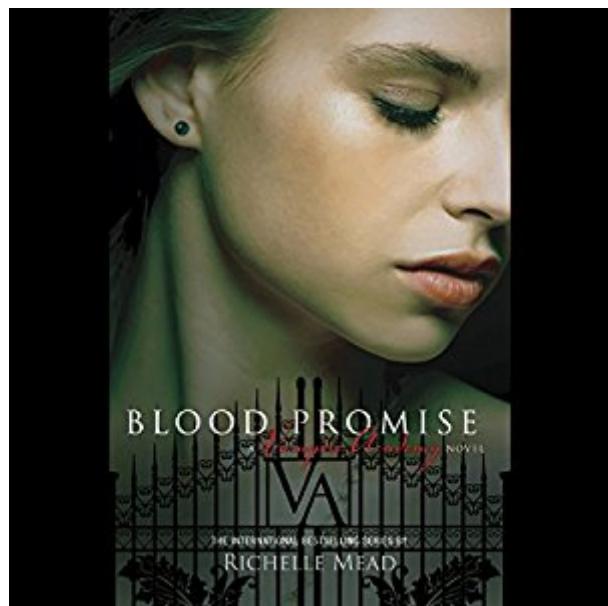


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Blood Promise: Vampire Academy, Book 4



Synopsis

The recent Strigoi attack at St. Vladimir's Academy was the deadliest ever in the school's history, claiming the lives of Moroi students, teachers, and guardians alike. Even worse, the Strigoi took some of their victims with them . . . including Dimitri. He'd rather die than be one of them, and now Rose must abandon her best friend, Lissa—the one she has sworn to protect no matter what—and keep the promise Dimitri begged her to make long ago. But with everything at stake, how can she possibly destroy the person she loves most? --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

I'll be completely honest: I wasn't at all very excited going into *Blood Promise*, the fourth book of the *Vampire Academy* series. The previous installment, *Shadow Kissed*, was what I call a game changer of a novel and contained a lot of big developments, but it also ended on a note that I didn't really care for with Rose leaving the Academy the hunt down Dimitri. Mead has surprised me in many ways with the series thus far, so I was hoping that maybe, just maybe, she'd turn around and knock this one out of the park like she has with the previous books—but it never happened. In fact, it ended up being a frustrating slog to get through. Spoilers follow. With the events of *Shadow Kissed* still fresh in her mind, Rose finds herself in Russia

ridding the world of Strigoi, one at a time. Taking out Strigoi is only incidental to her real goal: finding and killing recently turned Dimitri, as she'd promised she would months earlier should he ever turn. Her endeavors not only bring her into contact with the Alchemists, an institute of humans who help keep the vampire world hidden, they also take her straight to Dimitri's family. And when she finally encounters Dimitri, she realizes that her plan will be impossible to carry out. Meanwhile, back at the Academy, Lissa has been hanging out with a new girl: Avery. But Avery isn't turning out to be the best influence and her intent may be more nefarious than anyone could have expected. I hate to start this on such a negative note, but the pacing is atrocious. It's really slow for the first 300 pages. Rose travels around Russia, Lissa settles into a life without Rose, and Rose meets several inconsequential people. Nothing that occurs in these pages really seemed to matter and it all just felt like lots of wasted time. The story just dragged as if it was just trying to fill space to meet some page quota. None of this would matter if the long journey was intended to help Rose get over Dimitri and heal (so, character development), but that's not the case. It all picks up a bit when she finds Dimitri and then we're treated to MORE wasted time by Rose being captured by Dimitri. As an aside, I hate the trope of "protagonist gets captured by her newly-evil love interest." It always results in the protagonist just lounging around, playing dress up while mooning over her beloved. Rose has an excuse for this with her high from being fed from, but it's still super frustrating to read and accomplishes absolutely nothing. After nearly 300 pages of eating up pages by travelling all over Russia, this additional stalling of the plot just wasn't needed. Everything picks up again after Rose comes to her senses and makes an effort to fight back, but it's sort of too little too late. When it's all said and done, there are maybe only 150 pages of relevant content in this nearly 500 page book. There are some decent developments hidden among the fluff, but it's not really worth slogging through the irrelevant garbage to find it. I also can't shake the feeling that this book could have been left out entirely without having much impact since so much of it feels like filler. There's a very similar issue with Lissa's story. The end result is interesting. Another spirit user? And one that isn't as benign as Adrian? Intriguing! But the pages and pages of buildup feel so unnecessary and long. Additionally, there's a bit of an issue with the bond that Rose and Lissa shared. I'd said in my review for "Shadow Kissed" that I could see the bond becoming a plot crutch and that's exactly what happened here. In previous books,

