



Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book I: Yasamin

J. Matthew Saunders

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Buda, Ottoman Hungary, 1599: Yasamin, the naïve daughter of an Ottoman bureaucrat, finds herself trapped in an arranged marriage to the son of the powerful governor of Buda. She is unprepared for the gossip and scheming rampant in the palace but realizes she faces more than petty jealousies when someone tries to drown her in the baths on the day before her wedding. An unearthly menace lurks in the palace corridors, and the one person able to protect Yasamin is a soldier named Iskander, who seems to appear whenever she needs him. Charming and confident, he is nothing like her new husband, but trusting either of them could be a deadly mistake. Berlin, Germany, 1999: Adam Mire, an American professor of history, discovers a worn, marked-up copy of Dracula. The clues within its pages send him on a journey across the stark landscape of Eastern Europe, searching for a medallion that once belonged to Dracula himself. But a killer hounds Adam's footsteps, and each new clue he uncovers brings him closer to a beguiling, raven-haired woman named Yasamin Ashrafi, who might be the first of Dracula's legendary Brides. Adam has an agenda of his own, however, a quest more personal than anyone knows. One misstep, and his haunted past could lead to death from a blade in his back ... or from Yasamin's fatal embrace.

Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book I: Yasamin Details

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From Reader Review *Daughters of Shadow and Blood* - Book I: Yasamin for online ebook

Carrie Slager says

[Full disclosure: I requested and received a free ebook through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.]

The first thing you really need to know about this first book in the *Daughters of Shadow and Blood* series is that it's told in three different points of view. We have the point of view of Yasamin from when she was human, the present day with Adam Mire and the past with Adam Mire as he tried to unravel the mystery that is Dracula and his brides. I personally loved Yasamin's point of view the most because I love history but Adam's point of view was really just as good in a lot of aspects (particularly during his banter with Yasamin).

The thing that really stood out to me in this book is that Saunders is a master of plot pacing as well as suspense. Sometimes the point of view shifts can be a little disjointed or disconcerting (in some cases quite disconcerting) but in each little chapter there's that undercurrent of tension as we move closer and closer to the end of the story and the end of Adam's time talking to Yasamin. Will she decide to let him live if she enjoys his tale enough or will she kill him anyway because he knows too much? Not only that, we want to know what happens within each story: how Yasamin came to know the man known as Dracula and how Adam Mire stumbled across the truth about Dracula and found Yasamin. And of course, what does Dracula himself think of all this? I don't want to give too much away but let's just say he's not missing from the face of the earth like everyone seems to think he is.

Both main characters were fascinating for different reasons. Yasamin is fascinating not only because of her association with Dracula but because she was a remarkable young woman when she was still human. She grew up in the provinces and so never really was prepared for the secluded nature of the royal harem when she marries the oldest son of Buda's governor. When she realizes she isn't really attracted to her husband and that she'd really rather have his little brother, things definitely get interesting. Yasamin stays true to herself without and when she develops a dangerous attraction to the mysterious Iskander, things start to spiral out of control. Adam Mire is fascinating because he's an historian with a pretty exciting past. After his best friend died he tries to search out clues hidden in his friend's books and other documents to see what he was looking for and what he died for. In the process, Adam encounters more than he'd bargained for but he's not as unprepared as Yasamin would like to think.

Of course when you have fantasy colliding with history there are going to be some liberties taken with the facts but Saunders does a really good job of mixing the two together to create a great story. I loved how he meticulously researched the Ottoman Empire and gave little details of everyday life to make Yasamin's story all the more authentic. And he mixes in parts of the Dracula legend everyone will recognize while adding in some other parts to make it more of his own. (I particularly liked the Michael the Brave and Iskander connection.) If you're a fan of the Dracula legend or just vampires in general I think *Daughters of Shadow and Blood: Yasamin* is at least worth checking out. Who knows? Maybe by the time you finish the book you'll be as eager as I am for the sequel.

