



# Running Away

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Eliza Morgan is desperate to escape the horrors of her mortal life and understand why death follows her, leaving only one man, Nicholas French, in its wake. He's the one she loves, the one she resents, and the one fated to make her legendary among the Shinigami— an ancient order of vampires with a “heroic” duty to kill. He's also decaying before her eyes, and it's her fault.

On the ghostlike mountaintop in Japan that the vampires consider home, Eliza will be guided by the all-powerful Master for her transition to Shinigami death god. When Eliza discovers that sacrificing her destiny will save Nicholas, she's not afraid to defy fate and make it so—even when Nicholas's salvation kills her slowly with torturous, puzzle-piece visions that beg her to solve them. Both Nicholas and his beloved Master fight her on veering from the path to immortality, but Eliza won't be talked out of her plan, even if it drives the wedge between Nicholas and her deeper.

Allying with the fiery rebel, Kieran, who does what he wants and encourages her to do the same, and a mysterious deity that only she can see, Eliza must forge her own path through a maze of ancient traditions and rivalries, shameful secrets and dark betrayals to take back the choices denied her and the Shinigami who see her as their savior. To uncover the truth and save her loved ones, Eliza will stop at nothing, including war with fate itself.

## Running Away Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Julie Hutchings

Format :

Genre : Paranormal, Vampires, Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Speculative Fiction

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# From Reader Review *Running Away* for online ebook

## Cassandra Page says

*Running Away* is the second book in one of the most unique vampire stories I've read (and I've read a lot). I interviewed Julie Hutchings after the release of the first book in the series; I asked her if *Running Home* was summed up by the phrase "wasabi and tears". She said that was a better description of *Running Away*.

Having now read both, I have to say: hell yes. Wasabi and tears.

This book has the same lush - and often lucious - descriptions as the first book did, with a heavy emphasis on evocative scents and dark imagery. There's a bit less of the snappy dialogue I loved from book one, but that's mostly because Eliza spends a lot of time in this book trapped inside herself, both metaphorically and physically.

We meet some interesting new characters - I particularly liked Paolo and Kieran, although I could take or leave Blue. The Master was creepy; he's traditional old-school Japan, and Eliza is brash modern American, so as you can imagine they get on like a house on fire. (With the exploding.) Also, I couldn't help but imagine him looking a bit like the Master from the first season of Buffy. Eeew.

*Running Away* is the second book I've read recently that featured the Japanese deities Izanagi and Izanami. (The first was *Endsinger* by Jay Kristoff.) I really enjoyed seeing the different takes on the same mythology.

For me, the only downside to *Running Away* is that I felt the editing let Julie down a little in places. It wasn't anything really major, just the occasional comma splice and so on, but still enough that I noticed.

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## Ian Cann says

A fast pace with depth that drags you along for the vampiric ride, the Japanese setting and tone brings something satisfyingly different to the party, bring on the final part of the trilogy.

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## Tammy Farrell says

When I read *Running Home*, I couldn't wait to find out what would come of such an explosive ending. When I got my hands on *Running Away*, I was thrust back into the story immediately, immersed in the darkness that had descended upon Eliza. Hutchings is a gifted storyteller, with the ability to capture raw emotions and bring them to life on the page.

*Running Away* was so intense I couldn't stop reading it, and spent the entire day flipping to the next page. I absolutely love love love the complexity of Eliza and Nicholas's relationship. There is certainly nothing predictable about them, and that's a great thing. I also love the new characters, especially one which I have a mega crush on. Seriously. ;)

What really impressed me about this book was the ending. I thought I knew what was going to happen. But

then Hutchings took a right turn and I was shocked. While the ending is a cliffhanger of sorts, it didn't leave me feeling cheated. There were decisions made, fates accepted, and the door was left open for a lot more story to tell.

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### **James L'Etoile says**

You know when an author's first published book is so good and the second one is a total letdown? Well, the latest from Julie Hutchings, does not suffer from that sophomore jinx.

