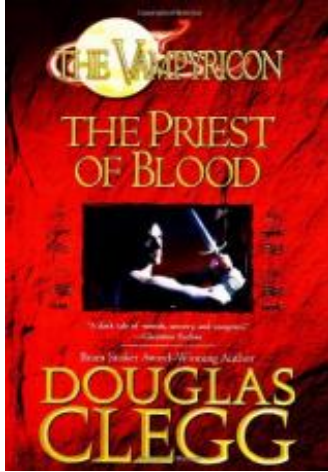


The Priest of Blood: The Vampyricon

by Douglas Clegg



About the Book

From Douglas Clegg, award-winning author of **Afterlife** and **The Hour Before Dark**, comes his first-ever fantasy novel, dealing with the dark edge of a fantastic medieval world. **The Priest of Blood** is the first novel of The Vampyricon, a saga of sword and sorcery --- and vampires.

Born the son of a woman thought to be a witch, Aleric does not know who fathered him. From his grandfather he learned the skill that will change his life. With that training --- and his own ability to communicate with the great predator birds of the forest --- Aleric is taken into service by the Baron and put in charge of his falcons.

Now called Falconer, he rises fast and far. Still, to those at court, he remains the bastard son of a peasant whore. And when his forbidden love for the Baron's daughter is discovered, his punishment is swift and severe. Beaten and brutalized, he is forcibly conscripted as a soldier and banished to the Holy Land to fight the Saracen infidels. Amidst the horror and chaos of the ongoing struggle, he becomes a mighty warrior --- and a man without faith or conscience.

Then, in an ancient ruined city, he finds a new love. She calls herself Pythia --- and in her passionate, bloody embrace, he also finds his destiny...

Set in a medieval world of ancient forests and buried kingdoms, of gods and monsters, of love that crosses centuries, and vengeance beyond lifetimes, **The Priest of Blood** is the tale of Aleric, Falconer, of his quest for his beloved, and for the legendary priest-king within whose tomb the secrets of the ancient, immortal race of vampires reside.

Discussion Guide

1. What are the advantages of telling this type of story in the first person? What are some of the disadvantages?

2. Discuss Aleric's description of his birth --- why is this so important to the tale? Do messianic figures have certain parallel lives --- is Aleric's early life a presager of later events? Why do you think the author took us to a lowly place to begin this life? What perspective does Aleric bring to us, having come up from nothing, as he discovers the world?
3. Aleric constantly refers to the old tales, legends, and prophecies. How do these stories add depth to the novel? Given its historical aspects, does it ground the story with a more realistic sense of place?
4. Aleric's grandfather tells him "All is good and bad. There is no one or the other. You must look at the bad and see the good in it." Do you think this is true? What are the good and bad in Aleric? What about Corentin?
5. Was the revelation of Corentin's parentage a surprise? Does it cause you to view him, and his motives, differently? If so, how?
6. Aleric says that his warrior brothers and their crusade "brought the love of mankind back to me." How ironic is this statement given that he is engaging in slaughter in the name of God? It is possible to celebrate and embrace humanity when you are engaged in war?
7. Pythia's taking of Aleric is savage, yet Aleric feels a sense of erotic pleasure. How can one feel such pleasure during such a great and painful violation?
8. How do the vampires in this story compare to those of other stories? What powers do they possess that are unique?
9. Was it selfishness that made Aleric bring Ewen into the tribe? Had he truly loved his friend and sought to end his pain should he not have just taken his life?
10. Aleric walked into Pythia's trap to become a vampire. Why do you think he would be so quick to follow his visions and return to Alienora? Why do you think he would not suspect another trap?

Author Bio

Douglas Clegg is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *THE PRIEST OF BLOOD*, *AFTERLIFE*, and *THE HOUR BEFORE DARK*, among other novels. His short story collection, *THE MACHINERY OF NIGHT*, won a Shocker Award; and his first collection, *THE NIGHTMARE CHRONICLES*, won both the Bram Stoker Award and the International Horror Guild Award. He lives with his husband, Raul, in New England, with a small menagerie of rescued animals.

Critical Praise

"**The Priest of Blood** is a dark, sensual epic of alternate history, grand mythology, and the supernatural. This is Clegg writing at his best. An absorbing read, an astounding accomplishment."

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