I give this book 4/5 stars.

Kathrin says

I received a free copy of this book through Netgalley.

“Daughters of Shadow and Blood – Book 1” is a story set in many times and regions following an American scholar called Adam Mire who, after a long search, meets Yasamin. Yasamin was once married to an Ottoman bureaucrat and tells her own story of love and loss.

The book caught my attention because I love vampire stories. Over the years I learned that there are good and bad ones as well as a lot of repetition. Being original is difficult if there’s such a well-known topic as vampires involved. This book was certainly one of the better ones and although it was a little confusing and overwhelming sometimes I really consider continu-ing this series.

First, let me say that the characters were well-written. Yasamin is definitely a favourite of mine which is probably based on my love for historic fiction. As the story progresses she tells us more about her life in Ottoman Hungary and her situation was intriguing. There was a cer-tain dynamic to the people surrounding her that I loved to read about. I’ve got to admit that I hardly know anything about her time or what it was to life in the palace but the author man-aged to keep me turning the pages. Stories with female protagonist are sometimes difficult for me to read because I look for something to connect to whereas I can handle male protag-onists quite well. Yasamin managed to stay interesting until the very end of the book and I enjoy finally having read a great vampire book told from a female point of view.

Throughout the book we also learn more about the life of Adam Mire. I wasn’t sure about him for some time. Looking back a lot of his secrets made sense and they were revealed when needed but before that I didn’t really know what his character was about. Also, his part of the story didn’t capture me like other parts did but maybe I was just too involved in different parts of the story.

This is probably the only thing about the book I was not happy about. The story was rather complex and managed to keep the action going although backflashes were used a lot and were a huge contrast to the action-packed parts. But sometimes I was a little lost – too many things happening at once or a jump within the narrative left me confused. There was some guessing involved on my side and sometimes I had to go back a few pages and read some-thing again. Not a bad thing per se as I really wanted to understand all the things that were going on but it killed the atmosphere for me.

Apart from this point the book was amazing. The fact that they referred a lot to Stoker’s Dracula made it even easier for me to like this book – just make sure you know the original story when you start reading this one. I highly recommend this book to fans of the vampire topic and those seeking an interesting female protagonist. Yasamin truly left an impact on me and I would love to read more about Dracula’s brides.

Kristy Sartain- Whispering Pretty Stories Reviews says

The only two criticisms I have of this book are that

- 1) there are a ton of characters, so many that it was sometimes hard to keep up with who is related to whom and what role they have/had in the story.
- 2) some of the conversations are pretty trite.

Other than that, the action is great. The politics are intricate, as one would expect in 1599 AD and 1999 AD when dealing with vampires. I really enjoyed the historical aspect of the book, especially the male/female roles in 1599. The interweaving of Dracula and Yasamin throughout the book in every major event in history is great.

This would be a good read for people who enjoy urban fantasy, vampire books with a good historical background, and thrillers.

Jennifer says

Received through FirstReads giveaway...

This was better than I was hoping for. In the past decade there's been such an onslaught of vampire themed books that I was pleasantly surprised that this didn't feel like a stale rehash. It had a bit of a romance, but nothing gushy or sappy, which always makes me cringe. I also liked the fact that it didn't try to make its characters ultra hip and trendy. I feel like a lot of books now spend a whole lot of space trying to convince me just how different and cool the main character is, like I need a minute description of every outfit/hairstyle.

Lynn Williams says

3.5 of 4 stars

<https://lynnsbooks.wordpress.com/2015...>

Daughters of Shadow and Blood is the first in a series by Matthew Saunders. I think you could call this the thinking person's vampire book as it is a story of mystery that follows a trail of breadcrumbs around the world in search of a strange medallion. A medallion that once belonged to Dracula and is now sought after by many different factions.