Rose's peek into Lissa's life have told her what's going on presently and given her an inkling into what Lissa may be thinking. But now, suddenly Rose can pry into Lissa's thoughts and get not only a detailed idea of how Lissa feels about current events, but also the backstory of how they've occurred. It's all just very convenient and I can't help but think that the story suffers from Mead attempting to split it. Rose can just slip into Lissa's mind whenever she wants, usually when Rose's story is starting to get a little stale. I'll don't know, it just seems like a plot device that attempts to buoy a struggling story. I'll give credit where it's due, though, and admit that I really enjoyed the fight between Lissa and Avery. It was one of the most creative combat sequences that I've read and I enjoyed the deviation away from the usual "Rose kicks everyone" ass. Plus, it's just kind of amusing to watch Lissa, who previously has never lifted a finger against anyone, punch an assailant in the face. This was definitely a high point in the novel that almost made up for all the dragging the beginning and middle did. Almost. Just like with the previous books, the ending packs something of a wallop. I was incredibly moved by Lissa and Rose reuniting, almost to the point of tears. I loved that Rose reconnected with her mother and was shocked to learn that Abe was her father. I was even more pleased that Rose was actually starting to give Adrian a chance to win her affections and seemed to be interested in moving forward with him. In short, Rose was starting to move on, away from Dimitri and what happened in Russia. After all of the pages devoted to a relationship that I didn't fully buy, I was ecstatic that Rose appeared to be on the path to recovery, putting her past behind her and coming to terms with it so she can graduate and move into the future. And then it's all ruined when she gets the letter from Dimitri. Let's be real here. Adrian will never have a fair shot with Rose, even if they do have great chemistry. I guarantee that the next two books will be all about finding Dimitri again and figuring out a way to un-Strigoi him. And that just doesn't excite me at all. I don't usually do this but I'm adding a bonus paragraph to this review! I'm a Russophile. I spent several years studying the culture and language and studied abroad there in an immersive language program. In short, I love Russia and so few novels that I read take me there that I'll dedicate a moment to reflect on the country's portrayal. Honestly, Mead didn't do that bad! She seems to have done her research on the places that Rose would have visited (though I can't claim to have

ever been to Siberia) and took care to present the locals and their beliefs in an inoffensive manner, so I was satisfied enough. I admittedly bristled a bit at Rose's complaints about Russian cuisine, but then I reminded myself that Rose doesn't really want to be here, so she's not quite as charitable as I would be. The only inaccuracy that I picked up on was that the church that the Belikovs attend has pews. Russian Orthodox churches do not traditionally contain pews, so they aren't commonly found over there. But that's not a significant part of the story at all, just a minor nitpick. I also found myself wondering how she got a visa approved so quickly, but again, that's just me getting stuck on details. So, if Mead was intent on parading us through a country, at least she picked one that interested me! Alright, so the biggest failing of this novel from my perspective is that it really relies on the reader supporting the Rose/Dimitri romance. And I don't. Call me cynical and heartless, tell me that I don't understand how deep their love is, tell me whatever the Hell you want, but I just don't buy this deep relationship that Mead keeps insisting they have. I simply never saw enough development in the first three novels to justify the significance placed on this relationship, and what I did see wasn't heartfelt love. At best, it was infatuation and hero worship from Rose with a tiny bit of reciprocation from Dimitri. Sure, they had sex once (and I totally called that "that time in the cabin" would come up over and over again), but one could almost argue that it was an accidental heat of the moment sort of thing rather than a coupling born of true love. So yeah, this whole relationship wasn't established enough for me to buy Rose throwing away her whole life to essentially pursue it. And Mead must have realized that, too, since she does some serious backtracking to convince us that Rose and Dimitri have had more lovey dovey moments than we've seen in the form of long, drawn out memories of the two interacting in some meaningful way. There's a huge problem with this: we've spent almost every minute with Rose over the last few months. As far as I can remember, there has been literally no time for these memories to have occurred. It's a very lazy attempt by the author to sell us on a relationship that's key to enjoying the book now when she should have been growing and developing it more purposefully in the first three installments. "Blood Promise" was pretty much dead in the water to me upon starting it because it all hinges so heavily on being invested in Rose and Dimitri. Everything revolves around Dimitri, and I do mean everything. All of Rose's thoughts, her memories, the things his family tells us (which are just more rushed attempts to give Dimitri more

