



Honor at Stake

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One is a heartless, merciless killer. The other is a vampire.

College freshman Amanda Colt knows few people and wants to know fewer still. She enjoys fencing and prefers facing a challenge every once in a while. She is beautiful, smart, and possibly the most interesting person on campus...and most people stop after the first adjective. Then she finds Marco Catalano in her fencing class. He is tall, attractive, and very intense. With a mind like a computer and manners of a medieval knight, he scares most people. Except Amanda.

They both have secrets, for they are both monsters. As they draw closer, they must find the line between how much they can trust each other, and how much they can care for each other. Each carries a secret that can destroy the other. They must come to grips with their personal drama soon, because a darkness is rising. Bodies are turning up all over New York, and an army of vampires is closing in on all sides. They have only one hope—each other.

Honor at Stake Details

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From Reader Review Honor at Stake for online ebook

Ava Armstrong says

To be honest, there have been too many bad vampire novels written and I was filled with apprehension about starting this one. However, my mind quickly shifted to Stephen King's Salem's Lot – and I found myself enthralled with the characters and storyline in Honor at Stake.

The first in a series, this novel nicely introduces Marco and Amanda and all of the characters who either are friends, family, or murder victims! It starts out as girl meets guy, but don't let that fool you. This is vampire meets – oh, I can't really say it. It would spoil the surprises that roll out in the plot.

Of interest in this story-- the vampire isn't necessarily horrible or forlorn. And, it's not a sappy story like Twilight. Declan Finn found a way to make me actually like a vampire. And, he tossed in moments of humanity and a bit of a love story.

But some of my favorite parts were classic Declan Finn, tongue planted firmly in cheek. This author knows how to make acerbic but witty observations with his characters.

After the sweet and sassy beginning, the action comes almost non-stop, punctuated with an occasional scene of seemingly normal domesticity. One of my favorite lines was when Amanda said, "I suck out the fillings from some of the chocolates."

If you like mystery, action, adventure, fantasy, and a lot of blood, this book is for you. If you enjoy reading martial arts scenes where "fighting is just three-dimensional chess", you will love this book. This is a unique mix of a thriller, mystery, and vamp romance rolled into one. Highly recommended.

Karen Boyce says

How talented does an author have to be to make a reader care for, cheer for, and emotionally invest in characters who are killers and vampires? I'd say extremely talented. Especially for a reader, like myself, who avoids sci-fi as if one could catch the spooky virus by touching the pages. I met Declan Finn at a book signing event. Just talking to him and his sister made me curious about the kind of book such an intelligent speaker could create. I offered to read one of Finn's books more as a challenge than a joy.

Opening the pages of his action packed work changed my expectations. I didn't expect the deep moral questions the book presented. I didn't expect the exploration of the philosophical that laced the pages. And I certainly didn't expect the supernatural and eternal battle between good and evil that kept this fast-paced work in my hands long after I should have gone to sleep. For while the fascinating plot is mesmerizing and unexpected in itself, the deeper layers of "the story between the lines" is eternal. Good vs. Evil always lies at the root of most tales. In the rare work, as in the Lord of the Ring trilogy, it deepens with unexpected and vulnerable characters called to fight for the right.

Spiritually, this kind of work reminds us that we, those who are called, are not all good. We are sinners with evil tendencies, who struggle against our own flaws. It is only through grace and the transformation that God's light provides that we can fight for the good. God does not cure us of our flaws. He does give us the grace to overcome them. That is what makes Finn's book so Catholic. This author shows through complex and unusual characters that goodness is a struggle against our all too human tendencies. Instead of the

blandly perfect characters who flood the pages of most Christian works, I found the deeply flawed characters in Finn's book strangely compelling.

Mystery, Romance, Vampires...Finn has kicked up the action in this thriller! It is a riveting novel where the action never stops. A real page-Turner! It kept this author up at night.

