and his descriptions of Romania in post-communist shambles is breathtaking. Unfortunately, so much of the novel is taken up with unnecessarily complex technical discussions of blood diseases and viruses that at times it reads more like a medical textbook than a breakneck horror novel. The result is a book that gets mired in its own details at times, breaking the otherwise rocketing pace and suspense. But Simmons's grace as a writer wins out in the end, and the book has enough thrills and cliffhangers to keep you up late

into the night feverishly turning the pages. It was especially refreshing to see Mike O'Rourke, last seen as a child in Simmons's classic *Summer of Night*, grown to become a priest not because he believes in God, but because he has witnessed evil firsthand.

Does the world need another vampire novel? I would say, yes, of course, especially if that novel is well written and adds something new or compelling to the literary conversation about vampires, a conversation that authors and readers have been having since 1872 with Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla." In *Children of the Night*, Hugo award-winning author Dan Simmons makes a solid contribution to the ongoing vampire mythology by giving us not only a believable scientific explanation for vampirism, but also by adding to the history of Vlad Dracula himself. Winner of the 1993 Locus Award for Best Horror/Dark Fantasy Novel, *Children of the Night* reflects Simmons's experiences in the horror, science fiction, and fantasy genres by weaving a compelling horror tale in a thriller format. The tale focuses on an American hematologist Kate Neuman, a dying baby she adopts during a visit to Romania, and a priest named Mike O'Rourke, who helps her get out of that post-Communist country. But her adventures do not stop there. The baby, which she names Joshua, suffers from several genetic diseases and is doomed to an early death, until Kate discovers that Joshua can gain temporary relief from the disease symptoms when it receives whole blood transfusions. This genetic defect, Kate discovers, holds the key to a cure for many common diseases, including AIDS and cancer. One rather large problem however is that the baby turns out to be the heir of Vlad Dracula himself, and Dracula disperses his shadowy family line, vampires all, to bring Joshua back. During her multi-country struggles, Kate is assisted by the conflicted priest O'Rourke and a young, too-good-to-be-true Romanian medical student named Lucian. But O'Rourke and Lucian seem to have their own agendas regarding Joshua, and she is never exactly sure who she can trust until the end. And speaking of the end, this book is written as a thriller, so there are more than a few daring escapes and plot twists therein, including a finale that would make Indiana Jones tip his fedora in appreciation. But interspersed with harrowing escapes from infernos and being smuggled by gypsies, there are also reflective moments, such as when the point of view shifts to Vlad Dracula. From him we hear stories about his century-spanning life as the leader of the vampire clan, and these insights do much to extend the Dracula mythology. The story settings and details in *Children of the Night* are well-researched. Much of the action takes place in Romania, and Simmons paints a vivid picture of what life was like there just after the fall of Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, overthrown as President of Romania in 1989. In fact, historical events are weaved into the narrative of how the family members of Vlad Dracula act as "dark advisors" to

political, economic, and military leaders throughout the country. Moreover, the author presents a technical, detailed explanation of vampirism as a very rare genetic defect. In fact, there are so many genetic engineering details and discussions amongst the characters that some parts of the story are a little thick, as if we are eavesdropping on a conversation in a university genetics lab. But this information is crucial to the plot and adds a layer of credibility to the characters' motivations and actions. *Children of the Night* does not portray vampires as campy love interests as in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, nor does this story take the path of vampirism as global viral pandemic, as in Justin Cronin's *The Passage*. Rather, Simmons takes us on a more personal descent into terror and adventure as Kate finds herself mixed up in Vlad Dracula's family affairs. We learn the genetic reasons why vampires need to drink human blood, and though these vampires are not the supernatural forces from legend, that does not diminish their power as keepers of a family secret seeking the return of Dracula's heir.

An interesting take on Vampire myth, where it is a double recessive genetic disorder that causes immune system anomalies negated by drinking blood or blood transfusions. The first part where Dr. Neuman is working in Romania, finds the sick baby, adoption, research in CDC, and even the attacks of the vampires to recover the kid, make for a 5 star book, but when she goes back to Romania the book suddenly turns into a dumb Hollywood action movie where Dr Neumann and Father O'Rourke are expert fighters, trackers, marksmen, spies, and lovers, baah.

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