



Blood on the Page: The Complete Short Fiction of Brian Keene, Volume 1

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“This is my gift. This is my legacy. This is my curse...”

BLOOD ON THE PAGE is the first book in a series collecting all of Keene’s short fiction. Included in this volume are such critically-acclaimed and fan favorite stories as “Burying Betsy”, “Dust”, “The Resurrection and The Life”, “I Am An Exit”, “Fast Zombies Suck”, “Bunnies In August”, “I Sing A New Psalm”, and many more.

These are stories of love and hate. Trust and betrayal. Happiness and heartbreak. Truth and lies. Innocence and paranoia. Flying and falling. Unhappy endings and conspiracies of one. These are stories about zombies, ghosts, serial killers, and the most horrific monsters of all—ourselves.

BLOOD ON THE PAGE – the only thing we have to fear is... everything.

Blood on the Page: The Complete Short Fiction of Brian Keene, Volume 1 Details

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Scott says

My experience with Brian Keene's novels has been hit or miss, so I expected more of the same from this short story collection. I usually prefer novels to short stories, so I was very surprised that I liked this as much as I did. For me, Mr. Keene's writing style is more effective in these shorter works. For diehard fans, there are plenty of links here to the ongoing Labyrinth mythos, but knowledge of that isn't necessary to enjoy the stories. I'm looking forward to reading the next volume.

Stephen says

Great collection of short stories by a master craftsman. WE can all relate to these stories, with the twists Brian spins on feelings and emotions we all encounter in our lives. I highly recommend reading this collection of character driven stories. This being volume 1, I can't wait for 2.

Eric says

This is an excellent collection of short stories. I'm a fan of Keene's longer works, but this collection contains some of the best writing I've yet to read from the man.

It's always difficult to give a collection a single rating, because no author on earth has ever been blessed with perfect consistency. I chose a four, because 1) that's my overall impression of the read, and 2) that's where I'd put the majority of the stories. Some were sublime, inching into 5-star territory. Others were more mediocre, earning a 2 or 3.

Unfortunately, some editorial errors made it into the final product - in particular a few misuses of apostrophes. Though jarring, there were only a handful, and they do not greatly take away from the experience.

If you are a fan of horror, gritty life experiences, and general creepiness, you owe it to yourself to give this one a shot.

Jack says

Complete collections are tough to rate. There are a lot of stories here from a lot of different phases of Brian Keene's career. Some of the stories are particularly cool because of their association with the mythos of his longer works. You can see him trying some things out that would make it into later works. You can watch his writing skill progress. For a Brian Keene fan, that is worth a lot. Some of the stories are great. Keene has a way of mixing graphic horror with dark humor. It's a great marriage when it works out. But there are also stories in this collection in which he was still trying to figure out exactly how to go about that. It's a spectacular insight into a single writer, with everything from flash fiction to longer short stories. Some of the stories, as Keene will admit, aren't as strong. But they are elements that add up to the sum of his career, and it has been a pretty good one so far.

Jordan Anderson says

I've been known to be a Brian Keene fanboy, and I've probably said all there is that needs to be said about his early books being staples of my introduction into horror and zombies. I've also written repeatedly, about the steady decline of his books, along with his health, confidence, and personal life, and the fear that one of my all time favorite authors of the past had finally reached his zenith of greatness and would ever be the same again. I admit, that fear is still there when it comes to his full length novels (although the more recent *Pressure* was a small step in the right direction), but there's still no doubt that when it comes to short stories, Keene is still at the top of his game and still leaves me with faith that there's still a great author somewhere inside of him.

Blood on the Page is one of the reasons I still have faith in Keene. Now, while it's been noted that trying to give a short story collection an honest review is tough due to the nature of the hodgepodge of collected stories and the varying strengths and weaknesses (as well as length) of the collected works involved, it's still a fairly easy enough conclusion that *Blood on the Page* fully deserves every one of its four stars.

While the stories inside of this volume range the gamut from zombies, aliens, serial killers, and introspective (meta) fiction, the one thing that is constant is the consistency of strength in pretty much every single one. I can count only 3 stories that I found to be a bit on the lacking side ("Portrait of the Magus", "Fade to Null" and "Golden Boy" if you really want to know), while the rest were above-average to awesome.

