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Colin Wilson

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When Captain Carlsen entered the vast derelict spaceship, he was stunned by its awesome splendor--and shaken by the discovery of its immobilized humanoid passengers.

Later, after three of those strange aliens had been transported to Earth, his foreboding was more than justified. The creatures were energy vampires whose seductive embraces were total, whose lust for vitality was boundless. As they took over the willing bodies of their victims and sexual murders spread terror throughout the land, Carlsen worked toward their destruction--even though he was erotically drawn to the most beautiful vampire of all!

The Space Vampires Details

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From Reader Review The Space Vampires for online ebook

mark monday says

don't watch Lifeforce unless you're drunk. read the book instead. can a movie rape a book? yes it can.

David Agranoff says

Space Vampires AKA(Lifeforce) By Colin Wilson

216 pages

Out of print

This science fiction horror crossover is remembered mostly from the Cannon films adaptation of the novel. The film while produced by Cannon films the schlock studio behind the cinematic ascension of Chuck Norris and the Sho Kosugi Ninja trilogy is not that bad. They certainly hired excellent cast and crew. Directed by Texas chainsaw massacre director Tobe Hooper, adapted by Alien Screenwriter Dan O'Bannon and scored by Harry Mancini. Lead by an impressive bat shit crazy performance by Steve Railsbeck, a small role by the future enterprise captain Patrick Stewart and of course the naked space vampire who excited overly hormonal horror fans by walking around London naked played by Mathilda May.

It was sci-fi and horror so I have seen a few times over the years. Recently I saw a tie-in paperback on the shelf at powells and thought I would give the book a shot and re-watch the movie. The first 80 or so pages of the book I was impressed thought it was much better than my memory of the film. First off I think the novel takes place a little further in the future. The discovery of the "stranger" spaceship and the discovery of the vampires is handled excellently. The creepy-ness of finding a old dead space ship in space is well done and I felt the charcters nervous-ness come through the text.

"The stranger ship" in the novel has a very cosmic horror, lovecraftian-ness that exists in the novel but it is deeper in the book. One of the blurbs on the cover called it fast paced. Yes at times it was fast paced too fast paced, some times scenes and action transitioned so fast and I to go back and re-read sections. Wilson just skipped ahead if the part of the story bored him at least it seemed to me.

Any of my friends on Good reads might notice that I started this book in July and finished in October. I am a fast reader generally. But once this book hits the wall. For 20 or 30 thirty mind numbing pages the main character Carlsen gets a history lesson on vampires. This is meant to connect traditional vampires to the three energy sucking space vampires. The major difference between the movie and the book is O'Bannon didn't use any of this material. Good on him, it is boring ireallavent and just straight ruined the main work of the first 80 pages.

The movie turned out a little better. Yep it's one of those rare cases like Children of Men or the English Patient where the film is much better than the book. While the movie comes off now as campy, and little over the top most of that is due to being out of date. Perhaps it seemed less cheezy in 1985,certainly when I watched it in the 80's it looked better to me.

Daniel says

Well, I read this book when I was a teenager, almost twenty years ago, and the little I can remember, I really enjoyed the story. Today, I hardly ever would read a book with such a title (and such synopsis), and, even less I intend to read it again and spoil my diffuse remembrance (fantasy/delusion) that it is a nice title. So, 4 stars for the nostalgia.

Scott Rhee says

Colin Wilson's 1976 novel "The Space Vampires" is actually less cheesy than the title may suggest, although there is no escaping the inherent cheesiness of the concept of vampires from outer space. It immediately brings to mind Ed Wood's classic so-bad-it's-good movie "Plan 9 from Outer Space" (which has the distinction of being both Bela Lugosi's last film and voted worst film ever made) as well as a famously awful episode of the '80s TV show *Buck Rogers* simply called "Space Vampire".

Nearly every attempt to put vampires in a sci-fi setting fails due to the fact that most vampires simply can't shake the stereotypical pale-faced creature in a black cape hovering over a damsel in distress. The idea just doesn't work in a sci-fi setting, not without conjuring laughable "grade-B horror" movie cliches.