The story is narrated in a number of different timeframes and voices. We flirt back in time to Buda in 1599 where a young woman, Yasamin, is about to enter into an arranged marriage with the Governor's son. Arriving friendless in a strange place it seems like she may have more than petty jealousies to worry about. We alternately follow in the tracks of Professor Adam Mire, an expert in history who seems to have become obsessed with the clues he finds within the Pages of Stoker's Dracula. We also read various historical pieces that move the story along and bring to light certain characters whose lives have interwoven with that of Dracula throughout history.

I enjoyed this but will stress it's not a typical vampire story so if you're expecting lots of fangs and bloodsucking I'll just throw in at this point that that isn't really the main focus of the story. You could say it is a mystery and I will say there's a good deal of cloak and dagger action going on to support that theory. In fact the main thrust of the book seems to revolve around the different parties searching for the medallion – ruthless people who will commit any crime to gain their desires. And, on top of this we have a murderer who seems to be following in the footsteps of Professor Mire. Basically the whole basis of the story doesn't really become clear until the conclusion and I'm not going to give any spoilers away in that respect.

I think the author does a good job of writing a story that spans across many years and is told in a number of voices. I actually enjoyed jumping back and forth and travelling around the globe and thought the writing

was easy to follow, in fact I was intrigued to know what exactly was going on.

In terms of characters – well, I don't think it's a secret that Yasamin is actually one of the brides of Dracula – I enjoyed reading her story when she arrived as the young bride in waiting in fact I thought this side of the story was my favourite aspect and I could have definitely read more from her. Presumably the next two books in the series will be the other brides and will involve some story unique to each one. Professor Mires story is much more involved with the action side of the tale and following the trail of clues as they take him in pursuit of his goal.

In terms of criticisms. I wasn't really sure what to expect with this story and so in that respect it felt like an original idea, well executed and easy to read. However, having now finished and reflected I think to an extent it is a little bit of a missed opportunity. It's not very often that you get to see a tale related from a different point of view and so the tales of the brides of Dracula could be incredibly interesting to read. Yasamin's story was intriguing and was certainly my favourite part of the novel but strictly speaking you could as much call this Professor Mire's tale. Don't get me wrong, I did enjoy the interaction between the two in the more modern aspects of the tale but I think Yasamin isn't really focused on enough. I wanted more of her tale and more of what comes next – but, that being said, there are more books involved and so perhaps I'm just being hasty. I also felt that the characterisation took something of a back seat to the action which left me feeling a little ambivalent towards the characters overall.

I would be interested in reading more to see where the author goes next with this series. At this point it feels like the brides of Dracula theme is just the backcloth to another story or stories but that could change entirely with the next book so I will be keen to see where this goes next and in spite of my criticisms I thought this was a good read.

I received a copy through the publishers through Netgalley for which my thanks. The above is my own opinion.

Kayleigh says

[it has to be Dracula (hide spoiler)]

Lys says

2.5

I admit I started reading this book without really knowing what it was about: it had a nice blurb and a nice cover and sometimes it's just enough to pick your interest up. And I found out a book that was something I didn't expect it to be.

Despite its name so close to Laini Taylor's ones, Daughters of Shadow and Blood has nothing in common with it. A mix of thriller and historical novel with a heavy dose of vampirism thrown in the midst of it, Mathew Saunders' book is an interesting and original one although, in the end, it didn't do the trick for me.

What I did like:

1. The overall idea and plot. It's original, fast paced and layered.
2. The setting. Well, Buda, that's it. The author did a good job to make me see and feel old Buda. Yasamin's story in Buda is the part of the book I enjoyed the most.

