



## **Blood & Spirits**

*Dennis Sharpe*

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Small-town life can be hard for a dead girl...

For Veronica Fischer the night to night life of a bloodsucking madam in Middle America is tough enough before she adopts Rachel Gregory, an eight year old ghost.

After her house is set on fire, and Rachel disappears, all signs point to foul play. When she finds herself with a hit out on her unlife, and warrants for her arrest, it becomes clear she's going to need help.

Now she has to contend with horny zombies, violent spirits, and murderous grave robbers if she's ever going to find Rachel and discover the awful truth of the coming storm.

A raucous ride through the dangerous lives of the lecherous undead.

## **Blood & Spirits Details**

Date : Published April 21st 2011 by Createspace Independent Publishing Platform (first published April 1st 2011)

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Author : Dennis Sharpe

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# From Reader Review Blood & Spirits for online ebook

## Garrett Quaid says

The coming storm trilogy, in book one, looks to be the perfect storm. It has vampires, spirits of all varieties, emotion, depth, and richly unique visual elements.

Blood & Spirits takes us on a whirlwind ride through Veronica, or “V’s”, life as a small town, Middle American madam who happens to be a “Bloodsucker”.

The Vampire/Paranormal genre is approached from a direction I’ve not seen a lot of in the more modern urban fantasy releases. The flavor was as refreshing, as the characters were vivid. The pace was fast, and the story engrossing.

All in all I must say that I’m left with a serious desire to read the next book in this series if only to know where the lives of these characters can possibly go next.

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## Roger says

Basic review: This is not the great american novel. People will not be celebrating how it made humanity better as a whole. What it is is a good ride into the world of a middle-american madam with some peculiar habits and some strange friends...and stranger enemies. Good book, will read it again! Looking forward to the next one in the series!

scroll down for larger review:

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Do your vampires sparkle? Mine don't. Blood & Spirits does not contain anything that sparkles. The world around the heroine is very much like real life in that the people around you are not able to be painted black and white, and the situations that occur don't have solutions immediately apparent to the characters involved. I feel that Dennis has written his characters to be as human as they can be given the circumstances. In his world there are no paladins who fight the good fight for the sake of right. People do what they have to to survive, and most of the time that means being the biggest badass, or at least working for him. I like the way love is addressed, but not obsessive. He built a woman who is looking to protect what she has and is willing to do anything (oh yeah, ANYTHING) to do what she thinks is right, even if its not. Blood & Spirits is enough emotion to make you like her, enough violence to make you love her, and enough shock to make you NEVER wish you were her..

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## Kerry says

I can't stand vampires. I do not know how I got dragged into reading this book. But it doesn't matter, I am flucking glad I did as Sharpe paints a hilarious, dark world that defies stereotype. Who doesn't like Brothels? Or Veronica, for that matter? I have a nasty habit of falling in love with female characters and Veronica, that headstrong shedevel, is another notch on the imaginary bedpost for me. It's kind of strange when you think about it that a man wrote this, so my love may be skewed but whatever. Vamps be damned, this was fast-paced, fun ride and Sharpe has given me new respect and admiration for self-published authors. I hope my own books end up being as well-received and well-written as his. Twilight fans need not apply.

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## **Patricia says**

I picked this book up for the author, despite the fact that it was listed as horror. The tags said it was dark urban fantasy, and I'm just starting to get into that recently. I've found that after a while it becomes difficult to find books in the genre that are original in any way, but I thought the horror angle might make for a good twist.

I expected it to be average at best, even though I like other works by the author, but it wasn't. The world, the characters, the creatures, and even the take on vampires is so refreshingly different that I was drawn in and led on a journey that was as fast paced as it was enthralling.

I don't want to give spoilers, so I'll just say that the main character is tough but still feminine, the supporting characters are real and have a depth to them, and the setting is vivid. I did find the Garrett character a little too good to be true, but this is just book one of the series, so I'll have to see where he goes from here.

I'd definitely recommend this book to anyone. I'm looking forward to seeing what book two has in store.