Jack says

I'm not a Sci Fi or fantasy reader. However, back in my younger days I enjoyed the occasional Anne Rice Vampire novel. A friend assured me that this book was NOT your typical Vampire novel. I have already called and thanked that friend.

Oh my goodness what an entertaining book. Amanda and Marco, complex characters with enough sexual tension to keep you guessing. Well-written scenes of pent up romantic confusion that burned the pages without being dirty or pornographic are a testament to really good writing.

Action scenes that flowed and sometimes made you feel like you were in the fight. A more realistic, yeah, I guess that fits, description of vampires. I really liked these vampires. Even with the bad ones I understood the thoughts and motivations.

Ancillary characters were not just thrown in to fill a void. Everyone was interesting and had a roll to play. Most of all, this book didn't coast. Not an ounce of filler. I blasted through it pretty quick. If I had any complaints, it was an abrupt stop. I don't blame the author. I blame myself for wanting to know what happens next. The way this is written, there will be a next.

I recommend this book to everyone. It's too much fun to be stuck in a genre.

Steve Schaper says

Fun, clean vampire novel with the best treatment of vampires (they don't sparkle) since George MacDonald's Lilith.

Jeff Miller says

I reread this once since the second book came out. This is still a lot of fun while adding something to the Vampire mythos with a somewhat plausible theological bent. Solid action and some really funny lines.

Previous Review follows:

A mostly enjoyable take on the vampire mythos. Certainly more old school than most modern incarnations. Still it has some interesting new twists philosophically such as St. Thomas Aquinas's speculations on Jesus's body post resurrection. Also introduced is kind of a D&D alignment which affect vampires. So there are evil vampires and saintly ones. Mostly this works plot wise and there is not the Buffy predestination towards evil character flaw.

Mostly I enjoyed the story and the characters and it plays out as a solid action novel with both a bent towards

humor and philosophy. There is a running gag mocking vampires from Twilight. The whole premise is interesting enough to want to see where the story goes in possible future novels.

Nissa Annakindt says

Vampire romance for people who think! How many vampire novels have you read that feature a discussion on philosophy, as it relates to vampires, with references to Thomas Aquinas?

The story is centered on Marco Catalano and Amanda Colt, who meet at Hudson University. One is a vampire, one isn't. And I suppose telling which is which would be a spoiler.

The story begins with a prologue, in which Marco and his then-girlfriend Lily Sparks, and the violent incident that made Lily into an ex-girlfriend. We then move on to the meeting of Marco and Amanda. Amanda, in spite of her name, is actually Russian, and of course she is beautiful. Sparks--- but not Lily Sparks--- fly.

We then encounter one of Declan Finn's patented Clever Chapter Titles: "Always Date Inside Your Species." Which is a way of raising the question, can a vampire date a human without someone becoming dinner?

Marco, as it turns out, is a feudal lord to a pair of street gangs--- the Dragons and Los Tigres--- which unlike most street gangs compete to see how many bad guys they can apprehend and turn over to the cops.

Marco introduces Amanda to his father, Dr. Richard Catalano, and invites her to spend Christmas with the family. Richard reports on the murder of a former member of one of Marco's pet gangs. It is one of a series of vampire murders.

There are some medically unusual things about the vampire killings and Richard sends samples to the CDC. Which action attracts a vampire to the hospital. Marco has to fight the vampire off with a martial art called Krav Maga.

Then there is the matter of the Vatican Ninjas, a vampire fighting force. You see, evidently the Church noticed the sudden demand for holy water and other blessed items from people fighting vampires, and so the existence of vampires is no mystery to them.

The vampire virus is revealed to be parasitic in nature--- kind of like vampires themselves. And then there is the late introduction of another character, Merle Kraft, and the useful revelation of how you can up with a 50 gallon drum of holy water when a vampire battle looms.

There is a major battle against the bad vampires, which by no means ends the war, since this book is going to have a sequel (Yay!)