What I think it could have been better:

1. The structure of the story is very fragmentary. The book is a bit more than 300 pages and it has almost 80 chapters. Considering that the story follows different timelines and many different characters, jumping from one to another every three pages makes for a confused reading experience. And it makes almost impossible to get really involved with any of the characters and their misfortunes.
2. Despite being first and foremost a thriller, I felt there was very little mystery to it. A lot of action, yes, but not so much suspense.
3. Being very action packed, it left quite little space to characterizations. At the end I didn't feel like I knew the main characters at all. And while reading I couldn't connect with them either. I would have liked better to see what brought Yasamin to Iksander, what brought her away from even trying with her husband, what kind of relationship she and Selim had (no-one? Then that last warning makes even less sense). Anything, basically, to manage to see her as a person and not just a plot device. And the same it could be said for all the other characters in the novel.

Who could be interested in this book?

Despite my judgement I think this book can be a nice reading for those enjoying a fast reading, action packed book, while it could leave those enjoying a more characters driven plot less satisfied.

I received this book from NetGalley in change of an honest review.

Tabitha says

Big thanks to NetGalley and St George's Press for an advanced copy.

First off, I wanted to give this book 5 stars. I almost did, until I thought over the one issue I have with it and decided that meant taking away a star-- that problem being some rather confusing time jumps, which while clever, took some getting used to (meaning I really don't recommend reading this when tired or after a few drinks or especially both, cause I wound up having to re-read the same few pages several times when I tried that lol!). And, well, I have one other gripe with the book technically and that's that the ending is rather abrupt. I'm assuming it's the start of a series, which I'm looking forward to since I loved it, but at the same time that abruptness was pretty annoying.

On to the good stuff! I basically loved this book. It's like *The Historian* (which I loved) written by Steve Berry (whose books I am addicted to). Even with the many time jumps the story moves at a quick pace. Saunders is a capable writer and does well with atmosphere and action, making the reader want to keep reading to find out what happens next. The answers to the readers questions are answered slowly as the story

unfolds, and the withholding of them never gets unbearable (until the end when it just, you know, ends -_-). Though his characters can sometimes be confused with their similar voices, some of them shine, Yasamin in particular. I don't want to give too much away but Saunders did well in differentiating her voice then and her voice now, which I think really helped in making her story more emotionally evocative. You can't help but feel some attachment to her, and her parts of the book are easily the best. I would have happily read an entire book just about her and her journey (which is heart-breaking and fascinating).

Speaking of Yasamin, I suppose I should talk about the actual main character. Dr. Adam Mire is at varying times bland, Gary Stu, and annoying. He never felt like a real person, and normally that would annoy me. I almost took away another star just because of him actually, but in the end I decided that his limitations as a character weren't that terrible because he was more just a courier of stories and chase scenes and brawls. He could have been anyone.

I am very much looking forward to future sequels, I just hope Dr. Mire isn't at their focus. I'd also like to read more of Yasamin's story because there is still a lot of mystery there, but I'm pretty sure future stories will be about different women (and you'll understand what I mean by that once you read the story). All in all in a good read!

Please Pass the Books says

With *Daughters of Shadow and Blood*, J. Matthew Saunders has given us the most profound, intelligent, champion of a vampire thriller in contemporary literature. I have just finished it and my head is still spinning. This book—and I do not exaggerate—is an Islamic Da Vinci Code on fire.

We start the search for a dragon medallion in the Berlin living room of Yasamin with Dr. Adam Mire. From there, we go back almost a thousand years to Yasamin in Hungary under the Ottoman Empire. These two stories alone create enough depth for a spectacular read. Saunders takes us deeper, transitioning between these two layers, all the while giving us additional clues through books, letters, and newspaper interviews that chronicle—Guess who? Vlad the Impaler, who carries a whole laundry list of recognized (though not traditionally linked) names over our thousand year tour. All the while, we have Dr. Mire a week before he finds himself in Yasamin's living room, on an exhilarating Eastern European journey with two fantastic sidekicks: Anya and Kostya, a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church Special Forces.

If you're reading this review and thinking you'll be confused, think again. Saunders is a master of layered storytelling and the transitions are effortless to the reader. All is revealed in a blissfully synchronous fashion, packaged up in one of the best thrill reads you could possibly get your hands on.