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## **Dark Faerie Tales says**

Review Courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: Down and dirty first person narrative that follows a “madam” vampire and her troubles.

Opening Sentence: I’m told that it’s an oddity that I still sleep.

The Review:

In a market flooded with vampire stories, I was not expecting much from debut author, Dennis Sharpe. I have never been so happy to be wrong. Blood & Spirits, the first book in The Coming Storm series, is as gritty as it is captivating. I am also pleasantly surprised at how well a man portrays a realistic woman’s point of view. Very few can obtain such insight into the opposite sex. I know that I have NO idea what guys are thinking, just ask my husband. Anything I found lacking or obtuse will most certainly be touched upon in the next two books. That is part of the reason this book catches my attention: we learn along with V and her companions in a first-person perspective.

Veronica “V” Fischer is a madam in a brothel house in Middle America. If you don’t know what a “madam” is, then this book might be a little too risqué for you. Just remember, I warned you. She has employees, a go-

to man, and spirits that she relies on to take care of day to day affairs. She is also a vampire. Found by her sire, Jules, at a young age, V has always used her “assets” to her advantage. She is smart, and runs her house like the business it is. Now there is someone out there trying to tear down all that V has built up, one brick at a time. Rachel, an eight year old ghost that V has grown attached to, goes missing. “Patrons” of her establishment are telling police that they are being blackmailed by her. Someone keeps trying to blow up her brothel house. Can’t she catch a break here? The more that happens, the more we see V lose her cool façade. Anyone, vampire or human, can only take so much in so little time. I do so appreciate a character that responds in a more realistic way. V is then forced to admit she is in over her head and calls on her sire for help.

Jules is an old vampire. He is V’s “father figure” and has long ago left her to fend for herself. Jules is truly like a dad in this novel. I mean, what adult do you know wants to admit to needing their parents to bail them out of trouble? No one, that’s who. He is strong and invincible in V’s eyes. So surely anything that’s going on here he can fix, right?

The love interest here is an unknown vampire named Garrett. He blows into town just when things are getting out of control and saves V from some “unquiet” spirits that are attacking her. But is his help as altruistic as he wants us to believe? V is certain that whoever is trying to kill her must be one of her own kind, a vampire. So is this sexy new player on the field a good guy or a bad guy? Can V truly resist him either way?

Frank, V’s right hand man, is an ex-cop. He relies on his old contacts on the force to investigate things for V. Frank stays with V, not only because she is his boss, but also his friend. His ex-partner, David Lewis, refuses to understand why he would leave the force and go work for someone they both used to think of as a “bad guy.” There is a lot of sexual tension between the two that is never fully addressed. I enjoy the by-play though. Dave helps Frank track whoever is causing problems for V and her girls, even though he would rather see V behind bars instead. The loyalty Dave shows toward Frank is commendable, and the fact that he refuses to give up on his old partner is comforting. I believe everyone should have someone looking out for their best interests, whether you want them to or not. Dave’s feelings are evident in everything he does. Will these two work it out? Will they get together, or not? Will the difficulties V is having be the final straw that breaks this long time friendship? Or will it turn into the catalyst that changes their relationship forever?

One of my favorite characters to hate in this story is Paco, the zombie. Nasty looking: inside and out. The maggots hinted at below his skin are a perfect metaphor for the rot in his soul. He is a magic user and holds sway over the spirits around him. Being one of the less desirables of the little town of Pekin, few choose to go to Paco for assistance. Unfortunately, V is left with little choice if she is going to find out what is going on in the spirit world. How can she help those ghosts that mean so much to her without a guide? Will he help her or use her toward his own advantage? I mean, what’s in it for him? Will she ever get the smell of him out of her car?

V is a wonderful anti-hero; full of vulnerability and cunning, street smarts mixed in with naiveté. I have grown to adore her and her lackadaisical attitude shining in at the oddest of moments. A diamond in the ruff, *Blood & Spirits* exceeds many of my expectations from a self-published work. I will be looking forward to future Dennis Sharpe books.