characterization to validate the time spent on him), her decisions aren't everything. I am just not on board with this relationship. I have seen nothing to convince me that these two need to be together and, if anything, have seen more evidence to the contrary. Nothing in this book further convinced me that they are a couple that absolutely must be together. Damn it, Rose, you are eighteen and Dimitri is the only guy you have ever loved. There are other men out there, ones you have more chemistry with and can maybe develop a better relationship with. I don't get why Dimitri is the be all end all. As an aside, I burst into laughter when Rose berates one of Dimitri's sisters for not knowing what love is. While it is true that Dimitri's sister was in a hopelessly manipulative relationship with a Moroi and well on her way to becoming a blood whore, I don't think Rose truly knows the meaning of love, either. She spouted some nonsense about your partner being your other half and feeling like part of her soul died when Dimitri became a Strigoi and so on and so on, but it is absolutely laughable because I never saw any of the things that she was describing in her relationship with Dimitri. It came off as yet another attempt by Mead to tell us that Rose and Dimitri are just meant to be. On the Lissa side of things, what happened with her and Christian? Christian breaks up with her at the end of the novel for her actions while under Avery's influence, and I can't say that I fully blame him, but this seems very out of character for him. Until now, he has been fairly willing to sit down and talk to Lissa about whatever is bothering her and he is usually ready with advice or forgiveness. I could have thought that he could be more understanding of the situation and the fact that Lissa wasn't in control of herself. You know, talk it out like most couples do. Instead, he just decides to break it all off. It just didn't feel right for him and I can't help but feel like this twist was thrown in solely for the sake of adding some more drama. Up until now, I have really liked Rose as a protagonist and narrator. Her voice was strong and interesting and she came off as a very genuine and capable young adult with both weaknesses and attributes. In "Blood Promise," my opinion of her began to flag. She is gone from being a practical, if headstrong and sometimes emotional, young woman preparing to begin her adult life to a lovesick girl who feels justified in putting her life on hold to hunt down a guy that she was infatuated with (and yes, I know that she presents it as more than that, but that is what it boils down to). Rose can still kick ass and her confidence is still sort of there, but now she spends a decent portion of the book worrying about her clothes and

appearance, things that she didn't concern herself with earlier. I always loved that Rose put so much value in her friendship with Lissa; in a genre filled with bland heroines pining over their love interests with no outside relationships, it was refreshing to have a protagonist with such a steady friendship. But that's all out the window now and with that ending, I don't really see it changing anytime soon. Additionally, her voice felt off, for lack of a better word. She still has her moments of sarcasm and self-awareness, but it often came off as sounding forced and a little unnatural. I got the impression that Mead was sort of just phoning it in for the sake of getting through the book. Most of the time, Rose just tends to drone on without the passion or care that her character was given in the earlier books. And while I suppose that she does grow (at least until she gets that damned letter from Dimitri), it's a long journey to get to some pretty obvious revelations that she just sort of suddenly has. This simply wasn't Mead's best utilization of this previously interesting and unique narrator. I can't help but wonder if this marks the point where the author had too many projects going and wasn't able to devote the time or effort to making "Blood Promise" as good as it could have been since, in hindsight, many aspects of the novel felt like halfhearted efforts that lacked the life and authenticity of the earlier installments. As for the other

characters well my thoughts on the aren't great there, either. My main issue is that the figures that we grew close to in the first three books aren't present for a majority of the novel. Instead, we get some new characters that conveniently pop up when Rose needs them. This would be fine if they were intriguing individuals in their own rights that felt like they were serving a purpose beyond taking up space, but they just aren't. Sydney is functional enough, I suppose. She gives us some insight into this mysterious order known as the Alchemists and she has her own issues with the organization and their relationship with vampires, but that's about all she offers as a character. There was nothing about her that particularly interested me and that's a bit of a shame given that she has her own spinoff now. And she left once her part in all of this was done. In fact, that's what most of the characters do: they play their parts (Sydney, Dimitri's family, the other Strigoi, the guys that Rose goes hunting with, Avery and her brother, the humans working at the Strigoi manor, etc.) and then just disappear. It's all so lazy compared to the careful characterization that was put into everyone in the earlier books. Mead used to take the time to develop her characters, but now

they're just like set pieces, moving in and out as the story needs them. I can't move on from characters without touching on Dimitri.

