Clarion Review

Fantasy

Vampires Curse
David D. Taylor
AuthorHouse
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Three Stars (out of Five)

For readers who eagerly gulp down vampire stories, David D. Taylor's debut novel pumps refreshingly new blood into the genre. In *Vampires Curse*, Thomas Garrett finds his beloved girlfriend, Miranda, murdered, and signs suggest a vampire is the culprit. In his hunt for her killer, Thomas turns to his friends Mark, Anthony, Nicholas, Ryan, and Jason for assistance. They must act quickly, however, because Garrett is a prime suspect, more young ladies are dying, and rumors are circulating that vampires really do exist. Garrett and his buddies struggle to prove his innocence, catch a killer, and prepare themselves should those fabled creatures of the night appear in the human realm.

It is not a spoiler to reveal that the vampires are real, and that Taylor achieves a brilliant coup in their characterization: the bloodsuckers Garrett encounters have different viewpoints regarding their status as vampires. Some view their condition as damnation and will not take blood from the living unless necessary. Others view hunting and killing as a means to an end; they don't enjoy taking life, but they need to feed. Still others revel in the chase and the execution. In addition to the creatures' varying moral compasses, Taylor creates a fascinating hierarchy in which the humans that a vampire turns into bloodsuckers swear allegiance to him, protect him, and can be controlled by him.

Some of the humans in Taylor's story are hunters who slay vampires with a vast array of weapons. They take an oath to die rather than reveal to a vampire the name of the master hunter they serve. The battle between humans and vampires takes surprising turns, as the roles of hunter and hunted switch frequently. Vampires can also hypnotize humans to do their bidding, a well-known trope that Taylor uses to a squirm-inducing degree.

For all his vampiric innovations, Taylor's novel has insufficient scaffolding. The town in which the vampires reside is unnamed and has no distinguishing features, providing a minimal

sense of place. Some of the vampires' powers and restrictions are introduced when needed, rather than hinted at from the beginning. Garrett is the most nuanced of Taylor's characters; his friends are less distinguishable from one another. Miranda remains underdeveloped in Garrett's memory, which makes it difficult for readers to care about her the way he does. Additionally, as the novel goes on, spelling and punctuation mistakes become more frequent.

Nonetheless, readers looking to sink their teeth into some novel horror will be pleased with *Vampires Curse*.

Jill Allen