Notable Scene:

I can see the shadows have fled, but I’m not alone. There he is, standing in the center of the room outlined in red from the light of the emergency exit signs. How did he get here so fast? Why didn’t I sense his presence?

How did he even know I was in trouble? Nothing is making any sense. I stare, trying to wrap my mind around what I'm seeing, and then I gasp audibly, drawing attention to myself.

His head snaps in my direction, and he takes a defensive posture. His head cocks slightly to the side and I know his face, and the motion of what he's doing. I've been through it before, he's reading me.

"Jules?" So small, my voice is hardly more than a squeak.

"Who?"

The Coming Storm Trilogy:

1. Blood & Spirits

2. Distant Thunder

FTC Advisory: The author provided me with a copy of Blood & Spirits. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review. I only get paid in hugs and kisses from my little boys.

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## **Kelli McCracken says**

What do you get when you mix a vampire madam, wicked spirits, and a zombie with a lust for power? Blood & Spirits.

Veronica, better known as V to those closest to her, is a vampire, but not your ordinary vampire. This chick is tough as nails with a heart of gold for those she holds near and dear. Did I mention she runs a brothel?

The storyline is through V's POV. It spins a tale of a woman who is meeting with her vampire maker after years of being apart from him. She's dreading the reconnection but only because she has to reach out to him for help.

V's a strong female character, who is self-reliant. Unfortunately, a series of events sends her life spinning out of control, and those she loves become endangered and for a few, worse things happen.

The vampire world doesn't usually mix with the spirit world, but V befriends a spirit by the name of Lucy. This spirit eventually seeks V out to care for a younger spirit, Rachel, who V comes to adore and think of as her own child.

When unknown forces kidnap Rachel, V does everything in her power to find her, but 'unquiet' spirits refuse to make things easy. V must seek the help of those she would rather not count on, including a zombie who is not only perverse, but has a strange fetish with the local sewage drains.

Unfortunately, V cannot count on her own kind, as they seem to despise her. The vampire lineage basis for this story is pure bloods. Most vampires are family and they frown upon making another who is not family. The local vamp clan treats V like the plague and only tolerates her out of loyalty to her maker.

Luckily, V has a loyal staff that is not only her self-proclaimed family; they do whatever they can to help her through any crisis. She also meets another of her kind who isn't like the local clan. In fact, sparks begin to fly.

Of course, nothing is ever what it seems. This new vampire has secrets of his own. Will his presence in town help or hinder V? Well, you'll have to read the story to find out for yourself.

I can honestly say I enjoyed Blood & Spirits. Once I began reading this unique story, it became hard to put it down. Every free moment I found, my eyes were back on this book until I finished it. It is the first book in a series and I can't wait to get my hands on the next one.

The romantic elements in this book do not go overboard. The author keeps it light. I'm all for the romance, so I hope the author will delve a little more in this direction with the next book.

If you enjoy vampire literature, be sure to check out Blood & Spirits.

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### **Kristen says**

I'm a first time book reviewer. I guess I should start by saying that I normally read urban fantasy and paranormal romance. I heard about this book on goodreads listopia lists. I bought this book from amazon.com, based on the reviews I read here. I got it and ended up staying awake until after three in the morning finishing it.

I was hooked from the first chapter. It was easy to read, moved at a fast pace, had an exciting plot, and really believable characters I could sink into. It's nice to read a tough vampire chick with a heart, and conflicting emotions.

The books starts with Veronica, the main character going to pick up the one who "made" her from the airport because she's gotten herself in some serious trouble. From there the story tells us, as she tells him, how she got in the mess. We get to see the small town she lives in and all the people she cares for. I've never seen vampires that were structured like these, or an explanation of vampirism quite like this one.

This author and this new series both seem wonderful. I can't wait to get book two. I highly recommend this book. If you like Jim Butcher, Kelley Armstrong or Chloe Neill, then you will most definitely love this.

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### **Sammie Spencer says**

I am blown away by how good this book was! V, the main character, is a vampire and quite a powerful woman...in many different ways. ;-) However, there was a vulnerability about her that I haven't seen with many vamp books. This one is about so much more than vampires. I love the 'family' she has created and the

loyalty that exists.

