

ACCALIA

Kimberly Olsen

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ACCALIA, a dark fantasy novel by Kimberly Olsen, combines the story of a werewolf's struggle to remain undetected with elements of Roman mythology and Freudian psychology.

A serial killer who feels "no remorse or pleasure, just the need to survive" has moved to Buenos Aires, and Detective Sebastian Michetti is becoming desperate to stop the bloodshed. But the clues point to something supernatural, something beyond Michetti's refined logic. Even when Diana, his gorgeous new girlfriend, admits that she's the killer, he has a hard time accepting the truth—that werewolves *do* exist, and that he has to kill her in order to protect his city.

Diana knows she's not human. She wasn't born that way. Cursed with emerald green eyes, raven hair and a slender, strong body, Diana doesn't believe in love, since it means "falling into vulnerability." Every twelve days, rather like "getting her period twice a month," she changes into her true form and fulfills her innate desire for blood by killing random victims. But lately, she targets specific people, especially men who treat their women poorly. Like a samurai who disembowels his victim to purify the murder, Diana uses her sharp claws to bring justice against criminals, negligent boyfriends, and abusive fathers. But it's all very tiresome, so she seeks release from the one man who knows her secret.

The craftsmanship here is weak. The author has created a plausible situation about an immortal werewolf who must wander from city to city in order to avoid arrest, but Olsen fails to develop a sympathetic side to Diana. Although Diana eventually uses her wolf form to free her female friends from the lousy men in their lives, there's not much depth to this character. It is understandable why she avoids romantic involvement, since her discovery could lead to arrest—or having to kill her lover in order to protect the secret. And it's believable that, after thousands of years of cultural changes and kills, Diana no longer takes pleasure in life.

However, despite the author's claims about a "strong maternal instinct," Diana comes across as a cold-hearted, mercenary character whose lack of pain makes her difficult to identify with. She may be strong and self-reliant, but she's numb—and that never changes. If the author turns this into Detective Michetti's story instead of Diana's, it would be much stronger. His character is more realistic, since he struggles to balance his police duty with the realization that his girlfriend is a cold-blooded killer, and it breaks his heart to learn that he must kill her so that she can be "reborn" into her wolf form.

Finally, the point-of-view changes are distracting since the author jumps from Diana's thoughts to Michetti's without warning, and the verb tense shifts are so frequent that the reader often doesn't know when the story is happening.

Still, readers who enjoy werewolf stories with detective subplots might enjoy *ACCALIA*.

EMILY ASAD (May 13, 2013)

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