

From the Author of "Night Whispers"

DAVID  
GRESKE

BLOOD  
RIVER

# BLOOD RIVER

"WHEN THE RAIN OF BLOOD BEGINS,  
THE REIGN OF BLOOD WILL END."

When Todd Remington and his college friends pickup a mysterious hitchhiker, they soon realize there is something strange about their new passenger. Annabella is a perfect woman whose pale blue eyes, snowy hair, and milky skin arouse men and women alike. She knows things she's never been told, and can manipulate the minds of others, make them see and hear things that aren't there.

Remington's vehicle breaks down, and the sensual Annabella lures them to Blood River, a town not found on any map, where the sidewalks roll up come sundown and townies find solace behind locked doors. Inside a boarding house located on the town's fringe, she awakens a creature of pure evil with a taste for human blood.

Trapped within a house more a living organism than a stone structure, Remington and his gang must battle a resurrected being born out of fear, cowardice, and blood.



# SATURDAY MORNING (I)

The albino walked into the Lazarus Room, the sweet smell of sex seeping from every pore of her naked body. Her pure white hair fell across the swells of her breasts, covering them in a veil of alabaster lace. Her eyes sheltered a terrible malevolence.

She padded across the earthen floor and the room trembled. The candles set back in the stone walls flickered. The odd chandelier quivered. She approached the altar, and the stone carvings fell silent as she peeled back the gauzy shroud covering the thing lying upon it.

The albino leaned forward until her lips brushed the creature's, then turned her head and brought her ear close to the thing's mouth.

The creature spoke; the woman listened. A smile curled across the albino's face. It was time.

# ONE

It was impossible to distinguish the vocals of Nickelback's lead singer, Chad Kroeger, from the screech of the tires as Todd Remington's metallic blue Chevy Tahoe with the chrome spinner wheels barreled around the corner at such a speed it threatened to roll over.

Blind Man's Curve, as the locals called it, wasn't visible until you were almost on top of it. Over the years, there had been dozens of accidents along that section of road. Most of the victims were drunks coming from town after a heavy night of drinking on Friday or Saturday. In an attempt to stop the accidents, the county put up barriers along the stretch of pavement. Nothing more than construction cones and barricades accessorized with blinking orange beacons, the efforts only proved to be a waste of taxpayers' money. The longest the blockade stayed in place were three months before someone high on drugs or alcohol barreled through the flimsy barricade and plummeted to their death.

The accidents amounted to ruined nerves, and wrecked cars. Most of the mishaps were fatal. That short stretch of blacktop had seen more blood than a dozen operating

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rooms at the local hospital, and during the day, if the sun shone just right the asphalt had a slight red tinge to it.

Driven at the posted speed, there was plenty of time to react to the hidden danger, but Todd's concentration was on his crotch rather than the speedometer, and the SUV had crept to a speed almost double the thirty-mile-per-hour limit. Aware the Tahoe was prone to flip even under the best conditions, Todd Remington, star quarterback of the Prairie Rest Panthers, understood the consequences of cornering too fast. However, when the road suddenly disappeared in front of him and he found himself staring at the fifty-foot drop, he had no other choice than to crank hard on the steering wheel to avoid disaster. Halfway through the turn, Todd felt the gravel shift beneath the tires and heard the stones clank against the undercarriage as the left side of the Tahoe lifted from the pavement. The landscape tilted; snippets of his life flashing like quick-cuts of a movie on the bug-splattered windshield.

*Birth*—surrounded in darkness he moves down the birth canal. When he enters the world, a brilliant light slams in his face and he squints to block out the painful glow. Once he adjusts to the brightness of his new world, he opens his eyes and, with the blurred vision of an infant, sees the doctor. The doctor, dressed in blue scrubs with matching mask, nods and hands Baby Todd to another. Even though this man is dressed in the same manner as

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the doctor, Baby Todd knows by the smile-wrinkles in the mask and the proud sparkle in his eyes that this man is his daddy. The room rolls for a minute, and nausea causes Baby Todd to cry as he is passed to a woman. The woman is his mother, and although she is crying, Baby Todd knows these are tears of joy.