This book was a roller coaster ride – one moment I was cringing in disgust, the next moment I was laughing out loud and then the next moment I was tearing up. Several times while I was reading it, I wanted to stop and copy quotes because they were hilarious or priceless. The book is gritty, raw, very well written...it's like a Stephen King/Anne Rice cocktail. One of the things I loved most about this book is that Dennis Sharpe writes fearlessly. Maybe that's what reminds me so much of Stephen King...he writes those scenes that you can't believe came from a human's mind, but you know the book wouldn't be nearly as good without them.

Absolutely one of the best books I've read, and I know that certain parts of this book will stick with me for a long time.

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### **Tammy says**

It's rare when two of the things you've wished for come together in one book. Not only am I thrilled that Dennis Sharpe has written a book of fiction but that he has written one that is so truly unique for this, my favorite, genre. I have read all three of his poetry books and fell in love with his arresting style and have so hoped he would venture into fiction. *Blood & Spirits* possesses the same lyrical phrasing as his previous work but this time we are taken on a dark journey with Veronica Fischer.

I must say that I love Veronica Fischer! Kudos to Mr. Sharpe for breathing life into such an amazingly strong, funny, independent, and still very feminine female character. This book is a must read for anyone who has been a little jaded or turned off by the stereotypical vampire tale and would love to experience a fresh and intelligent approach to the genre. You think you know where it's going but you are SO WRONG! *Blood & Spirits* has really given me a new appreciation for character development as each person we encounter is a rich tapestry of the world and circumstances they have endured. You will laugh, cringe, and perhaps even shed a tear but more importantly you will be captivated by Veronica, Sunny, and Paco and, like me, salivating for the next book in the series! I HIGHLY recommend this book!!

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### **Lenore Wolfe says**

#### **Blood and Spirits**

*Blood and Spirits* is about vampire who runs a house of 12 girls she takes care of, each who have their own individual powers and abilities. She also watches over a little girl who was murdered, is now a ghost and has disappeared. She has to deal with her hunger, a determination to find the little girl, and one heck of a mystery.

This book reads like a detective novel, and I quite enjoyed it. It's fast paced, with the heroine getting herself into one hairy situation after another. I gave it five stars.

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## **Tishia (Paperback Opinion) says**

First of all, I have to say I'm surprised that a male author wrote this book from a woman's point of view, and did it well! Veronica, the lead in this story, is a vampire who runs a brothel. She is a strong, likeable character that gets herself into a lot of trouble. She basically adopts an 8 year old ghost named Rachel, whom she becomes really close to. When Rachel is taken, Veronica is determined to get to the bottom of it. Veronica is desperate and willing to do anything for answers, which include some cringe-worthy moments. Veronica is a very well written character, and you can feel the emotions she goes through in this book.

Garrett enters the story and tries to help Veronica get things sorted out. He seems like the perfect guy for her, but I feel like he's hiding something. Actually, my favorite character is Frank. Apparently, he is gay but I couldn't help but want to see him and Veronica together. He does so much for her and I feel that he is in love with her, but I may not be reading into that quite right.

The explanation of vampires in this book is different from other books. This is a very original, fast paced story. There is action all the way through. If you like zombies, vampires, and spirits - with a little bit of gore, then you will probably enjoy this book. The only thing that I wanted more of is romance. Of course, that's just a personal preference - I'm a sucker for romance. The sex scene in this story is probably the most disturbing one I've ever read, lol... Now that I've piqued your interest - go get this book and see what I mean!

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## **Jen O says**

I was completely amazed by Veronica. A Vampire with real heart, soul, emotions, desires, and fears. Not larger than life immortal kinds of things, but real down to earth things that almost any girl could relate to. She wants to protect what's hers, and those she cares about, even if she wishes from time to time she didn't care so much.

I can't wait to see where the second book in this series is going to lead V, but I hope we get to see more of her relationship with Garrett. I felt like there just wasn't enough there in this book. They need more time together, and we need to know more about him.