That said, some authors have come close to making it work. "Carrion Comfort" by Dan Simmons is perhaps one of the most thought-provoking science fiction twists on the vampire mythos. Published in 1989, Simmons re-imagines vampires as humans with a rare genetic trait: telekinetic mind-control. These rare individuals have existed throughout history to bend other humans to their will, to do things that they wouldn't normally do, and to reap the benefits, usually in the form of fame or power. People like Adolf Hitler, who may or may not have even been aware of their innate powers, used their vampiric mental abilities to charm and manipulate and ultimately take control of governments and businesses for self-aggrandizement.

Wilson's novel is another clever twist on the concept of vampirism. His vampires don't suck the blood from his victims; instead, they suck life-energy. Vampirism, according to Wilson, is a kind of energy transference. In mild cases, the victim is simply left drained and exhausted. In extreme cases, the victim can be sucked dry of energy until they are a lifeless vessel. The vampire can also "hop" from body to body, constantly changing his or her form by simply transferring its life-energy into another human.

Wilson's twist is that this vampirism can be both harmful and helpful. In its parasitic form, the vampire drains its victims of energy. In its symbiotic form, the vampire can transfer energy *into* its victims, giving a dying person more energy and opportunities to heal.

In the book, astronauts discover a mile-long spaceship floating in space for what may have been thousands of years. Inside, they discover the bodies of several humanoid creatures. They resemble humans in every way, and they seem to have been perfectly preserved.

The space mission, led by Captain Carlsen, retrieves three of the bodies to take back to Earth for further study. When they arrive on Earth, however, they come back to life and leave a wake of bodies sucked dry of life-energy. Carlsen, with the help of a scientist named Dr. Fallada, must hunt down these space vampires, who have laid waste to countless other worlds for countless eons.

If this novel sounds similar to the 1985 Tobe Hooper film "Lifeforce" it's because it was the basis for the film, although there is very little resemblance, other than that basic plot, between book and film. Hooper's film was a sci-fi action thriller with a gothic tone and a lot of gratuitous blood and guts, as well as plenty of gratuitous nudity. And while I certainly have nothing against any of that, Wilson's book succeeds over Hooper's film in its intelligence and subtle tongue-in-cheek self-reflexiveness.

William Oarlock says

Sometime in the 21st Century Commander Olof Carlsen and the crew of the Hermes discover a colossal and archaic alien craft drifting in the asteroid belt. Christened 'Stranger' exploration of its fantastic interior discovers among many weird marvels a number of well-preserved humanoids returning home with three of these beings Carlsen unknowingly unleashes on the planet and himself the space vampires.

Best known as the basis for cult-chesnut "Lifeforce" (1985) this epic of life-sucking, demonic/fallen angel members of a divine race of telepathic, teleporting space-squid is perhaps more stimulating intellectually than that none-the-less fun flick.

Most action-packed of Colin Wilson's Lovecraftian trilogy of novels, essentially blending elements of "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow Out of Time" with Stoker's "Dracula" and M.R. James' "Count Magnus" bridged by the plot derived (though used more effectively here) from A.E. van Vogt's "Asylum" - alien vampires whose condition is the result of a cosmic accident take Earth as their next victim planet. As well as Wilson's own interest in criminology - it's perhaps most entertaining. Though some will find the long dialogue and exposition scenes dragging.

Though his 'Mythos masterpiece' has to be 'The Return of the Lloigor' in both Turner and Derleth editions of 'Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos', I find this novel handles 'Alien Theology' in a generally more fun way than C.S. Lewis' "Space Trilogy".

Clint says

First off, if you're looking for the book that the insanely awesome Life Force movie was based on, this is it. No wonder they changed the name for the movie, haha.

Anyway, the first 50 pages or so of this book was just rocking as hard as a pirate ship in a hurricane. Some space explorers come across a 50km derelict ship floating around, with insanely huge fixtures, stairs, badass gothic cathedral architecture, weird artwork involving Lovecraftian squiddy things, and some naked people in suspended animation behind glass walls that open telepathically. And they are space vampires. And in the ship there is a map of ancient Greece. Holy shit, the stage is set for some badassery.