Running Away is the sequel to Julie's acclaimed Running Home, an unusual vampire tale featuring the broody vampire Nicholas, paired with young lost soul, Eliza Morgan. Running Away takes Nicholas and Eliza to the remote reaches of Japan where a communion of vampires meet and feast on human flesh to continue their ancient line. Eliza is next on the menu.

Julie's vampire characters are complex, brooding, multifaceted creations with unpredictable storylines. She unfolds a world where her creatures hunt, live and love with vivid prose. The choices Eliza makes have cascading consequences for all vampire-kind.

Running Away is a fantasy infused romp and is written so well that once you start, you're addicted to the page to the end.

Julie has elevated the vampire game and if you like your immortals without sparkle, Running Away is a must read for you.

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### **Summer says**

I fell in love with Eliza and Nicholas in RUNNING HOME (The Shinigami series #1). Ever since then, I've been DYING for the next installment of their story. And Hutchings doesn't disappoint. In fact, as amazing and gorgeous as RUNNING HOME was, this sequel blows it out of the water.

You guys. This. Book.

Let's just say, I devoured this story. I read it like it was the air I needed to live, so full and engrossing were the descriptions and storylines. Hutchings grabbed me right from the beginning, and before I knew what happened, I felt like I was on a runaway train of emotions and anticipation! I never wanted it to stop! When I finished, I had the biggest book hangover I'd had in a very long time. For days, my thoughts were still so engrossed with the characters and their motivations, their triumphs and their pains. Needless to say, I'm aching for the rest of the story. Hutchings has set the bar high for a finale that will do this story justice. But I know, without a doubt, she will deliver in a ever so satisfying way!

My advice to readers...you haven't truly experienced the magic of reading until you've read RUNNING HOME and RUNNING AWAY.

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## Melissa Petreshock says

This review is published in full with images/gifs and fun stuff on the Dragon Blog and was posted Thursday September 25th.

So, I finished my eARC of *RUNNING AWAY* well before the release of our promo for *RUNNING HOME*, as expected. (I'm writing this review on July 31st, though I finished the book a couple days ago.)

Seriously, Julie? WTF?

Let me just say it straight up. KMN. For real. KMN. Put me out of my fucking misery. I am so #DONE with you, Julie. I can't even BELIEVE I let you do this to me. I got so sucked into *RUNNING HOME*, liked sucked in with glee to the point I jumped right into *RUNNING AWAY* with blissful abandon, but now... now...

Well, it all went down a bit like this.

Even if I hadn't literally just finished reading the first book in this series and cracked open the second, I would have known exactly where I was from the first scene in *RUNNING AWAY*. Unlike some sequels, you don't lose any sense of who the characters are or the setting of the book from the first to the second.

Kudos to Julie on that. I'm okay with finding my way once again as the next book in a series transitions me to the next step in the story, but a seamless entrance is a thing of beauty and not easily accomplished, so bravo and all that yada yada blah blah. Don't go getting a Tony Stark-sized ego, Julie. You're awesome, but keep it dialed down to a likable level.

Now, you can call this a spoiler if you want, but *RUNNING AWAY*, like its predecessor is never fully a paranormal romance, though it delivers the sexual tension on a scale to have you strung out like an addict WAITING, but neither is it fully a horror novel, despite keeping you creeped the fuck out just enough to never be at ease with what's about to happen on the next page.

The ever-delicious Nicholas French continues to be his broody vampire self in *RUNNING AWAY*, which could get overplayed and rather old, something that had me concerned... not that Nicholas doesn't have his reasons to be a bit broody, but I was hoping for a turn of events with him and Ellie come book two, if for nothing else but my own sanity (and other readers).

I hate to give away too much since I despise spoiler-filled reviews about as much as I despise living in a town without a Starbucks, but I'm going to attempt to set your mind at ease regarding our swoonworthy hero's serious case of brooditis.