An awesome book. Anyone who likes Paranormal fiction with good plot, and real punch, should check this out.

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## **Melanie Marsh says**

Blood and Spirits turned out to be a pleasant surprise. I expected it to be entertaining, as I do any book I read, but I didn't necessarily expect it to blow me away. But it totally did! I love it when I get more than I expected instead of less!

There are so many great things about this book that I'm having trouble deciding where to start. So I'll start at the beginning. The cover of this book is totally bad ass. I absolutely love it. I know that we aren't supposed to judge a book by its cover, but whom are we kidding really? We both know we are more likely to read a book with a cool cover than a book without one.

Veronica is a vampire Madam. As in prostitutes. As in she runs a brothel. And she's a vampire. She sounds SMOKING hot, as I think vampires should. Apparently, she has some enemies and such, so this book focuses on one of those enemies and the nastiness they are trying to get away with.

Blood and Spirits isn't a one-dimensional book, by any means. It has multiple layers, and different concepts throughout the book and really keeps you guessing as to what is going to come next. There are multiple conflicts, peaks, and resolutions so the story continues through several well set scenarios. I like how the author sets everything up for explanation and back story throughout the book. There is a variety of paranormal elements and species to give the story a more complex world in which Veronica and friends reside.

There is one thing with which I had a small problem. At one point Veronica is telling the story of what has happened to cause her to feel the need to involve Julius, her maker. She is telling it to him so that he can "see" her memories. This goes on for quite a while so at some point, I realized that I forgot what going on and the role Julius was playing. I asked myself, "Why did she go pick him up? Where is he now?" At that point, I remembered what was going on, but for a minute, I was confused.

I'm not going to lie, at first, I was surprised that this book was written by a man. I had actually forgotten who wrote it while I was reading it, as that's not necessarily something I think about. For whatever reason, in my head, I had assumed Blood and Spirits was written by a woman. When I realized Dennis Sharpe wrote it, who, I am under the impression, is NOT a woman, I was surprised until I started to think more about it. He pulled off something many men cannot. He wrote a book from a female's perspective and didn't completely screw it up. His action scenes were well thought out and planned. Veronica kicks ass all over the place and she looks good doing it. I'm pretty sure it's a fantasy for some men to see a super hot chick kicking ass.

Regardless of the author's sex, this was a great book. There was action, emotion, mystery, multiple paranormal and horror-esq elements that all came together to create a wonderful book that I will recommend to anyone who likes female Vampires who can kick the crap out of people both physically AND mentally! I highly recommend this book to all vampire lovers out there.

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## **Carriennejones says**

Dennis Sharpe's first novel, Blood and Spirits, completely wowed me. Blood and Spirits is the first book in the coming series of "dark, urban" vampire stories and promises a wild unfolding storm.

In this book we are introduced to Veronica Fischer—a madam, a vampire, and a friend of spirits, who has to endure the sick, disturbing, and disgusting whims of a flesh-rotting, self-aware zombie.

Sharpe's story takes some unexpected turns. Some will make you gasp, some will make you laugh, and some may make you cry, but none will disappoint.

Veronica tells most of the story in first person in her hometown of Pekin. Her voice cuts with sarcasm and you can feel her frustration, despair, fear, and elation right along with her. She has brought together a team of vampires, spirits, and "breathers" that she both relies on and loves. And, through her story, I grew to love them too—especially the dark humored Frank and the sweet and naïve Julie.

This book has everything packed into it: dark humor, sarcasm, fear, love, loss, disgust that will make you need a shower, and dizzying fight scenes, but Sharpe doesn't lose focus, the characters stay true, and when this story is over, you're left wondering: What is this storm bringing on Pekin?

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### **Ashley - The Bookish Brunette says**

Um did you read that synopsis? A vampire madam , ghosts, and \*gasp\* (my fav) ZOMBIES! Sounds super awesome right?

Right from the get go, I freaking LOVED Veronica. She's sharp, funny and has a totally killer attitude... and she's a madam! Is it crazy strange that I loved this little idiosyncrasy about her? Maybe so.