Unfortunately, that's about all the badassery we're going to get. As another reviewer has said on this sight, it's mostly talking heads, scientists, cops, politicians, all talking about vampirism, parasitism, then a couple of nicely-placed scenes that follow, to give examples of what everyone was just talking about. I won't give away the ending, even though it's not that awesome, but just want to say that if Colin Wilson had handed in the first 50 pages to the publisher and said, "Ok, here's the rest of the story, blah blah blah," then had the

publishers pull in, like, Dan Simmons or someone like that to finish it up, would have been the best sci-horror novel ever. But, he fucked it up.

Frank says

I originally read this book about 1980 not long after its publication in 1976. On reading it again, I really didn't remember much from the first read. I read it originally because it was written by Colin Wilson. When I was in the military in the early 70s, one of my friends there was a Wilson fanatic and had to read everything ever written by him. Wilson is best known for his nonfiction works such as the "Outsider" and his existentialism philosophy. On my friends recommendation, I read several of his books but mostly his fiction such as this novel. According to Wilson's acknowledgements, "Space Vampires" originated in a discussion with A.E. van Vogt and his story "Asylum". This was another reason to read this novel.

On rereading this, I have to say that Wilson did pull you into this story. The novel starts out with the discovery of a space derelict containing the bodies of alien life forms. This initially reminded me of Clarke's "Rendezvous with Rama" - a super sci-fi novel. But then Wilson takes a twist when the bodies are transported to earth and found to be vampires, not in the usual sense, but beings able to suck the "lifeforce" from other beings. The novel goes on for an entire section discussing vampirism in general and how other creatures such as a moray eel also have vampire traits. Overall, I would give this one a mild recommendation but I think some of Wilson's other work is much superior.

William Prystauk says

Wilson did not write a novel, but an extended stage play of talking heads (when they weren't drinking), who discuss the philosophy of vampirism ad nauseum. It's as if Wilson wanted solely to explore his notion of vampirism and nothing more. As for the elements of science, it's hard to take a book seriously when the the author uses "apparatus" four times on one page.

If you're like me, you probably indulged in the B-movie horror LIFEFORCE (1985), and found your way to the book expecting one great sci-fi/horror/action adventure. Well, this is not even close. Then again, I know through a friend of Wilson's that the author hated the movie. Then again, if the producers had wished to make a film close to the book, audiences the world over would have either fallen asleep or walked out. Talking heads do not make for good pictures (unless you're Jerome Bixby who wrote the fantastic THE MAN FROM EARTH (2007)).

Sadly, this book is so long-winded, I decided to skip a thirty-page section only to find the scene had not changed - and that I had not missed any information. If anything, open this work only to read the last five pages regarding consciousness, energy, and immortality.

David Moore says

There's a lot wrong with this book: structurally and in terms of pacing; even the dialogue is clunky and

unconvincing. The general idea isn't entirely original either. However, there's something inexplicably alluring about it - that vampiric charm - which draws you in, and entertains you.

But it doesn't suck away your life-force.

It's incredibly light-reading, and pulpy too. However this is Colin Wilson the great philosopher, so if you take a few steps back you're presented with a large tapestry of ideas being presented through pulp fiction -- and even if vampires are not 'your thing', there's something here that might make you reconsider the notion of what a vampire truly is.

A lot of research is hidden behind those clunky info-dumping monologues, and you go away from this book feeling full and wholesome. There's something immensely satisfying about this piece of pulp literature bestowing philosophic messages about the power of phenomenology.

It's got that subliminal bite.

Melissa says

This book was awesome. A very interesting take on what life force in humans is and how it can be related to this version of vampires. There are definately some new thoughts about vampire-type beings, and it is a good thriller. Very enjoyable.

Precarious says

The Space Vampires is by no means a great scifi book. Colin Wilson's style is somewhat awkward and mechanical. In fact, it almost seems this book were contrived as a means of expressing his ideas on the dynamic of vampiric exchange and the nature of consciousness, and that's fine by me because Wilson is spot on with his observations. From what I've been told his novel The Mind Parasites is a similar venture into expressing his ideas as fiction. I plan on reading that very soon.

