



Old Blood

John Reece

Lulu (September 2009)

Softcover \$10.00 (336pp)

978-0-557-10044-6

John Reece's *Old Blood* starts off with murdered angels...or at least that's what they seem to be. In cities around the world, murder victims appear as if they fell from the sky. All beautiful and in top physical condition, they are naked, and they have had their spinal cords severed. Each lies on a bed of huge, dove-like feathers. Most intriguingly of all, each victim has what Reece calls "old blood," blood without immunities to diseases such as plague and cholera. Are they supernatural? Or members of a secret society? Or both?

Three detectives across the globe and their forensics teams begin to investigate the unusual murders. Their search for clues leads them into the byways of the fetish community, ornithology, and ancient Persian myth. As the human community struggles to tie the murders together, supernatural forces collaborate to take over the world. If humanity is to remain unenslaved, the secrets behind the "old blood" killings must be discovered.

This is John Reece's first novel. He graduated with a degree in English from Harvard University, but a career as an investment banker intervened before he could get to his first book. After twenty years in the financial sector, Reece started on *Old Blood*.

Reece's initial effort does a lot right. At base, *Old Blood* is a good-vs.-evil, race-against-time story, but Reece's clearly thought-out and unusual interpretation of supernatural forces and their influence on human history give the plot originality. Reece also skillfully manages a cast of global proportions, both human and superhuman. His deft touch with almost a score of characters succeeds in giving the book a truly apocalyptic scope and scale. Brisk prose keeps the story moving at a fast clip.

If *Old Blood* has a flaw, it's in the details that Reece chooses to include. Digressions about, say, the fruit fly genome get a whole page. At the same time, information crucial to understanding Reece's biblically inspired characters is relegated to a note or two after the end of the book. Reece obviously knows how to weave facts into his fiction, but he too often chooses to highlight minor research, rather than the more important threads of his mythology.

Nevertheless, *Old Blood* draws together ancient esoteric knowledge and a modern-day murder mystery for an intricate, yet clearly executed, conspiracy story. Think of Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*, but with more realistic characters and better writing.

(February 15, 2010)

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