FLAWS IN THE BOOK (tongue in cheek)

Marco says some rude stuff about Mormons and also does not care for the Twilight series (I liked that series well enough, myself, and some of my imaginary friends are Mormons.)

A priest-character expresses the opinion that 'no one' believes in Adam and Eve any more. Which is not accurate since the Catholic Catechism mentions Adam and Eve and the Fall of Man rather than rejecting them. But I contacted the author and he says he ran this concept past a couple of priests. So it is possible a priest would say this.

The Yiddish word 'schm-ck' (rhymes with duck) is used. It's a dirty word in Yiddish.

The Star Trek series is mentioned and the character who does so gets it WRONG! He mentions 'Kojo the Executioner' and later corrects it to 'Chronos the Executioner'. It's KODOS the Executioner! You know, like Kang and Kodos on the Simpsons.

A character mentions that Boston, as home of the Red Sox, is EVIL. I am a Red Sox fan and therefore know that this is wrong, and that there is a whole other baseball team that is EVIL, and their initials are: New York Yankees. I shall have to get revenge on the fictional character that said this.

CONCLUSION:

This book is an excellent read for anyone who loves vampire fiction. The love story does not get in the way of all the action. And there are no sex scenes or rants featuring foul language, so you don't have to hide the book from your kids or your parents.

"Sikh and ye shall find." (For some reason, some people groan at lines like that.)

There is a fair bit of violence mentioned, most either violence committed by evil vampires or violence defending against them.

And this novel represents a return to the vampire traditions of Bram Stoker's Dracula in the fact that the evil vampires, at least, are vulnerable to holy items.

I can't wait until the next book in the series comes out. If you read this book, you may feel the same way.

Adam Lane says

Going into this book, it had everything counting against it. I just do not read vampire books, and the market has been so oversaturated with them that one of my least favorite genres is constantly being shoved in my face. It took months of friends raving about this author to convince me to even give it a try.

The characters are solid and believable. The main heroine, Amanda, is one of my top two favorite female protagonists this year. Their relationship (sort of) is tense and done very well. Marco is an unstoppable machine of testosterone and rage. I would have liked to have seen him get taken down a peg or two here and there, he's just so smug, but the author brings out that believable personality in vivid ways. The humor sprinkled through the story is used well and had me really laughing. The pace is usually blistering, rushing through at high speed. Action is mostly non-stop.

I had only two issues with this book. One is a few spots that get really bogged down in characters just discussing info, sort of a half-disguised info dump. It happened a couple times and had me itching to get through. I'm happy to chalk that up to inexperience on the author's part. Everyone has to start somewhere.

The second issue was a character who pops up maybe halfway or more into the story. He gets introduced really late in the game and then we spend a bunch of time with him, without any answers about who he is or why he's there. He's cool and mysterious and all, but I kept wanting to get back to focusing on just the two core characters and their frustratingly tense pseudo-romance.

Other than those two mild issues, this book was great. It's the first of a series and the author has convinced me to come back. I especially want to know more about Amanda and learn about her past. I don't think there's a better compliment to a book than to say, "Give me that sequel!"

Kia says

The mind of author Declan Finn is a bizarre and fascinating place, so it is not surprising that this unique tale sprang from it. No sparkly-ass vampires here, just violent, evil bloodsuckers – the way vampires are supposed to be. But wait, what's this? A curvy, attractive, strawberry blond exception to the rule, Amanda proves you can be a good girl and still technically be a demon. Thus we have a devout Catholic who thrives as a vampire. (And I LOVE the way she gets her blood fix.)

Finn's physiospiritual (if I may coin a word for the occasion) explanation of vampirism is both rational and intellectually thrilling, and makes an excellent premise for a monumental battle of good vs. evil. The enormous cast includes gangs, cops, OC, mean ex-highschool girlfriends, and deadly Vatican warriors, all linked through co-protagonist Marco. He's a whole other ball of weird, trained to kill yet psychotically sane in a moral sense. Plus there are plenty of other singular characters interwoven into this epic story.

