

Two Bodies One Soul: Brothers

Alannah King

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Two Bodies One Soul: Brothers breaks with tropes of vampire stories, and does so with strength and vision.

Two Bodies One Soul: Brothers by Alannah King focuses on experimentation on vampires and the nature/nurture conundrum. The liberties it takes with vampire mythologies are intriguing, if they seem underexplored in a story that doesn't truly catch fire until late in the work.

Lukas and Tristen are vampires. They have been trapped for twenty years in bodies that remain nine years old. They are further trapped within the grounds of the Maverick vampire clan by Jak, the clan patriarch. As far as they know, Jak found them abandoned in the woods—but there is far more to their background than that.

Lukas seems mild-mannered until he loses control around the living; Tristen is more impetuous and mercurial. Different factions within the clan either care about the twins or loathe them, and each has its own agenda. Jak's determination to induct the brothers into the clan is both a means of protecting them and a way to keep them under control.

These are vain vampires, spending a lot of time in front of mirrors in an interesting, if recently overused, break from traditional vampire lore. Violence is grisly, explicit, and prolonged. Combined with instances of experimentation on Lukas and Tristen, this makes for powerful, if disturbing, movement forward. Portions of the story will ably fulfill any horror reader's desires.

There is a distracting amount of head-hopping within scenes. Pronouns are often used instead of names, and it is frequently confusing to determine whom they refer to. Words are consistently misspelled or misused, and grammatical mistakes abound, making for frustrating reading.

Lukas's frustration as a man trapped in a boy's body and Tristen's determination to learn the truth about their origins drive the narrative. Their conundrums are amplified by their circumstances, such as Lukas falling in love and wanting to be regarded as adult enough to be loved back. Similarly, Tristen's fair distrust of Jak's version of their past leads him to become not just interested in, but obsessed with, discovering an alternative account.

The final chapter is provocative and breathtaking, and the book ends on a cliffhanger. The catalyst and hook for future compelling developments in the twins' story are contained almost exclusively in that conclusion. Artwork supports and enhances the text in clever ways.

Two Bodies One Soul: Brothers breaks with tropes of vampire stories with strength and vision, leading to intriguing moments and leaving hope for future development.

EVA SCHEGULLA (October 30, 2017)

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