Readers' opinions on his new personality are pretty mixed. There have even been some comparisons to Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I can't talk about any similarities there, but I will say that I found Dimitri's change very boring and uninspired. See, I liked the old Dimitri. I may have never bought his relationship with Rose, but I rather appreciated that he was a paragon for good, an individual who accepted his role in vampire society and strove to make the best of it. I've noticed a trend in the YA genre: the romance interest is either going to be a brooding supernatural bad boy or a loyal best friend from the protagonist's childhood. Dimitri was a deviation from that and I found it quite refreshing that he didn't fit the normal mold. But now? Now he's just a brooding bad boy. He's edgy and dark, he encourages Rose to make questionable decisions, he oozes sex appeal and he's horribly boring for it. It's all just so expected that I couldn't find much of interest in the new Dimitri. I wish he'd maintained some of his old values. It would have been far more intriguing to see him trying to reconcile his old self with his new Strigoi persona. But, alas, Mead didn't really take any risks with him. Overall, *Blood Promise* was a horribly disappointing book and I can't shake the feeling that by the end of this series, this novel will feel mostly superfluous. The story plodded along, taking us through Russia and introducing us to a slew of characters that don't matter until we finally meet up with Dimitri, which then leads to yet another slog through too many pages of Rose languishing about. The whole effort feels phoned in and it's such a drop in quality from the first three novels that I'd probably stop here if it weren't for the fact that I'm over halfway through the series. I was ready to give it three stars for the unique final battle and Rose appearing to have moved on at the end but then she got that letter from Dimitri that just promised more of the same in the next book. I'm not optimistic for what's to come, but I've put too much time into this series to stop now. I can only give it 2 stars, and I feel like I'm being generous with that.

Let me start by saying the entire Vampire Academy series, 6 books, is a winner. Love it. But the

narrator who read the Audible version drove me crazy. The narrators for the first three books were acceptable and I grew to like their dialog after a while. However, the male characterizations in this book were extremely difficult to take. Both Adrian's and Dimitris voices/dialects were awful. I guess there's no other way to say it. If it weren't for my love of the book I would probably have quit listening after a half hour. I barely made it through. I understand the narrator "adjusts" her accents and voices in the next book so I'm going to give her one more chance. These books deserve better treatment.

Wow! This book is not like the others. I was frustrated to discover that the story had separated Rose and Lissa - I was sure that this would negatively impact the flow of the story. It didn't - it is a little rough in the beginning to flow between the different locations (Lissa @ School and Rose on her adventure). Rose's adventure leads to future storylines; she meets new people and discovers things unknown to her - things that she is sheltered from. All of the wonderful characters that Mead created in previous installments are back, along with some new intriguing ones. I visited Mead's website today and discovered it is going to be a long wait, May 18, 2010, for the next book Spirit Bound: A Vampire Academy Novel. But I have no doubt that she, Mead, can deliver another winner!

This book would have received a two star rating had it not been for the second half of the book, which garnered it an additional star. In short, I'm not really feeling the whole Lissa thing. Sure, she redeems herself somewhat at the end of the story but what the hell? Am I the only person who sees an issue with her refusal to heal Dimitri? I mean seriously, I'm not even remotely kidding. That would be the end of my BFFness regardless of some stupid bond. Can anyone say hypocrite? I can. You save your own boyfriend but won't help out your besties? Nope, that was it. Stick a fork in me I'm done. What saved this novel: in short, the dramatics with Dimitri and some redeeming friendly stuff at the end (which, as I noted, was not enough to win me back entirely). Other than that, there were a lot of elements that were needless. Story arcs that did nothing to advance the story and huge pacing problems. The visit to Russia was nice but all things being equal, some of the Lissa stuff just got boring. Plus, all the flashbacks to the old Dimitri were too little too late. I would have much rather seen this investment into his character in, say, book one. I have a better feel for Dimitri now but why, oh why, did it have to take SOOOO long to get there. Ugh. Anyway, it was better than the last book and based on the ending I'm hopeful that book five will be better still.

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