In the romance department, some shit gets REAL between Nicholas and Ellie. Not telling you exactly when, how, or exactly what way, but I'm telling you, shit gets REAL, and shit gets REAL COMPLICATED.

Speaking of complicated, I happen to be a big fan of love triangles or some variation of healthy romantic competition in my fiction.

BAM!

Enter Kieran Smokin'-Hot-and-Sexy-Irish-Vamp Coughlin. Epitome of bad boy charm. Irish brogue. Tats. Excuse me while I drool.

Ellie finds him appealing too. No shit. Chick's got eyes and ears. Yes, she may already have our tasty treat of swoonworthy deliciousness Mr. French, but... You know... Well, you don't know. You haven't read the book. GO READ RUNNING AWAY, AND YOU WILL KNOW. Trust me. Kieran. You would too.

So, Nicholas, sweetheart, brood away. You've earned the right.

Meanwhile, all of this is actually the least of anyone's worries, because true-to-form, Hutchings has once again woven a world steeped in mythology unique to the Shinigami vampires she created. RUNNING AWAY takes readers to the lush setting of Japan, and paints detailed pictures worth a thousand words in far less droning purple prose than that. The writing remains clean and concise while balancing an appropriate level of lush beauty to engage readers and fill the pages with everything I needed and wanted.

This is where my point of reView gets a bit complicated.

I'll start this part by stating that I read an unedited eARC of RUNNING AWAY. There was A LOT of editing still to be done in the process of bringing the book to publication when I got my hands on this copy. Much of what I read will undoubtedly be smoothed out by the time it goes to publication. Consider that a disclaimer on what I'm about to say.

The mythology and setting was both my favorite part and the most irritating at times. Due to issues that I believe were purely editorial in nature, I did trip up over some of the finer details and intricate explanations regarding Izanagi (Pronunciation? Beats the fuck out of me.) and the mysterious nature of the old Japanese beliefs surrounding him.

It wasn't impossible to understand, and for those who read fantasy and enjoy rich fantastical worlds, you'd catch on even if the sentences and wording aren't quite up to par with her previous book. There were simply times Hutchings' fluent writing lost its typical pace, generally when the details became quite critical, and she may have been trying too hard to get everything in "just right", and she left the jagged little edges on there. Editing should take a belt sander to that bitch and smooth it out like my dining room table (when I bought it, not since my kids started touching it).

Julie also does a bit of a character give and take dance in RUNNING AWAY. While I get that this book is very much centering around Ellie's personal journey, so focusing on her and the introduction of the Master are critical, I felt a little shorted. Roman and Lynch were barely a flash in the pan in this, like sub-sub-plots practically. Since they were both such interesting (though Lynch not necessarily likable) characters from RUNNING HOME, I was rather annoyed.

Me being annoyed while reading usually does not bode well for anyone.

However, in place of serious time spent with Roman and Lynch, I got the aforementioned lickable (and likable) Kieran, a new chick character to replace Kat by the name of Blue who is WAY cooler than Kat could have ever hoped to be in a million years, and OMG Paolo. Hutchings describes Paolo as "a would-be saint turned vampire" on her RUNNING AWAY Pinterest board, where she notably dream cast him as JAMES FREAKING YUMMYHELLYESILOVETHIS MCAVOY.

These are all characters I can get behind as additions to the story line. They don't overpower Ellie's primary

story, yet they're well developed, and each of them has a unique twist to make them worth being around. I liked reading about them. I wanted to see them pop into scenes. I was happy to see them show up on the pages. I'll permit them to stay without complaint and withhold any petition for their immediate removal from my sight. In fact, I'd like to petition for more of Kieran and Paolo on that Pinterest board.

Overall, there's a shit ton of events that happen in *RUNNING AWAY* that I can't begin to mention without spoiling basically everything. Ellie's developmental arc as a character is kick ass. Nicholas is phenomenal, even though I sometimes wanted to slap him worse than Ellie, but she's young, so she's allowed to do the Stupid Shit of Youth dumbassery that heroes/heroines do to get themselves in situations that make you want to slap them. Nicholas is old enough to know better, but then again, being old enough to know better and still fucking up is part of his charm as a character.

