



Vampire Games: Boundaries

Mathias Kirk

Maccool (Sep 5, 2014)

Softcover \$13.99 (268pp)

978-0-615-94201-8

Fully developed characters and vampires in a blood-sucking Romanian regime make this an exciting tale.

Vampire Games: Boundaries, a novel by Mathias Kirk, is not the customary bloody fare typically associated with the subject of vampires. Although necks are nicked and blood drips into buckets, this is a mysterious, historically relevant book of trickery and sex, with an abundance of bureaucratic accuracy.

The book's title, though slightly misleading, hints at the exciting tale of life in Romanian border villages and forests during the late 1980s. No one in the area has ever seen a vampire, but tales of their rituals and murderous activities are prevalent. In *Vampire Games*, the poor blood-drinkers are only a ruse politicians and party leaders have created to control villagers...or so it seems.

Vampire Games puts a creative spin on the popular vampire genre. It is easy to read and full of historically accurate depictions of Romania as the author, according to the back cover, "observed first-hand the conditions depicted under the Ceausescu regime, including political detention in psychiatric hospitals." Nicolae Ceaușescu was the former Romanian dictator who was executed during the 1989 anti-communist revolution.

A few characters in *Vampire Games* are sympathetic; however, most of the main characters are believable yet pathological in their motivations, as in this example: "Soldiers brought plastic tubs and placed them under the unconscious men, tying plastic bibs over their faces. *Securitate* men with specially designed cutters began to snip the jugular veins of the two prisoners. It was Nekrasov's idea, these vampire games."

The author is skilled in character development. For instance, upon introduction, protagonist Dr. Stefan Wolf is humane, modest, and slightly conflicted, with a sweet, suitable girlfriend. Subtle hints as to his true character are given as he quickly moves through his life, and suddenly becomes amoral and devious. Characters are described with quick wit and juicy detail. A scene featuring the vampire, Boyar Szekely, reads:

His mouth felt dry and he tried to taste, but there was no taste. Something moved on his chest. It was a large rat. He snatched it with his right hand and held its neck with his left. Sitting upright on the bed, he bit into the flesh and began to suck the blood from the squirming creature. It gave a muffled squeal but then grew still. Gradually the taste returned, but the hunger remained.

The image on the front cover of *Vampire Games* does not fit the tone of the book. Blood red, though, is an appropriate color. The back cover, with a glossy black background and red type, is very difficult to read, and doesn't give book-browsers a true sense of the interesting subject inside.

Readers who enjoy books where vampires play an unusual role will surely enjoy *Vampire Games*.

JOAN E. PHELPS (November 26, 2014)

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