When you read Honor at Stake, a movie plays in your head. There is no other way to describe the action sequences. You can visualize each blow, kick, impalement, and explosion. Never a dull moment in the 'hood!

I came across some editing issues which cost the book a fraction of a star, but it still rounds up to 5. Pick up Honor at Stake for a scintillating story of poignant romance interspersed with beaucoup d'ass kickery.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Margaret Konecsni says

This is what happens when Buffy the Vampire Slayer gets the Declan Finn treatment! :)

Seriously, though, this is strong characters in a credible world and the most chaste love story I've read in a long time. Read it, love it, pass it on!

Stuart West says

Okay. Genius? Check. Expert at hand-to-hand combat? Check. Heavy into philosophy and religion? Check. Of course it's the newest Declan Finn epic, Honor At Stake. But whereas a roomful of characters like the aforementioned can be a grind at times as in Finn's earlier tale, A Pious Man, Finn balances his act nicely in his new book. The writing's great. The story's extremely compelling (although it does take about a quarter way through to get going). And the action...dayum. If you're an action aficionado, you won't be disappointed. Honestly, I can't think of a better writer who handles action so well right now. I've got minor quibbles with the book: "guido" might be considered offensive to some readers (even if used in describing mobsters); the

"will they or won't they" love story had me grinding my teeth (just get on with it!); and really, for a genius Marco should know that Wile E. Coyote is a mute cartoon character (Note to Marco: watch more Looney Tunes). But, these are all little nitpicks in the grand picture of things. Honor At Stake is a tremendous vampire action novel that never lets up with lots and lots of blistering, fully realized action sequences. I was exhausted after reading it. And I loved the Kraft brothers(?) characters. They should get their own book. Highly recommended.

Dawn Witzke says

I am such a sucker for a good romance and this one delivered a sweet clean romance that left me begging for the next book to come out. Declan creates a story that expertly balances action, suspense and romance that is less Twilight and more Christine Feehan's Carpathian series.

My favorite moments in the book

- 1) It's the first time that Marco and Amanda start to get past that whole "let's be friends" thing. It's so close that you're on the edge of your seat ready to cheer when they finally kiss. Instead, you're yelling noooooooo! (And maybe a little swearing.) Declan sets it up just like Lucy with the football and then just rips it away at the last minute. The only consolation is that you know eventually they are going to ditch the stupid "let's be friends" and live happily ever after...okay maybe not, but they'll at least get together eventually.
- 2) The bedroom scene is my favoriteist scene out of the whole book (Okay, maybe the 2nd favoriteist scene). Amanda shows up in Marco's bedroom to talk over some ideas. Most of the scene focuses on the main plot of the book, but ends with a very sweet conversation where they seem to be miscommunicating, but the reader can tell exactly what they're trying to say. These intimate moments are what makes reading romance oh so worth it.
- 3) My other favoriteist scene takes place on a rooftop with vampires and explosions. I do love a good explosion. Besides the explosions, I love the fact that the characters use the same tools that normal people use...youtube. It makes them more believable.

There are many many scenes throughout the book that I like, but I don't want to give away the whole book.

The Great

- Declan uses a good mix of show and tell to create a unique voice and awesome story.
- He does an impeccable job of balancing the action, suspense and romance. Usually, you get one with a side of the others, but not in this book. All three are served up in equal shares.
- The "rules" for vampires are consistent. Declan does stray from the original vampire lore, but not so much that it's not believable, unlike a book with sparkley vampires..
- There are Vatican ninjas involved and they have cool toys.
- The romantic scenes are very well done. Declan has a rare gift to be able to write romance scenes that women actually want to read. Men usually fall short in that area.
- There are hooks throughout that force you to keep reading because you just have to know what happens next.
- Did I mention there are ninjas? Oh, and fencing and krav maga and explosions and loads of other fun stuff.

