

Vlad Dracula: The Dragon Prince

Michael Augustyn

iUniverse (Apr 11, 2014)
Softcover \$18.95 (294pp)
978-1-938908-54-5

The Dracula we've never known was more than just a bloodsucker; Augustyn gives us the details.

To most, the name *Dracula* calls up old black-and-white horror movies, as well as the pop cultural artifacts they spawned, that feature this most famous vampire. But *Vlad Dracula: The Dragon Prince*, by Michael Augustyn, explores a different side of Vlad Dracula often unknown to many: Dracula as a historical figure, a prince, warlord, and a tactician in a brutal time of war.

Vlad Dracula of Wallachia (known also as the “Dragon Prince” to some), is shrewd and cold, even as the city of Wallachia is threatened with destruction from both Hungary and Turkey (under the reign of the Ottoman empire). The novel explores his reputation beyond just the “mad impaler” role by putting Dracula in his element, showing that he needed to use brutal force and cold calculation, even if it meant torture and even impalements, in order to send a message to those threatening him.

The novel is more than just gory battles and bloody scenes of torture. It provides context to the cruelty of the time, as well as Dracula’s cold actions in times of war. He is not portrayed as an unsympathetic person, but instead as someone pushed to the limit and under immense pressure to defend his province from not one but two hungry superpowers. And the threat is personal, as the novel reveals that Dracula’s own father was tortured and killed by the Hungarians. Every figure portrayed in *Vlad Dracula* is done with a sense of dignity and purpose, even though many of their actions happen to be cruel.

Vlad Dracula is clearly well researched, integrating elements from Dracula’s personal life and family, as well as other historical figures. It’s a novel that manages to be both educational and engaging. It takes the time to explain certain historical customs, such as the impalements, courting traditions, and the way certain empires worked at the time. The dialogue also seems to be well researched and well utilized. The story is rich with important background information and yet the novel manages never to isolate or bore the reader. Every bit of the backstory is carefully explained through dialogue and exposition woven throughout.

The pace is slow early in the novel as the prologue explains the history of Wallachia as well as that of the royal family. After that, the story picks up speed, and it’s hard to put down.

History buffs as well as fans of historical fiction will enjoy this book.

SONYA LOVY (July 14, 2014)

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