Now, this is where I'm #DONE with Julie's shit. BITCH, WHERE IS MY BOOK THREE? I finished *RUNNING AWAY* and was all like OH NO YOU DID NOT JUST LEAVE ME STILL WAITING, YOU HATEFUL BOOK WENCH!

Okay. So I'm not really #DONE with her. I still need book three, and since there's THAT, I can't be #DONE with her... But I expect its eARC in my inbox ASAP.

So how did *RUNNING AWAY* stack up in my opinion?

For the second book in a trilogy (from what I understand), *RUNNING AWAY* pulls off a great arc between picking up from the first book and leading into what should round out a terrific overarching plot woven throughout. The characters remained in line with who it was I got to know in *RUNNING HOME* yet developed appropriately throughout the book, never remaining flat, but always consistent. New characters were introduced but not excessively. I don't feel like I have too many players on the field after two books that I'm going to need a spreadsheet for book three.

Series-wise, *RUNNING AWAY* is looking good.

In the grand scheme of things? If the copy I read had been a final production copy, I'd be giving it a 3-star rating based on editorial shit driving me out of my mind, simply because I cannot stand that in books I read. Errors will drive down my opinion of a book no matter who the author is. But, this was a VERY early eARC with a great deal of editorial work to be done still, so I'm leaving those judgments out of the equation altogether. (Count your lucky review stars, Julie.)

Mel's Point of reView on *RUNNING AWAY*: 5 STARS! I fucking love this series, the mythology, the world created, and the cast of characters. This isn't your watered-down paranormal genre vampire novel stuff. The writing depth is lush and draws me in wholly to a world where the vampires are uniquely mystical in their beauty, danger, and storied history.

All personal opinions of her aside, after two consistently incredible books, Julie Hutchings has climbed into my list of favorite authors, and I can't wait to see what else she has in store for fans of her writing.

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## **Kim says**

One of Julie Hutchings' great strengths is inspiring addiction. I mean this in the nicest way possible, as I

spent over year waiting and whining for the sequel to Running Home - the newly released Running Away. The second in the Shinigami series is a whirlwind of words, with just the right amount of mystery and sass to keep you turning the page.

Let's start at the beginning, shall we? Running Away begins where Running Home left us: in a complete, emotional mess. Hutchings makes a rare but welcome decision to join the conclusion of her first book seamlessly with her second's introduction, instead of recapping in the first chapter with flashbacks. Our wonderful, headstrong Eliza Morgan is reduced to a guilt-stricken, grief-stricken wreck in the wake of her best friend's death; a shadow of her former self, and her relationship with Nicholas French is in tatters. Her numbness vibrates through the first pages and echoes throughout: this grief feels real, and resonated with me as fictional loss rarely does.

It is a few chapters in, however, that Hutchings really kicks it in to gear. The preliminaries dealt with, and the readers up to speed, it's time to dive straight in to the culture clash that is An American Eliza in Japan. The scene is effortlessly set, with the vibrancy of modern life mixing with the ancient zen of the Land of the Rising Sun. Hutchings works well with description and her unique, fresh style of narrative prevailed where another author might have given in to stereotype and tired similes.

New characters are introduced: Paolo, who seems too 'good' to be true; Blue, the vampiric alternative to now-dead Kat; Kieran, the fiery Irish scoundrel who'll scorch your heart with want. We meet the Master, Nicholas' mentor, who is - quite frankly - creepy as all Hell, and I shared Eliza's distrust of him from the start. And the death that has followed Eliza around since childhood is given a name and a new, physical form: the Japanese god Izanagi. All add a welcome layer of complication and depth to the mystery surrounding life on the Shinigami mountain.