I was given an advance review copy of this book from NetGalley and Saint George's Press in exchange for an honest review.

Drew says

I have to kick this review off by saying one thing: Thank GOD that the vampires in this book do NOT sparkle! Yeah, I know that it's pretty much a cliché at this point to slam on the Twilight series. But I'm sorry, I just can't help myself. I've been a fan of vampires ever since I first read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* more

years ago than I care to remember. Just the atmosphere, the idea of a supernatural killing machine that could turn into mist, a wolf, a giant bat, or rats just enthralled me. The young me thought that it was just awesome. And as time went on, and I got a little more sophisticated, I came to understand what a tragedy the book was, as Count Dracula was really doing all of this for love. Hit me right in the feels, I tells ya.

As I went on, I devoured just about every piece of vampire lore that I could, both serious and moody, like Anne Rice, or goofy as all get out like Leslie Nielsen in *Dracula: Dead and Loving It*. Then came the Dark Times, the Sparkly Times, the Twilight Times(sorry, *The Platters*) when vampires became angst-y teen heartthrobs with all the flavor of a plain rice cake. I couldn't deal with that, and I pretty much decided to give up on vampires for awhile.

Now, however, we come to today where I'm writing a review of another new vampire novel. I broke down and read a new vamp novel for one, because the author is a friend of mine, and I know that the dude can write damn well, but for another because he promised me that his vampires do not sparkle in the sun. And he was right. Matthew's vampires don't sparkle in the sun, they burn, as it should be, but more on that in a minute.

Yasamin isn't a book that fits exactly into one particular category. In part, it'll be shelved in Science Fiction/Fantasy, because it is largely about vampires, but it could also easily get filed under Thriller and (if such a category existed) Fictional Biography. The book is set during the course of a night in which Dr. Adam Mire is telling *Yasamin*, the first of Dracula's brides the story of his hunt for Dracula's Medallion and the troubles that that hunt brought to the good doctor. What with fanatical religious organizations, both Muslim and Christian, and a shadowy figure that's following behind Adam as he flows the trail to the medallion, it's amazing that he survived long enough to tell *Yasamin* his story. Also interspersed throughout the novel are even further flashbacks to Adam's tragic past. I won't tell you what it is so you can discover it for yourself, but it does give the reader some insight into why Adam Mire is on this insane quest of his instead of back in America enjoying being a professor.

In addition to Adam's story, almost as if he's playing Quid Pro Quo with an unholy, vampiric Hannibal Lecter, *Yasamin* gives the story of her past before she became a Bride of Dracula. It's a fascinating look at a character that was pretty much just a cipher in Bram Stoker's original novel. But reading it, I think that Mr. Stoker would be pretty well pleased at what Saunders has done here, and it's great to watch *Yasamin* go from the naïve young girl in an arranged marriage to the immortal terror that she is when the novel ends.

I devoured this book over the course of just a few days. The pacing is excellent, and the story just grabs you right from the beginning and doesn't let go until the last of the book's 385 pages. Personally, I can't wait to see what comes next in this series. If you're a fan of well-plotted, well-written, and very well-paced fiction, go pick yourself up a copy of this book. And if you're something like me, and you've been cynical about vampire books over the last few years because of things like *Twilight*, well this book will be a breath of fresh air. No, I'm not going to make the obvious joke about an infusion of fresh blood. Too easy. Even though it is.

4cats says

First in a trilogy, this novel deals with the meeting of an American professor and a raven haired woman who he believes is one of the original 'Brides' of Dracula. This fabulous historical/ modern thriller intertwines the life of Vlad the Impaler, Bram Stoker's Dracula, the turbulent history of the Ottoman Empire and the savage civil war which caused the breakup of Yugoslavia.

By cleverly mixing the American's story with that of Yasmine we discover why the American is willing to risk his life to meet with this fabled woman. This is a highly entertaining thriller which sweeps across the

everchanging landscape of Europe.