Trying to pick out the ones that really stood out is kind of tough (since they were almost all stand outs) but if I had to chose, "Full of It" (because it harkens back to the glory days of Keene's gory and gross out brand of fiction), "Bunnies in August" (because it was just such a heart-rending tale), and "Red Wood" (just because it was a hell of a lot of fun to read).

There were one or 2 stories I have read before in other collections but it's still crazy that being a fan of Keene for so long, I've missed so many of his short stories. And that fact that this is only volume one of a 2 part series is pretty exciting.

Glenn Rolfe says

I started reading Brian Keene much the way as everyone else-reading *The Rising*. That was followed by my joining the Leisure Book Horror Club, and a ton of great, solid books from LB and BK. After the Dorchester fiasco and the departure of BK from their ranks I lost touch with my Keene collection. My BK relationship was suspended at A Gathering of Crows. I've kept tabs on him via his great website, but admittedly hadn't read a new release since the Crows.

Once I saw that he was releasing this collection of short stories, I decided it was time to visit and old, reliable friend. I usually have anywhere from 2 to 7 books being read at any given time (5 when I purchased this one). I put them all on hold and decided to give this work my full attention. *Blood on the Page* is a great collection of published and even early stories shared by BK "warts and all" as he says in the foreword. There are a few stories I forced myself through "Couch Potato" for one, but almost every story in here is good, really good, or great. My favorites were the "EXIT" stories, "Fast Zombies Suck", "Halves", "Bunnies in

August", and "The Resurrection and the Life". All said and read, it felt good to venture back into the mind and worlds of Mr. Keene. I highly recommend this to fans of BK, short stories, and horror. *Bonus points for his love of "the Boss" (any Bruce fan will immediately connect the dots with "Johnstown").

Thank you, Brian.

Allan says

An amazing collection of short stories! Highly recommend if you are a Keene fan, or a great introduction to Keene if you have not read him!

Karl says

A great collection of Brian Keene's stories all in one place. Here is hoping that the publishers continue this series. One of the stories collected here in was published on a "T" shirt. Others were quite limited and impossible to find, till now.

Christopher Roberts says

I read two Brian Keene short stories before buying this book on Amazon. I loved both of them and I figured if two random Keene stories could knock me out then a collection of them had to be pretty good. I have had trouble reviewing collections of short stories in the past so I am going to try something different. I am going to review each story individually.

PORTRAIT OF THE MAGUS AS A WRITER - I would perhaps have liked this story less by itself, but as an opening to a collection it works. It is one of those stories about a writer and his "muse" and sets up the tales that follow pretty well. (Four Stars)

CAPTIVE HEARTS - There are a lot of zombie stories in this collection and this is one of them. Keene says it is a stab at paranormal romance but it does not resemble that genre on more than superficial terms which might be a good thing. (Three Stars)

JOHNSTOWN - This story is inspired by the songs of Bruce Springsteen and sometimes captures that same sad ache that his songs do. (Four Stars)

WAITING FOR DARKNESS- A piece of "flash fiction" that works very well. (Five Stars)

DUST- This story invokes 9/11 and has a similar feel as Johnstown. Not really horror, yet cutting the way horror does anyway. (Four Stars)

BURYING BETSY- This is the only story I had read previously. On a second read I was bothered by some of the logic of the story but it wasn't anything I could not explain away. It still packs a wallop. (Four Stars)

FAST ZOMBIES SUCK- A pretty funny dig at horror fans. (Four Stars)

I SHALL SING A NEW PSALM- The story is cliché but the structure makes this one something special. (Four Stars)

CAUGHT IN A MOSH- Keene warns that this is an early story and it is immature writing. The punchline is pretty good, though it would have been better if the rest of the story was better written. (Two Stars)

I AM AN EXIT- Classic misdirection. (Four Stars)

THIS IS NOT AN EXIT- A sequel to the previous story that is not really necessary. (Three Stars)

THAT WHICH LINGERS- Keene says he did not intend for this story to be political but it is hard to imagine him not knowing it was a tough sell. I do not think it works at all because you can't help but think of it as a political statement. (Two Stars)

HALVES- This story is pure genius. It reminds me a little of the Neil Gaiman story The Price only better. (Five Stars)

WITHOUT YOU- This is another one where the story is meh but the writing makes up for it somewhat. Great first line. (Three Stars)