Eliza is obviously meant for something big. Every page of Hutchings' book builds towards this fact and it's a destiny that she reveals to the reader with a knowing, deliberate pace. Change is coming to the Shinigami whether they like it or not, and she's wearing Chucks and an Afghan. Running Away goes from strength to strength and the last page leaves you with the taste of blood and anticipation in your mouth when you realise where Book Three will take you.

That said, I did have some criticisms, which I'll get out of the way now before gushing about my favourite parts and finishing on a positive fangirly note.

As generally well paced as Running Away is, it sometimes felt a little too fast: namely the latter parts involving Eliza, Paolo and the Master. I felt that the urgency to tell the story meant that Eliza's reactions were not quite as well articulated as they could have been, and the Master's insidious presence not as potent as I'd have wanted. Eliza adjusted to some of her new powers a little too quickly for my liking, too, although I will happily put that down to my own rather rigid preferences with 'coming of age' plots. The prose in this instance lost its sharp pace and syntactical hypnotism, which regrettably meant that I lost my grip on what exactly was happening and why. It is rare that this happens in my experience of Hutchings' work, so I was perhaps more disappointed at this stage than I had a right to be, through sheer unfamiliarity with the problem. Fortunately, it picked up again soon after and didn't look back until the story was told.

Paolo's own revelation at the end with regard to Eliza I found difficult to believe, but I think perhaps that is the whole point: as Eliza says, Paolo would put his faith and love in anyone if it meant he didn't have to take responsibility for his own choices.

Mainly, however, I struggled with the decisions Eliza made with regard to Nicholas and Kieran, given her



own irrational jealousies with regard to relationships. Yet, perhaps that is a strength too: Eliza Morgan is not infallible. She is human, or close to it, now, and makes mistakes and inexplicable decisions based her emotions: it is who she has always been; it is who we all are. And, I can't honestly say that I wouldn't have made those same confusing, yo-yo choices myself when faced with what was happening to her (which is a gosh-darn lot, I tell you).

Oh, who am I kidding? I would have totally made those same choices, and probably done worse.

The only other criticism I have is that some of the editing was overlooked. I presume this is not Hutchings' fault but an oversight of the publisher, but nonetheless the few-and-far-between slip-ups detracted from the story in hand. Sorry, Julie - I try to ignore them but I'm a persnickety sort.

With those quibbles out of the way - let's get back to the goods, people! I loved the story. The pace was mostly excellent, the characterisation was as brilliant as in *Running Home* and Hutchings' unique brand of prose won me over yet again. The mystery she has weaved with the Shinigami mythology is testament to her imagination and creativity; it's a vampire story I want to hear. An all-too-human, self-deprecating Eliza Morgan heads the story with the unchallenged right to tell it. *Running Away* is full of moments and one-liners that will make you giggle, scenes that will ramp up the creep-factor to 11, and leave you wanting Book Three to already be available for sale.

Incidentally, anyone who has been following my Twitter for the past few days will have been privy to the dialogue I loved so much I simply had to share it with the world. I don't often tweet as I read, so kudos to Hutchings for making that happen.

I loved the characters. Each one was fresh and entirely their own self. Although I mourned the relative loss of Roman and Lynch from the first book, these new playmates distracted me from their absence very successfully. My favourite was Kieran, who radiated sexual appeal like a freakin' furnace. Although loving him so much felt like betraying Nicholas, I suspect every reader will be complicit in the same unbridled treachery.

The creep factor I mentioned was from a scene set in a certain historical mental hospital I know very well (through study and physical proximity, I hasten to add, not because I was ever a patient). I relished the exploration of these haunted hallways and attic (attic, seriously, Hutchings? I'm with Kieran - could you make it any creepier if you tried?) and felt the location served a metaphorical purpose, reflecting a beloved character's state of mind in a way no reader could ignore.