It reminded me of Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian*.

Burgandy Ice says

I read this one a lil' early (thx NetGalley, etc, etc!!)

Initially I was intrigued with the idea of dual stories taking place at the same time, one of which was an arranged marriage 400 years ago.

Reading the first few pages drew me in for the entirety. I read holding my breath and gripping my device during commuting trips. There are multiple story lines, snippets from characters in history, all being drawn towards Yasamin.

The way the story is written, I wasn't lost or confused, but I was often surprised. It wasn't so much a mystery as a tracking down of clues and piecing them together in the order Adam uncovered them. My interest mirrored Yasamin's and I couldn't help having a growing concern for Adam's safety. Each step and word is measured, but... death is accepted as inevitable and the idea of Happily Ever After is tossed out the window early on, as something that was lost before the story began. So the likelihood of any of the characters I became invested in being found lying in a pool of blood was very high.

The story is gripping and haunting and will linger a long time. I'm thrilled to see "Book I" in the title after reading the last page, acknowledgements and author information (you know, when you can't believe it's over). There is more and I cannot wait to read it.

Note: There are adult scenes, romantic & violent. They are brief and matter-of-fact, delivered as parts of the puzzle.

Mandy says

This review first appeared on Addicted to Media:

Throughout Europe's bloody and troubled past, there were rumours of nefarious and supernatural forces at play, forces that changed the course of history and brought power and riches to those foolish enough to side with darkness. From the Ottoman wars in medieval Wallachia, Transylvania and Buda to modern Budapest, Banja Luka and Berlin, J. Matthew Saunders's *Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book 1: Yasamin* takes us on a breakneck ride through a millennia of wars, pacts and atrocities and the legend of a creature that remained in the shadows yet influenced every step of the way.

Buda, Ottoman Hungary, 1599: Yasamin is a young orphan from Thessaloniki who is promised to Murad, the son of a powerful leader in the Ottoman Empire. She comes to live at the Haremlik in Buda where she is thrown into a life of politics, gossip and intrigue. There are several attempts on her life and Yasamin must learn who she can trust and who her true enemies are.

Berlin, Germany, 1999: Adam Mire is an American professor and historian. When his friend Mihai Iliescu leaves him some documents shortly before his mysterious death, Adam begins to follow the clues he discovers therein despite great danger to himself. At the heart of his investigations is the legendary medallion of Dracula and the clues lead from Budapest to Novi Sad, Banja Luka, Dubrovnik, Thessaloniki and finally Berlin where Adam catches up with the enigmatic Yasamin Ashrafi.

And so Yasamin and Adam engage in a terse tête-à-tête in which they each offer their stories in exchange for the other's information. Adam tells of his hair-raising attempts to stay one ahead of assassins as he tracked down the medallion and Yasamin in turn tells her story of intrigue, betrayal and murder.

Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book 1: Yasamin is a truly magnificent novel rich in colour, atmosphere and culture. I loved reading about life in the Haremlik, could almost feel the steam rising in the bathhouses and shared in the excitement of the Ottoman wedding rituals. Having travelled in the Balkans myself, I thoroughly enjoyed the journey down to Dubrovnik (although I'd have loved to spend more time in Novi Sad). Mostly, I enjoyed the supernatural element of the novel which I've only touched on lightly for fear of giving the story away.

I would highly recommend *Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book 1: Yasamin*. The author J. Matthew Saunders expertly weaves a tale that combines elements of historical, supernatural and 20th century modern fiction. With the teenage protagonist, this book will delight young adult and mature audiences alike and I am certainly looking forward to the next books in the series.

I give *Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book 1: Yasamin* by J. Matthew Saunders a superb five out of five stars and would highly recommend the book to fans of young adult, historical or supernatural fiction alike.

Connie says

A proper good old fashioned Vampire story with lots of twists and turns. Fangtastic!!