I HAVE to say that I am absolutely astonished that a man wrote this book, and I don't mean that in a bad way at all! Sharpe made Veronica undeniably real. I've read awesome books written by men featuring male protagonists and I've read amazing YA books by men featuring adolescent chicks... but never have I read a book written by a man featuring such a well-written adult woman.

That being said, there is a freakishly shocking (and dare I say gross) sex scene in chapter 9... and you guys know me- I like fictional sex of any kind! I'm not all that particular about it and I'm generally fairly difficult to catch off guard... but whoa.

After the 'zombie sex' I was completely ready to recant my theory about his writing women so well- because no woman would do that. THEN, I thought about it for awhile, and realized this Sharpe guy is a freaking genius! Because ONLY a woman would do that to get her child back. Well played!

A few words of caution: Blood & Spirits is pretty gory and graphic sometimes.

4.5 Stars and lacking the additional .5 only because I would've liked to see more relationship building with Veronica and Garrett. They have this totally intense relationship with nothing backing it, so I was convinced he was a bad guy throughout the entire thing!

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### **Mireille Chester says**

A breath of fresh air... That's what I thought when I finished the last sentence of this book. Blood & Spirits had all the great elements of strange; vampires, ghosts, spirits, zombies, but all of them weren't completely typical, which I loved. Add in some magic, and I'm hooked for life.

The story line was great; I wanted to keep reading to see what the next twist was going to be. It was funny, scary, and emotional. The characters were fantastic. V is great. She's loyal, she's caring, and she's a vengeful bitch.

I've seen a few comments about the sex scene, so I'll throw my two cents in... Disturbing. That's the only word I can think of. Though not 'disturbing' as in, "what the hell was he thinking when he wrote this"; 'disturbing' as in I could feel how completely repulsed V was and from that moment on, I got what she was

feeling toward him. I thought the scene fit and it was a great way to show those emotions.

I can't wait to see what's in store for V and company in the next book of 'The Coming Storm' series. I am definitely giving this book 5 stars.

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### **Christoph Fischer says**

"Blood & Spirits" by Dennis Sharpe is the first in The Coming Storm series and was recommended to me by a friend. I used to like True Blood but for some time now I have found the market for Vampire stories oversaturated and did not expect too much from the book.

I was pleasantly surprised when from the first few pages the quality of style and content showed a confident and purpose-driven manner of writing. A short prologue introduced the background of the main character with great sensitivity, something which I also often find over-done or over-dramatic. Here it sets the scene in an understated way.

Forward to the present the little child is now a grown up Vampire who sells sex so she can feed on the blood of her clients. Veronica Fischer (great name btw) is an odd character with many quirks that is not your usual heroine of a vampire story and I am grateful for that. She has taken an eight year old ghost under her wing who disappears after Veronica's house is set on fire. It becomes transparent that someone out there is targeting her and trying to set her up. Together with some friends, a love interest, who is also a Vampire, and her protector she sets out to get the girls back, fighting a malicious and vile Zombie and his associates.

The side characters are just as lively and colourful as Veronica, in that respect the book did remind me of True Blood, the TV series that I loved because the characters were playing with stereotypes but remained rather unique. I loved to hate the Zombie as much as I enjoyed seeing Veronica mess things up here and there and then succeed at other times.

The overall picture and the title of the trilogy refers to 'unquiet' activity of minions associated with Veronica's enemies.

The story has a lot of action going and is never dull. One of the things I liked most about the book was the skilful dialogue which sounded lifelike but never too simple.

Vampire stories aren't for everyone but as a casual visitor to the genre I would recommend this series to anyone who is looking for a good helping of the genre.

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### **Jessica at Book Sake says**

I loved this book! I'm a sucker for any book with vampires (except the sparkly kind), but this was exceptional. Admittedly, it did take a few chapters to really catch my interest, but once it did, I couldn't put this book down. The characters are very well-written and surprisingly funny. My favorite character has to be Veronica, a strong-willed vampire madam with a sarcastic sense of humor – how can she not be completely awesome, right? Right.