The Not So Great

- A few places get heavy handed with the info dumps.
- The emotional continuity of Marco's character left me puzzled in places especially in regards to Lilly.
- The romance build up wasn't there. Either there was romance involved or none at all. It wasn't consistent throughout the book. Since the romantic scenes were done very well and it's not a full-fledged romance novel, I'll give it a pass.
- Some little typo/grammar issues that would be caught by a good line edit.
- I found it perfectly fine that Dad was nosing about Marco and Amanda's relationship, but I found it kind of weird that strangers/acquaintances were adding their input. I would find it more acceptable if the stranger/acquaintance had his advances rebuffed all the while Amanda was claiming to just be friends with Marco.

There you have it, my take on Honor At Stake.

Jim says

The plot of the book combines a mystery with a Blade style battle against vampires with a government agent that knows about the supernatural and fights it just like in everybody paranoiac's fantasy about conspiracies. Oh, and let's not forget about the Vatican's special forces unit. Just like the old Prego commercial, "It's in there!" There is a surprise around every corner and one or two other factions that I've intentionally left out. The crazy part is that the conspiracy isn't even led by the government. Trying to figure out how it all goes together is just part of the fun.

Finn's characters are both deep and flawed and that makes them entertaining. Two of them fall in love and won't admit it. One of them is truly a sadist and wants to hide it. Others have a weird sense of humor. His villains are truly villainous. There is always a sense that worse is about to happen and it usually does. Not all is revealed and even when things are revealed they open up more questions. I'm still trying to figure something out and it's bugging me. It seems to me that there has to be at least one more book coming and this has the feeling of an ongoing series that never ends.

As much as I enjoyed the characters in Honor at Stake there is one who I can't stand: Cliff Hanger makes an appearance. Don't get me wrong. I enjoyed the book and I'm glad to know that there are more coming but after all the freshness and goodness of this story Finn hit us with the most overdone cliche in the history of history. Cliff hangers drive me up a wall. Having said that much, I'm still looking forward to the next installment. I just hope it gets here soon after he dropped that on all of us.

Llaph | No Frill | No Shill says

This book was so very, very good. I love the characters, especially Marco and Amanda; they were both complex and strong characters, but had issues with emotions. The action scenes were impressive - I could clearly picture what was happening. Finn's take on vampires was unique in a genre that can feel flooded with the same kind of character, just with different names. The snark and humor made me laugh, the world-building and well-developed characters held me in awe. I would definitely recommend this book to someone who does not mind violence, a unique take on vampires, and a lot of action with a bit of awkward romance

thrown in to keep those kick-ass characters from looking too cruel.

Llaph

Reviewer for Coffee Time Romance & More

Official Review @ Coffee Time Romance & More

Alexandra says

Yuck. Right off the bat it's terrible.

Starts with a description of a couple characters, telling of course. Boring and bad writing. Lily is walking with her "prim and proper" date, and thinks a "nice, private alley" "looked just perfect for getting the rest of the evening started." Ewww. Is she a street prostitute? Or maybe just doesn't think very highly of herself. Perhaps she's just not very bright.

Sorry, no. Girls walking down the street with their "clean cut" boyfriends don't typically look to dark alleys on the street when they want a bit of romance.

The rest of the one page Prologue is just not well written, IMO. Chapter 1 starts off with another female POV character. Unfortunately I can already tell this author shouldn't be writing females as POV characters.

I rolled my eyes so many times over the first few pages I lost track. My advice, give this one a skip.

Anla Gisclair-Etheridge says

not sure if I was reading the sam ebook that everyone else read... :(This book had such good relieves on good reads and I was shocked by how bad I thought it was. The writing style was choppy and the plot didn't flow and I found myself constantly with unanswered questions. I just could power through. I didn't like the characters and the dialogue was odd and somewhat juvenile writing class fiction. I guess this book just isn't my thing.