Adriyanna Zimmermann says

I thoroughly enjoyed *Daughters of Shadow and Blood - Book I: Yasamin* by J. Matthew Saunders. I'd recommend this title to fans of Bram Stoker because it pays homage to Dracula, but is still different enough that you can't easily predict what's going to happen. The novel is set up into three main timelines, among other minor ones in the form of letters, book passages and written accounts. The research is meticulous and the writing well-done, albeit sometimes lacking life in certain chapters. My first thought when starting this was "Dracula meets The Da Vinci Code", which is interesting because after finishing I saw Darin Kennedy quoted it as this too! This novel is the first in a planned trilogy and I definitely plan to read book two.

As I mentioned, the novel is divided into three timelines: Buda Hungary 1599, occupied by the Ottoman Empire at the time, and is told in the perspective of Yasamin. Then we have early August 1999, Berlin Germany told in the POV of Adam Mire and lastly mid-August 1999, also in Adam's POV. The differences between these last two POV's are Anya and Yasamin Ashrafi, who appear in one of these two timelines respectfully. Furthermore, the reader experiences other minor timelines that all have a connection to Dracula, his medallion and his legendary brides'. My favourite POV was Yasamin because I felt she was the most

developed character and I was the most involved with her. As well, it was great reading about the Ottoman empire in this context and I felt this made the novel different from other Dracula-inspired ones; it stood out more!

Everything about the 1599 timeline is five stars. The reader is given a deep understanding of Yasamin's background as well as her current life in Buda. The dialogue felt natural to me, never awkward or rough as was sometimes the case with the other two timelines. Yasamin meets Iskander, a janissary (member of the Turkish infantry) and the romance between the two is natural, moving at a realistic pace. I was of course rooting for the two of them! The author paints a very visual, three-dimensional picture of the Ottoman Empire in Buda, which I absolutely loved! Another interesting point was the Jinn, mentioned as creatures of a smokeless and scorching fire by the characters of this timeline. Instead of using the term 'vampire' to explain the mysterious happenings, the characters would instead talk about the jinn and demons, so this alternate perspective was interesting to read. I think for me including both the Western/Gregorian calendar date and the Islamic calendar date iced the cake.

The suspense is fantastic! This is where I compared it to *The Da Vinci Code*; there was always lots of action happening. The plot revolves around Adam finding a journal with clues to the location of Dracula's medallion and ends up simultaneously searching for one of Dracula's bride's. Of course, other secret organizations' would love to get ahold of that medallion, so Adam finds himself in a lot of danger and ends up being saved by Anya. I would say the suspense is built up a lot in the beginning, dies down a bit in the middle, but then starts back up near the end. The last 20 percent of this book wowed me enough to give it a 4/5 versus 3.5/5 stars.

When comparing Adam, Anya and Yasamin together as characters, it's clear Yasamin is the most expanded on. The reader learns a bit about Adam and some traumatic events in his past, but I wasn't as involved with him and Anya as I was with Yasamin. With Anya, we only seem to learn what's relevant to the plot - she has a connection with Yasamin Ashrafi, but it's not made totally clear. As well, there's some romance between Adam and Anya that I found unnecessary; they didn't seem to know each other for long enough. I think this lack of development is due to the many POV's filled in-between the three main ones, and so there's not a lot of space to grow. I'd recommend for book two the author make absolutely certain all main characters have breathing room to grow before filling in minor POV's. These minor POV's were of course all important, but I value well-developed characters over plot.

Overall, *Daughters of Shadow and Blood* was really entertaining and I will definitely be continuing the series. The format and plot brought me back to my childhood love for *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, and being a fan of *The Da Vinci Code*, I loved the mystery! Now I think if you're not a fan of Bram Stoker, the set-up of the novel might take some getting used to because there's multiple POV's and the author layers a lot of facts into the novel. I recommend this title for readers wanting a Dracula-inspired novel with intrigue, mystery and action-packed scenes!

I received a free eARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.