The morality of choice is something that Hutchings questions as well. Just because you can kill someone, should you? Just because fate tells you one thing, should you listen? Eliza challenges the Shinigami view of life and death with her arrival on the mountain and, in doing so, asks of the reader to answer those same questions. It's a refreshing take on the plight of the vampire, building on the foundations Hutchings built in *Running Home*.

Oh! Oh! I nearly forgot. There was one part of the ending I loved above all else: (view spoiler)

Second books in trilogies are notoriously hard to pull-off. They are the bridge between the story that hooked you and the dramatic conclusion with the characters you love. Whereas *Running Home* is the book you want to read in an armchair by a blazing fire, *Running Away* is the book you read as you walk along the street, or sit on the train - it is the transitional book that will lead you to great places. I wish I could delve into the spoiler-alert opinions I have in my brain, but I don't want to ruin the experience for potential readers. To

conclude: if you're a fan of the Shinigami series, read it, then join me in mercilessly hounding Julie Hutchings for the third book.

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## **Jennifer says**

Psychocat Saturday Review of **RUNNING AWAY** by Julie Hutchings  
(I was given free copies of this book in exchange for an honest review.)

I just finished reading **RUNNING AWAY**. As a matter of fact, I'm still in the middle of a rather lively Twitter debate with Julie over the end of the book. More on that later.

Anyway, even though we didn't have a set date for this review, when I finished **RUNNING HOME** I already had a copy of the eARC for **RUNNING AWAY**. Since it is a series, I opted to continue with Julie's books. I prefer to keep the continuity of the characters and story whenever possible.

If you haven't read my review of **RUNNING HOME**, you should pop over and check that out first. If you haven't read **RUNNING HOME** yet, you should really plan to go ahead and get both books.

**The Book as Part of a Series:** As I alluded to above, you need to read **RUNNING HOME** before you jump in to **RUNNING AWAY**. There's a certain foundation that you need about the characters and the Shinigami before you jump into this second book. This is not a bad thing, simply a reality of reading this particular series. Be prepared, you're going to want book 3 when you're done. That being said, you get a full freakin' story out of **RUNNING AWAY**. This book may live as part of a series, but it packs one hell of a punch inside those pages.

**The Characters:** I like Ellie better in this book than I did in the first. She may not be perfect, but this bitch has her big girl panties on and is ready to rock. I adored Nicholas in book one, but damn that vamp got even better in this book. I'm not sure how Julie managed that one, but she did. His personality absolutely dominates part of this book.

One of my favorite parts of **RUNNING AWAY** is the addition of Kieran to the cast of characters. I'll just warn you – he's Irish and feisty. Enough said. Prepare to get attached.

**The Relationships:** Relationships in **RUNNING AWAY** can best be described as complicated. The whole book is a tangled flippin' mess of emotion, mistrust, loyalty, and confusion. In short, it's fucking epic.

**The World or Mythology:** Much like the first book, **RUNNING HOME**, don't pick up **RUNNING AWAY** and expect quick, easy explanations about the Shinigami. It would ruin all the fun of the book if that's what you got. This book dives further into what the Shinigami are, and just how Ellie fits in.

**Jen's Final Rating:** 5 AMAZING STARS!! I reached the last page and kept trying to make my Kindle app turn to the next one. WHAT???? NO MORE BOOK!?!?!? NNNOOOOO!!!!!! Then I turned to Twitter to demand book 3. WRITE IT NOW, JULIE!!!! WRITE IT NOW!!!!

**Psychocat's Final Rating:** She's off looking for a mysterious mountain in Japan. If you find her, please send her back so she can help with the book reviews. On second thought, go ahead and keep her. I'm probably

safer with her gone.

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## Lori says

I was anxiously awaiting the sequel to "Running Home". "Running Away" was worth the wait. Characters are well developed making you truly care what happens to them. Well written and spellbinding. I couldn't put it down and can't wait to see what happens next.

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## Adam says

Took the world of Running Home, grew it exponentially without diluting character or plot. Honest, believable characters just as flawed as ourselves but oh so much more wonderful and interesting. Can't wait for the next one!