The end of the book touches on the idea of consciousness overcoming biology and therefore mortality. I tend to agree with this, as did the alchemists. Consciousness shall eventually supersede nature causing our endocrine and other system to obey the will of consciousness rather than the mechanical dictates of biology. The individuation process of soul (which is simply another word for consciousness) can only logically lead to this conclusion.

There is a dated quality to this work that will make you snicker, such as the preface of 'space' or 'electrical' before gadgets and gizmos. The "spacemen" wore "space helmets", etc. And there is an obsession with whiskey that borders on the absurd. It seems nearly every conversation and encounter between characters begins with them having a wee nip o'the spirits. Whether this is the reality Wilson lived in, or his odd projection of life in 2080 is uncertain, but it sure was funny.

All in all worth the read simply for Wilson's impassioned descriptions of the vampiric dynamic.

Paige Ellen Stone says

There's this movie.... I love this movie... it's called "Lifeforce." I love it because the cast is great, the story arc is great. The reason I am writing a review of the book, called, "Space Vampires," when published by Colin Wilson in 1976 is that one reviewer of the movie said that while a fun movie to watch, it missed the real guts of the story. I found this intriguing and decided to get a kindle copy and see for myself. Lo and behold, the other reviewer was right. The movie maker, Golan/Globus, directed by Tobe Hooper, simplified things to close to a salacious level. The essence of the vampirism is glossed over in the movie and makes the book stand out. This was not just about wiping out earthlings; it was about stealing the very essence of what makes them human. So, my advice is watch the movie because it's fun - get the new remastered, director's cut Blu-Ray if you can, but do read the book. It is much better and is a great sci-fi adventure.

K.T. Katzmann says

This book is famous for inspiring a movie with both Mathilda May spending the vast majority of it walking around naked and Patrick Stewart's first kiss.

This book is nowhere near that riveting.

This happens nowhere inside.

The first forty pages promises weirdness. A future expedition to the asteroid field discovers a gigantic floating spaceship, with a gothic interior and naked humanoids in suspended animation. Three of the creatures are brought to Earth. A reporter gains access to the government lab, which has less security than a Red Box's drop slot. He awakens the beautiful vampire woman, and she escapes into London.

Then the talking begins, and the drinks and meals. Scene after scene of our hero chatting about the philosophical nature of vampirism. Over a hundred pages are spent in mostly research and conversation. Hell, the protagonists leave the UK entirely and have a nice, informative vacation in Sweden.

This is the Atlas Shurgged of vampire fiction.

Within the last forty pages I sat up, gripped, as our heroes return to London and track the body-swapping energy vampires. There's brilliant science fiction world building, but you really have to work to get there.

Imagine visiting a friend who shows you brilliant horror movie DVDs but demands an hour and a half digression over cognac in the middle of the movie. So much conversation over food happens that I literally screamed in frustration when one of our steadfast heroes mentions breakfast.

Wilson obviously knew his stuff. He wrote *The Occult*, for Glob's sake. Fanboyishly, he spends an astounding amount of time tying in his book to the stories of M.R.James, and weeven get a little bit of Cthulhu Mythos at the end. But the work you have to go to get there is punishing.

It starts out with cool pulp SF. It ends like a vampiric version of Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters*. It has a middle that could stand to lose about 95% of the text. Some SF books are crazy because of the content, and I

like that; see my review of Image of the Beast as evidence. The structure is what's crazy here.

This is a really bad-ass short story with a giant loaf of a diatribe pinched off in the middle of it, and I just wanted more space vampires.

Winnipeg Mosquito says

I enjoyed this book! It's ridiculous and over the top and quite sexist (allowances given for time written), but in the end very entertaining. The Aliens had some interesting twists and I would love to read an extension on them. For a light vacation read its perfect.

Rabbit {Paint me like one of your 19th century gothic heroines!} says

I enjoyed this despite the misogyny.

It was a vintage pulpy sci-fi novel, so it was exactly how you think it is.

It was a fun, entertaining, and short read (finished it the same day).

This book was extremely dated, but that was part of the charm.