*Kindergarten*—the handwritten sign on the door of the fort reads **No girls allowed**. The fort is constructed of huge Styrofoam bricks, and when Barbara Hayes leans against it, one of the walls topples inward. A red brick hits Todd on the head and though he does not get hurt, the shock of the impact makes him cry. Todd's wailing causes Barbara to cry, too, as the teacher, Mrs. Holt, hurries to the back of the room to check on the children. Todd buries his face against Mrs. Holt's leg and the teacher assures him everything is all right.

*Middle School*—there is a huge granite boulder in the playground next to the school. A brass plaque attached to the stone honors Principal Malone. The fifth-grader could care less about the plaque's significance; all he wants is to climb the stone, but last night's rain has made the rock slippery. Todd falls and the back of his head slams against the granite. The playground monitors rush to the scene and panic when they see so much blood. They race back to the school and when they return with the head nurse, Todd is sitting up, rubbing the back of his head, and wondering about all the commotion.

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*High School*—Debbie Huneke is the class' ugly duckling. On a dare, Todd's football buddies convince him to ask her to the Spring Fling dance. Debbie accepts and is ecstatic the school's quarterback has asked her out. However, it is all a cruel joke. Todd has no intention of taking her, or any girl, to the dance. He and his friends go drinking instead. For weeks afterward, Todd feels guilty about the prank, though he never gets the chance to apologize because a drunk driver runs Debbie down one afternoon on her way home from school.

*Graduation Day*—Todd sees his parents in the crowd as he marches to "Pomp and Circumstance." Although they are older now, he still sees that sparkle of pride in his father's eyes as his mother's eyes leak happiness. A week later, he sees the same thing when he receives the full football scholarship from Prairie Rest University.

*An hour ago*—he wakes, steps in the bathroom, and turns on the shower. As he waits for the water to warm, he thinks about Tina Krause. These thoughts give him an erection and he wants to masturbate, but he resists the temptation. He'll save himself for Tina.

*Twenty minutes ago*—he pulls the Tahoe in front of Tina's house and honks the horn once. Tina bounds out the front door, her brunette hair tied in a ponytail, breasts bouncing seductively beneath her white cotton blouse. He thinks; *damn, she looks good!*

In her left hand, she carries a pink overnight bag. In her

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other hand, a matching cosmetic case. She opens the back of the Tahoe and dumps her luggage inside next to Todd's tattered suitcase; then she walks around the vehicle, pops open the passenger door, and crawls inside. She gives her man a kiss on the cheek, and before they are out of town, she unzips his pants and pulls out Lil Todd.

The windshield turns black.

While unimportant to most, these episodes, whether good, bad, or indifferent, helped mold him into the man he'd become.

With a groan, Todd slammed his weight against the driver's door, and the left side of the vehicle dropped back to the pavement. The pine-scented air freshener, a silhouette of a naked woman, swung wildly from the rearview mirror.

When the vehicle changed directions, Tina Krause, whose face was buried in Todd's lap, banged the back of her head on the steering column. With his right hand, Todd grabbed her hair and pushed her out of the way. He returned his hand back to the steering wheel and gripped the leather covering so hard his fingernails cut crescent moons in the hide.

"Ow, that hurt." Tina rubbed the back of her head. There was no blood, but she felt the swell of a bump. "Why'd you do that?"

"Because if I hadn't, we'd be at the bottom of Blind Man's Curve by now," Todd said, running his tongue

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across his upper lip and looking at her with terrified, steel-gray eyes.

Tina looked out the passenger-side window and into the outside rearview mirror. A shudder chattered through her when she saw how close the tire tracks came to the edge of the embankment before they abruptly changed directions. In her mind's eye, she saw the Tahoe as it spun front over back over the embankment, crashing into the shelves of rock as it made its way to the bottom. She saw herself thrown from the vehicle and crash against the jagged stones, her body pulverizing with each impact.

“Oh baby, I’m sorry,” Tina said and gave Todd a kiss. “And look at poor Lil Todd. He doesn’t look so good.”

