

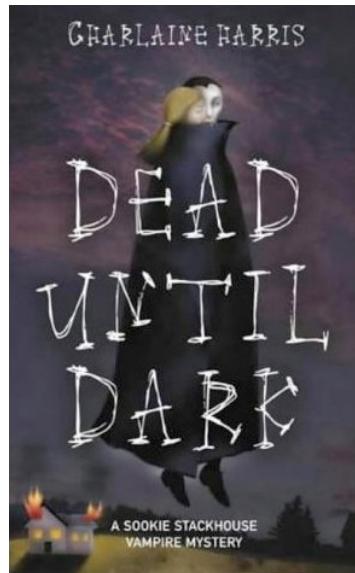
# ANG1755: Vampires in Films and Literature

Winter 2020  
Dr. Michael E. Sinatra

## Dead until Dead

Charlaine Harris (2001)

- Volume one of the The Southern Vampire Mysteries



## Week 13

- ❖ Charlaine Harris, Dead until Dark (2001)

Vampires

Ever since vampires came out of the coffin (as they laughing put it) two years ago, I'd hoped one would come to Bon Temps. We had all the other minorities in our little town—why nor the newest, the legally recognized undead? But rural northern Louisiana wasn't too tempting to vampires, apparently; on the other hand, New Orleans was a real center for them—the whole Anne Rice thing, right? (1)

The vampire was hungry. I'd always heard that the synthetic blood the Japanese had developed kept vampires up to par as far as nutrition, but didn't really satisfy their hunger, which was why there were "Unfortunate Incidents" from time to time. (That was the vampire euphemism for the bloody slaying of a human.) (5)

He was pale, of course; hey, he was dead, if you believed the old tales. The politically correct theory, the one the vamps themselves publicly backed, had it that this guy was the victim of a virus that left him apparently dead for a couple of days and thereafter allergic to sunlight, silver, and garlic. The details depended on which newspaper you read. There were all full of vampire stuff these days. (2)

"It's not your fault you were infected with a virus."

Bill snorted, even managing to sound elegant doing that. "There have been theories as long as they have been vampires. Maybe that one is true." Then he looked as if he was sorry he'd said that. "If what makes a vampire is a virus," he went on in a more offhand manner, "it's selective one."

"How do you become a vampire?" I'd read all kind of stuff, but that would be straight from the horse's mouth.

"I would have to drain you, at one sitting or over two or three days, to the point of your death, then give you my blood. You would lie like a corpse for about forty-eight hours, sometimes as long as three days, then rise and walk at night. And you will be hungry." (53) (6)

I had thought I was going to the house on the other side, the Compton house: but then I knew Bill must be here, somewhere in this six acres of bones and stones. I stood in the center of the oldest part of the graveyard, surrounded by monuments and modest tombstones, in the company of the dead.

I felt, rather than heard, movement to my right. I turned the beam of the flashlight in that direction. The ground was buckling. As I watched, a white hand shot up from the red soil. The dirt began to heave and crumble. A figure climbed out of the ground. (179)

There wasn't an odor, but there was gunk, black and streaky, and the absolute horror and disgust of watching Long Shadow deconstruct with incredible speed. There was a stake sticking out of his back. Eric stood watching, as we all were, but he had a mallet in his hand. (205)

## Sexuality

You can tell I don't get out too much. And it's not because I'm not pretty, I am blond and blue-eyed and twenty-five, and my legs are strong and my bosom is substantial, and I have a waspy waistline. (1)

Finally I pulled a dress from the back of my closet, one I'd had little occasion to wear. It was a Nice Date dress, if I was cut square and low in the neck and it was sleeveless. It was tight and white. The fabric was thinly scattered with bright red flowers with long green stems. My tan glowed and my boobs showed. I wore red enamel earrings and red high-heeled screw-me shoes. I had a little red straw purse. I put on light makeup and wore my wavy hair loose down my back. (97)

When Gran urged me to get in the shower and change my clothes, I realized that she regarded Bill the vampire as my date. That made me feel a little odd. One, Gran was so desperate for me to have a social life that even a vampire was eligible to my attention; two, that some feelings that backed up that idea; three, that Bill might accurately read all this; four, could vampires even do it like humans? (44)

I'd never looked on Sam as a beddable man before—or at least not beddable by me—for lot of reasons. But the simplest one was I never looked at anyone that way, not because I don't have hormones—boy, do I have hormones—but they are constantly ramped down because sex, for me, is a disaster. Can you imagine knowing everything your sex partner is thinking? Right. Along the order of "Gosh, look at that mole... her butt is a little big... wish she'd move to the right a little... why doesn't she take the hint and...?" You get the idea. It's chilling to the emotions, believe me. And during sex, there is simply no way to keep a mental guard up. (25)

I spent an indecent amount of time lying awake in bed wondering if the undead could actually do—it. Also, I wondered if it would be possible to have a frank discussion with Bill about that. Sometimes he seemed very old-fashioned, sometimes he seemed as normal as the guy next door. Well, not really, but pretty normal.