COUCH POTATO- I saw the ending coming a mile away but still really liked this story. (Four Stars)

FADE TO NULL- This starts off really fascinating and you expect great things but then it turns out to be obvious. Still worth it for the beginning. (Three Stars)

BABYLON FALLING- This is another great story by Keene. It actually offended me a little while I was reading it, which was a bit of the point. Keene wades into bad taste territory but the ending makes it clear where he stands. (Five Stars)

A REVOLUTION OF ONE- I hated this story. It is heavy-handed, obvious and a chore to read. I kept expecting some kind of clever twist but it never came. (One Star)

FULL OF IT- Cliché story well written once again. (Three Stars)

TWO-HEADED ALIEN LOVE CHILD- The title gives away the joke. (Two Stars)

BUNNIES IN AUGUST- This story is pretty creepy even though I had some problems with some of the story's logic. (Four Stars)

THE WIND CRIES MARY- Another zombie story. It is decent if not memorable. (Three Stars)

THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE- A bible story retold as a zombie story. This could have been better but it is still pretty good. (Four Stars)

STONE TEARS- The premise is more interesting than the story. (Three Stars)

RED WOOD- A standard horror story exceptionally well told. (Four Stars)

THE GHOSTS OF MONSTERS- This feels like we read this story already earlier in the collection. (Three Stars)

SLOUCHING IN BETHLEHEM- This feels like it is the beginning of a novel not a short story. (Three Stars)

MARRIAGE CAUSES CANCER IN RATS- Weird and creepy story but once again feels like more of the same. (Three Stars)

GOLDEN BOY- Keene says this is not a metaphor for anything but still a great idea for a story! (Four Stars)

I kind of wish I could give this collection 3 1/2 stars overall because that is where I think it deserves to be. About half of the stories are good or great, another half fair with a few outright duds in there. I am going to give it three stars but I like this more than most collections I have given three stars to, but it is still not as good as collections I give four stars.

Bandit says

Whether its due to my continuous disillusionment with horror or just continuous disillusionment with Keene, but this collection really ailed to impress. I read a lot of Keene's work over the years, but only lately have I become really aware of how much of it is a cult of personality thing. It's no longer just horror fiction, it's Keene's horror fiction. The author who refers to himself (through fictional implications) as magus and a golden boy. I'm sure certain autobiographical aspects are bound to slip into the work of any author, but in this case it's a blatant overkill. It's seems to be all about Keene's life and Keene's mythos of spooky PA. All the characters are versions of similar prototypes, really tough rural dudes projecting machismo left and right, tough living individuals with tough small lives, basically something right out of John Mellencamp's song or Keene's preferred Springsteen. Some of the stories were outright crap and it seems like the only reasons they were being published is because it's early Keene and has some inherent value for collectors or connoisseurs. If it's for comparison sake, it doesn't do much. The quality of writing hasn't come along that far. Not every author known for longer work can go short. Definitely the case here, exemplified by how the best stories in the collection are the longer ones. The short ones just seem to go for the crude obvious, the low hanging fruit and all that. And this isn't a terrible collection by any means, it's perfectly decent, it's occasionally entertaining, but it never wows or genuinely impresses and seems to be driven by ego over talent. I'm sure there are plenty of fans out there who really do think Keene sh*ts gold, but in the end of the day that's just a turd in a shiny wrapper. Fiction should be fictional, ideally, not just a therapeutic process offal. Certain amount of distance/mystery is required.

Jonathan Echevarria says

Blood On The Page contains many of Brian Keene's hard to find short fiction. Previously most of them have only been printed in expensive limited editions and lettered editions, so this book was a real treat for his less wealthy fans. Blood on the Page: The Complete Short Fiction of Brian Keene, Volume 1 is going to be the first in a promised series, which will eventually contain every novella, flash fiction, or short story he has ever written. This book delivers on the goods and runs slightly over 200 pages long, some of me personal favorites include The Resurrection and the Life which features Ob from The Rising series. There are other awesome guest appearances from Tony Genova from Clickers and Nelson LeHorn from Dark Hollow. At the

same time this wonderful collection also acts as a scrapbook showcasing various snapshots at the different high and low points of Brian Keene's career. We get to see the man behind the legend in many different ways, by experiencing his fears, his passions, his love for his family, and his life through the characters in his book. *Blood on the Page* is a very fitting name for this series.

