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The Survivors

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It's impossible to read *The Survivors* without being reminded of another very popular series. It, too, featured characters who look young but are ancient, are prone to complex love triangles, and have strikingly odd skin. But enough about the kids from *Jersey Shore*. Meet Sadie Matthau, who has broken away from her family and their walled compound in the Montana mountains after 138 years of teenage boredom. The fourteen original Survivors were among twenty-six left for dead when they were accused of being witches in Salem, circa 1692. Hewing to their Puritan lifestyle even as they ceased to age, they formed a small community that was devastated at Sadie's departure. On the outside, she learns of a threat to her family and returns home both to face her past and warn them of impending danger.

The Survivors should be a slam-dunk with fans of the *Twilight* series; both feature complex romantic entanglements, plentiful violence and affluent, sexy vampires (because who would date them if they didn't wear couture?). But this series should also appeal to readers who dismissed Bella and Edward as merely an annoying couple. Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* is mentioned in the story, and it's comparable to *The Survivors* both for its international scope—Sadie is a globetrotter on a very dark mission—and an interest in the mythology and history of vampires that's not merely fang-deep.

Author Amanda Havard juggles these histories and myths artfully; what seems overwhelming at first (Vampires! Witches! Shapeshifters!) quickly develops into a plot that holds water and reader interest. Sadie embodies several extremes. She's still giddy with the experience of passing for human, playing high-fashion dress-up with her unlimited income, and beginning to explore relationships with a mix of curiosity and fear. But despite looking and acting like a woman on the verge of twenty, she also feels the strain of her 141 years, and would just as often like to find a loophole in the terms of her immortality. This makes room for some thoughtful rumination on life and death in between trips to buy Louboutin heels and Prada bags, and gives an exaggerated boost to the standard teen complaint about being sick of one's family. (After a century, you might be, too.) But then, she's got human and vampire suitors to deal with, and they're both rich and super-cute, so…maybe it's worth sticking around for a while. As the story continues, so will readers; *The Survivors* is a winner.
HEATHER SEGGEL (March 27, 2012)

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