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## S.L. Saboviec says

**My Rating:** 3.5 of 5 stars

**Note:** I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Please note that this contains spoilers of the first book, *Running Home*. See my review [here](#).

Before I get into the review, I want to say I really like Julie's work. For the sake of disclosure, she asked me to read the book, which I thought was classy of her, since I only gave *Running Home* 3 stars. (Then again, as an author, I do like 3 star reviews, since, as a reader, I find that they're more realistic than the 5 star ones. Not that I'm saying I'm right or anything. I'm just saying that... Never mind. I'm digressing.)

Anyway, I like her ideas, I find her tweets and blog posts entertaining, informative, and touching, and I really wanted to love this book. But once again, I liked it, but I didn't love it.

In preparation for reading this sequel, I re-read the first and found I feel the same way about it again as I did the first time. My biggest issue with both books is how long it took for anything to happen. My writer's curse is that I'm constantly analyzing what I'm reading. If I'm having trouble getting into a story, I look for the reason. If I'm getting swept away, I look for the reason. I'm a student of the world, what can I say?

With both books, I feel as though imparting back story replaced major plot points, which makes it feel like a whole lot of nothing is happening for a long time. In the first book, almost 75% of the book (thank you, Kobo app) is Ellie and Nicholas falling in love. She discovers he's a vampire, admires his physique, finds out that he can create a bubble in the snow, learns about how he and Roman know Lynch. A few things happen, but again, if I'm analyzing this, I'd say the inciting incident is when Jennevieve shows up. And she doesn't show up until the last quarter of the book. Which is a problem since inciting incidents are supposed to happen at 20%. So for most of the book, it's descriptions of how delicious Nicholas smells and them chilling at his house and having a nice Christmas. In my completely and utterly humble opinion (hahaha), that's not plot.

I'm not a big paranormal (or any) romance fan. I do enjoy one from time to time, but the long-winded descriptions of the hot love interest are usually just too much for me. When it comes to Nicholas, I love how he's described to make Eliza comfortable and draw her to him. That's the majority of the book, which is interesting when held up against my previous comment about lack of plot.

The strong character description also extends into the second book, when we're introduced to Irish Kieran. This is probably the strongest part of the writing--two book boyfriends for fans of PR to fight over. But, well, steamy love interests don't replace plot, and even though it's romance, things need to happen while people fall in love.

The second book starts on a melancholy note, with Ellie mourning Kat while she and Nicholas travel to Japan. Totally legit, but again, it starts to drag. Things really start to happen when Ellie becomes a vampire. Until then, she's meeting the new cast of characters, chilling on a mountaintop, and denying her anger to Nicholas. Which, unfortunately, goes on for half the book while nothing much happens. I mean, things *happen*, but they're not big enough, or, at least, they're drowned out by the "hanging out in someone's room" scenes. Once Ellie becomes a vampire, things get real. She's got awesome powers coupled with anger management issues, which makes for a jaw-dropping second half.

I love the concept of vampires as presented in both these books. I love how Ellie's character is developed in the second one, as she becomes who she's meant to be. My favorite part is the brutally awful hostage situation where she's exploited for her new awesome powers, which (in my completely and utterly humble opinion) should have been a major focal point of the book but only lasts for a short period of time. It could have been deeper, more revealing, more sickening, more "I know I shouldn't look, but I can't stop staring at this car crash"... Kind of like when Ellie takes her first victim. Now that was an epic chapter.

If these books wound back story throughout plot, I would definitely love them. I crave books where the story takes you by the throat and strangles you as it races onward. I hope that the third book explodes on the page like I know it has the potential to do.

P.S. I'm still disappointed in the editors at Books of the Dead Press. "One in the same?" Missed words? Incorrectly placed commas? C'mon, guys. I'm also not impressed with the composition of this cover. It looks amateur to me. Good idea, good picture, but it needs to be composed better.

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