Clarion Review

Fantasy

The Existence
B.J. Christopher
Trafford
978-1-4269-5370-5
Two Stars (out of Five)

When Chris attempts to intervene in an attack on a homeless man, his life changes forever. The ugly assailant calls Chris "Slayer" and leaps away with the body into the night. While Chris struggles to convince himself and others that he saw a demon murderer, the protagonist's friends and acquaintances start dying. Shaken, Chris finally seeks out his minister, Pastor Shellar, who informs Chris that these killings are the result of a local vampire named Peter, and that Chris has been anointed by God to become a Slayer of vampires. The Slayers are charged with sending all 666 vampires created by Satan back to Hell before they kill all of humanity prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Chris, Pastor Shellar, and the local law enforcement must work together to dispatch this gruesome menace before the monster decimates Chris's community.

Unlike sexy modern vampires who seem immune to almost anything, the beasts of B. J. Christopher's *The Existence* are hideous, soulless creatures who relish in inflicting pain. While they possess superhuman strength and speed, they can be injured by bullets and killed by sunlight. Therefore, they hunt after sundown, changing into their vampiric form to kill. Readers fed up with alluring invincible blood-suckers of the type popularized by *Twilight* will relish Christopher's disgusting demons. To heal lacerations to their human forms, vampires must feed more to replenish lost fluids. The author also makes a coup when he presents Slayers as chosen by God. However, this unique outlook on vampires is hampered by plot holes, a slow-moving story, and sloppy editing.

Christopher states that there are 666 vampires scattered throughout the world, and that the monsters rarely leave their home terrain. Yet, with only several hundred territorial vampires to kill the world's rising population, these territorial monsters seem a lot less threatening. Pastor Shellar says that, as a man of the cloth, Peter cannot touch him, only to have the vampire injure him later in the book. The protagonist does not accept his role of Slayer until more than halfway

through the book. Characters exist as one-dimensional plot devices, popping up only to be vampire fodder. We know little about the protagonist's friends, so it is difficult to share Chris's grief when Peter kills them. The author also makes the mistake of giving two characters the same last name. Further, he refers to Peter as "*the vampire*" for many pages before suddenly endowing him with a biblical name. The narration is tediously blow-by-blow. Redundancy occurs often. In the following quotation, Pastor Shellar remarks to Chris: "'There's this solid steel door, which looks like it was built right into the hill. It reads right on it, solid, steel door!' He said, as he raised his hand to emphasize the words, solid, steel and door." This quotation also illustrates Christopher's misuse of commas and capitalization. The novel also switches between past and present tense without reason. Even so, readers seeking a return to the malevolent blood-suckers of yore should sink their teeth into *The Existence*.

Jill Allen