Throughout this collection many stories exist within the universes of his previous written novels. Readers who have read *Clickers II: The Next Wave*, *Ghost Walk*, or *Dead Sea* might recognize familiar faces or settings. *The majority of these tales stand on their own and don't need prior knowledge of existing work to enjoy them. However if you are a fan of his preexisting material then your enjoyment will be greatly enhanced.* This first installment contains the majority of short novellas that were already featured in *Unhappy Endings*, *A Little Silver Book of Street Wise Stories*, and *Fear of Gravity*. However those collections aren't really necessary since most of those novellas were either reprinted in this collection or will eventually be reprinted in the second or third volume in this series. One of my personal guilty pleasures is his authors notes that accompany each short in this book, usually acting as commentary or bonus material for each tale. I learned a lot about the author and how each piece of fiction came to be because of these small but very welcomed additions.

Brian Keene reveals a little about himself through each and every piece of fiction included in *Blood On The Page*. In some instances he reveals how the military plays a part in his heritage, in others, *like a "Revolution For One"*, he lets us in on some of his political beliefs. I even saw myself connecting with him through his love for his pets in the novella called *Halves*. I found his work to be very intimate and I now know how writing can leave you feeling more vulnerable then I ever previously understood. *(Even in a genre like Horror we can still find parts of ourselves and our love for each other. Who would of thought?)*

As a fan I couldn't be more happier with this wonderful collection of ultra rare hard to find novellas. If you already couldn't guess this series easily gets a **five out of five stars** from me. Two of the stories in this collection are first and only known appearances of certain members of the Thirteen. (The villains who appear in many of Brian Keene's books, such as *The Rising* and *Earthworm Gods* series.) *Blood On The Page* also helps set up some of the ground work that will lead to his epic crossover *Labyrinth* series coming soon. (Titled *The Seven*.) Fans who read *Tequila's Sunrise* know why I am eagerly looking forward to the first installment of this crossover! If you are a loyal fan of the authors work or if you just like to follow the *Labyrinth* mythology then you can not go wrong with *Blood On The Page*.

Kaisersoze says

Collections of short stories are often difficult to rate. Especially when - like **Blood on the Page Vol 1** - they contain a wide variety of an author's works, often dating from their very early, *rougher* days as a writer.

But this also means there's likely something for everyone who enjoys any type of genre the author dabbles in. And after finishing Keene's large short story collection, I cannot imagine how anyone would not find at least one or two golden nuggets amongst these works. And for me, as an unashamed Brian Keene fanboy? Well, it was pretty much a rich vein of gold from beginning to end.

That said, there are always going to be stories that fail to hit the mark. For me, they happened to be the ones that I read toward the end of this book (as I rarely read a collection in the order they're presented in; choosing instead to skip around finding stories that are of a length I can read in one sitting). So **THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE**, **TWO HEADED ALIEN LOVE CHILD**, **JOHNSTOWN** and **PORTRAIT OF A MAGUS AS A WRITER (INTERPOLATING MAGIC REALISM)** did very little for me. Their themes were either too on the nose, too abstract, or simply seemed out of place for such a collection. (I might also mention while outlining my criticisms that there was some shoddy formatting through my paperback edition of the book. Paragraphs too regularly stopped mid-way across the page and continued as if they were a new paragraph on the next line. There were also a few typos which were missed in the final copy edit. Minor quibbles, perhaps, but I am nothing if not balanced when I write a review... Usually.)

That's just four stories, however, and **Blood on the Page** contains no less than 29 pieces of short fiction. Some, like **HALVES** and **BURYING BETSY** are pure genius in set-up, execution and pay-off. Others, like **FULL OF IT** and **RED WOOD** are straight-forward monster/gore mash-ups that revel in their carnage. Still others are introspective and thought-provoking, with none being more so than **A REVOLUTION OF ONE** and **I SING A NEW PSALM**. But all of these (and most I have not named) are well-written and interesting enough to be memorable on their own, and really, what more can a reader ask from a collection of short stories?

So the long story short is: Fans of short stories are recommended to give Keene a try. Fans of Brian Keene shouldn't even need a direction as to what they need to rush to their computers to do.

4 Writers Exposing Aspects of Themselves (and Not in the Illegal Way) for **Blood on the Page: The Complete Short Fiction of Brian Keene, Volume 1**.