Todd took a quick glance at his crotch. His erection had dwindled away and his flaccid penis lay in his lap like a pink finger of meat. “I guess it was too much excitement for the little guy.” An unsettling giggle came from his mouth.

A mischievous glint twinkled in Tina’s deep blue eyes and she moistened the underside of her upper lip with her pink tongue. “I bet I can get Lil Todd’s attention again,” she said and put her hand between Todd’s legs. With the bottom of her index and middle fingers, she stroked his saliva-slicked organ. Todd felt his loin muscles tighten. No doubt she’d make good with her promise.

The thing Todd liked about Tina the Cheerleader was

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her insatiable sexual appetite. She could go for hours without tiring, which was an ideal thing for a twenty-two-year-old male whose average recovery time between performances was twenty minutes or less. As a small boy, Todd often heard his father say, “She screws like a minx, that one does,” whenever he spoke of one of the town’s less desirable women. Tina was like a minx, and Todd had no complaints.

Todd knew the first time he met Tina she was not the kind of girl he could bring home to Mother. A mother’s instinct would tell her the cheerleader was “one of those kinds of girls,” and that was okay with Todd. He did not intend to introduce her to the parents even though they continued to ask him to invite her over for a nice Sunday dinner. In his mind, Todd often envisioned the whole dinner party playing out like an obscene comedy: She’d arrive in denim shorts that rode halfway up her ass and a tight pink blouse that left nothing to the imagination. At dinner she’d be seated across the table from Todd, who’d be seated next to his father. During the meal, she’d run her foot up Todd’s calf, working her toes under his pant leg, but the cheerleader would inadvertently be playing with the wrong person, and while Todd suspected that Father would enjoy such extra attention, he knew Mother would not approve of such behavior. Then his father, bless his heart, would tell one of his corny jokes, and Tina, out of respect, would laugh, and the jolly movement would

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cause one of her boobs to pop from her blouse. *Peek-a-boo, I see you!*

There were no doubts in Todd's mind that Tina had feelings for him, which was unfortunate because the only thing he felt for her was the pleasure she gave him whenever she buried her face in his crotch or threw her legs around his neck in the bed of some roadside motel. Lately even that bored him. Once they returned home from this trip, he planned on breaking up with her. In retrospect, he hadn't really changed that much from high school. Once a jerk, always a jerk—now he just refused to carry around the guilt.

Todd pushed Tina's hand away. "I think it's time for Lil Todd to go home." He stuffed himself back in his pants and zipped his fly.

"But I was just getting started," Tina pouted. She scooted up in her seat and removed the rubber band that held her ponytail in place. Her hair fell to her shoulders and rested on the swells of her breasts. She had the face of a small-town girl: pretty, yet hardened with lessons learned too young.

Her lips, Todd thought, were as red as her vagina. "I know, baby, and there'll be plenty of time for that once we get to Vegas. Besides, we're only a couple of miles from Godboy's house, and could you imagine what his mother would do to us if she saw us together like that?"

Tina smiled. She could. "Yeah, I suppose you're right.

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She'd probably beat you with her Bible and strangle me with her Rosary."

"You got that right."

Tina snuggled close to her man, breathed in his scent. She ran a finger down the nape of his neck and wrapped a lock of his brown hair around her index finger. She traced the contours of her boyfriend's angular chin. The sandpaper feel of the stubble against her soft, delicate skin excited her.

"I love you, Todd."

"Yeah, I know." Once a jerk, always a jerk. "Say, grab me a cold one."

Tina shifted her position and opened the cooler between her feet. She took out a can of Budweiser and popped the top. Foam bubbled from the opening and she held the Bud over the cooler so renegade beer wouldn't stain the leather seat. Once the contents settled, she handed it to Todd.

"Ain't you having one?" he asked. "No brewski for you-ski?"

Tina looked away, focusing on the dashboard. "No, not right now." *And it'll be quite some time before I do.*

"Suit yourself." Todd took a long pull of the malty beverage, turned up the volume of the CD player until the SUV vibrated, and headed for Godboy's house.