

The Bond

Pavla Melecka

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In the intriguing fantasy The Bond, complicated relationships between humans and vampires are complicated further when animals are added to the mix of the immortal.

The relationship between humans and horses is brought to new dimensions in Pavla Melecka's vampire novel *The Bond*.

When Silvia Milescu graduates from university in Bucharest, she decides to see the world as an au pair. An opportunity to live with the Bells family on Mount Diablo, outside of San Francisco, presents itself, and she jumps at the chance. In California, she meets Walter and his horses, Peace and Mack. For Silvia, who's been fascinated by horses her whole life, it seems like she's living the dream. But then new neighbors move in, and Silvia's life changes forever.

The book brings a new twist to the vampire genre. In addition to complicated relationships between vampires, the book adds animals to the mix when Silvia, desperate to save Peace's life after a traumatic incident, turns the horse into a vampire as well. The result is a genre-bending story with unexpected, sometimes invigorating, plot developments.

The book sets out to be a story about the close relationship between humans and horses, but the horses that Silvia bonds with aren't characterized, and the potential of their bond is unexplored. A closing peek at Peace's perspective is a fun addition.

When Bryan, Silvia's vampire maker, is introduced, he adds a different perspective at a crucial point in the narrative. The story returns to Silvia, her saccharine way of telling her story now embellished with a much-needed sinister undertone.

However, the story moves too fast toward its climax and conclusion. Setbacks are dealt with in a couple of sentences before the story moves on to the next issue. Several months go by in one page alone. Loosely connected events follow one after the other, turning the story into a series of snapshots at the expense of narrative coherency.

While the story is easy to read, its characters are kept at arm's length, and it never really grabs attention. Silvia's inner life is explored at a surface level; who she is at the beginning of the book is much the same person who she is at its end. Her Romanian origins are little more than a plot device to explain the history of Vlad Țepe, the first Dracula; they do not inform her characterization beyond her comparisons between the United States and Europe, which are both treated as monolithic. Further, Silvia forgives Bryan turning her into a vampire without her consent too quickly for her reaction to be credible.

The Bond is a creative, though not deep, vampire story.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (August 9, 2019)

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