Sharpe's writing is refreshing. I was so astonished that a man could write such a dynamic female main character that I repeatedly checked the cover to make sure Dennis wasn't a Denise. I can't wait to read the next book in the trilogy.

Reviewed by Brittany for Book Sake. <http://booksake.blogspot.com>

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## **Maya says**

I was warned that this book would be gritty and only one scene really was (but it's entirely possible that this is because I've been desensitized by violent video games and modern TV or I'm just a heartless person but either way) and I will be honest and say that it unsettled my stomach.

The premise of the story is very good. I won't give a summary (that's what the Goodreads product summary is for) but it's an unconventional vampire book with a few ghosts, a legion of demons, a sort-of zombie sorcerer thing and a whore house. In that respect, I liked the book a lot.

The writing itself was pretty good until about halfway through when the plot started unraveling and suddenly the twists were being told to the reader instead of being shown and/or figured out. Maybe the author rushed it, I don't know, but I was disappointed in the decline of the story and lost a lot of interest after that. I kept going to see how it would end and I have to admit that I was satisfied with the conclusion. It was neither overly sappy nor was it overwhelmingly bleak. It was an appropriate mix of the two (sort of) so on that count, I have no complaints. The world building was fairly solid although I would have liked more background information into vampire society and the ghosts, but since this is just one book in a proposed series, then more will be explained in the future. I liked the characters, particularly Julie and Frank, and grew quite attached to both, so kudos on the characterization.

The only real downside was the writing after the halfway point. Maybe the author was losing steam? I don't know, but I was disappointed. However, I have high hopes for the sequel so I'll be sure to check it out.

All in all, if you like gritty urban fantasy stories with a no-holds-barred heroine, you'll like this book.

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## **Melinda says**

I'm going to work damn hard to have no spoilers here :).

I enjoyed this book. It is overall a strong start to what looks to be a very interesting series. It took me a couple chapters to really get into the book, but then when the ball got rolling it REALLY moves fast. I am enjoying the world so far, dark urban fantasy with a rich paranormal mythos that really feels fresh. Not a lot of romance, but I'm more than ok with that. I'm much more in it for the paranormal. And as a horror fan the gore also fits in nicely, but the more squeamish might find a few parts of the story uncomfortable. The vampires feel dark and real, with emotions and violence and gore, and I loved it. And... IT ENDS. There is definitely more story to read, but there is a conclusion here that is satisfying, and I appreciate that. I'm not the biggest fan of cliffhangers.

Veronica is a strong woman and competent madam, but her vulnerability and inexperience shine as she gets

put through the ringer again and again. I am excited to watch her grow and hope she can blossom into the strong female lead that is hinted at here. Getting to watch her fail and have to ask for help made her feel realistic and really keeps the story moving, as does seeing the lengths she will go to for the family that has grown up around her. And her relationship with Jules is fabulous.

But I have to say, she wasn't my favorite character. I fell in love with Lucy from her first appearance. She doesn't feature prominently in this book, but she is just SUCH an interesting character that I just loved every scene she was in. Her grace and power shine through the words and she plays like a movie in my mind. VERY cool.

Garrett... I know others have fallen in love with him, but as a regular paranormal reader, he's just too suspicious for me to love him. He's TOO perfect. Time will tell...

Frank is FABULOUS in every sense of the word, and he really shines when he can. I'm not a huge fan of Lewis, but he came off as a bit two dimensional to me. I adore Jules, his strength and harsh reality mixed with his obvious affection for V. Rachel is interesting, but I didn't really get to know her well since she's gone most of the book ;). I love that the house girls have different personalities and I do adore Julie, she really knows where she stands and isn't afraid to do what she has to to keep the life she loves.

I could go on and on, but really you should check this out yourself. If you like vampires, ghosts and dark fantasy, and horny zombies don't scare you off, I think you'll find this an engaging read, and it will whet your appetite for more. I know I'm eagerly awaiting book 2.

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