It seemed both wonderful and pathetic to me that the one creature I'd met in years that I'd want to have sex with was actually not human.

What if we did it, and after all these years I discovered I had no talent for it? Or maybe it wouldn't feel good. Maybe all the books and movies exaggerated. (58)

At first I was dazed, but I began to catch on and keep up. He found my response very exciting, and I began to feel that something was around the corner, so to speak—something very big and good. I said, “Oh, please, Bill, please!” and dug my nails in his hips, almost there, almost there, and then a small shift in our alignment allowed him to press even more directly against me and almost before I could gather myself I was flying, flying, seeing white with gold streaks. I felt Bill’s teeth against my neck, and I said, “Yes!” I felt his fangs penetrate, but it was a small pain, an exciting pain, and as he came inside me I felt him draw on the little wound. (145)

The next moment his teeth grazed my shoulders, and his body, hard and rigid and ready, shoved me so forcefully I was suddenly on my back in the mud. He slid directly into me as if he were trying to reach through me to the soil. I shrieked, and he growled in response, as though we were truly mud people, primitives from caves. My hands, gripping the flesh of his back, felt the rain pelting down and the blood under my nails, and his relentless movement. I thought I would be plowed into the mud, into my grave. His fangs sank into my neck.

Suddenly I came. Bill howled as he reached his own completion, and he collapsed on me, his fangs pulling out and his tongue cleaning the puncture marks. (181)

Since vampire blood was supposed to temporarily relieve symptoms of illness and increase sexual potency, kind of like prednisone and Viagra rolled into one, there was a huge black market for genuine, undiluted vampire blood. (6)

“Maudette was a fang-banger.” ...  
“What’s that?” asked Gran. She must have missed Sally Jessy the day the phenomenon was explored.  
“Men and women that hang around vampires and enjoy being bitten. Vampire groupies. They don’t last too long, I think, because they want to be bitten too much, and sooner or later they get one bit too many.” (22)

Bill, shaking with temptation, was actually, bending to sink his fangs into Jerry's neck when I said, "No! He has the Sino-virus!"

...  
"Sino-AIDS," I said.

Alcoholic and heavily drugged victims affected vampires temporarily, and some human with full-blood AIDS didn't, nor did sexually transmitted diseases, or any other bugs that plagued humans.

Except Sino-AIDS. Even Sino-AIDS didn't kill vampires as surely as AIDS virus killed humans, but it left the undead very weak for nearly a month, during which time it was comparatively easy to catch and stake them. And every now and then, if a vampire fed from an infected human more than once, the vampire actually died—redied?—without being staked. Still rare in the United States, Sino-AIDS was gaining a foothold around ports like New Orleans, with sailors and other travelers from many countries passing through the city in a partying mood. (68)

I thought she looked cheap as hell and most likely absolutely mouthwatering from a male point of view. (64)

...  
The female vampire cocked her head and gave me a long look. "I'm not so sure. She looks like a virgin to me."

I didn't think Diane was talking hymens.  
(66)

## Pop Culture

"I am going on vacation," Harlen said, "I've been wanting to visit New Orleans for years. It's just a mecca for us, you know." (171)

Fantasia, the vampire bar, was located in a suburban shopping area of Shreveport, close to a Sam's and a Toys "R" Us. The name of the place was spelled out in jazzy red neon above the door, and the façade was painted steel gray, a red door providing color contrast. Whoever owned the place must have thought gray was less obvious than black because the interior was decorated in the same colors. (100)

The clothes ranged from reproductions of those worn by Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise in Interview with a Vampire to some modern outfits that I thought were influenced by The Hunger. Some of the fang-bangers were wearing false fangs, some had painted trickles of blood from the corners of their mouths or puncture marks on their necks. (101)

"Woof," agreed my companion.  
"I got to call you something," I said. "How about ... Buffy?"  
The dog growled.  
"Okay. Rover?"  
Whine.  
"Don't like that, either. Hmmm. " We turned into my driveway. (248)

"Eric wants you," Pam told her. Ginger's face lit up like she had a date with David Duchovny, and she was in here room and rubbing against Eric almost as fast as a vampire could have. (207)