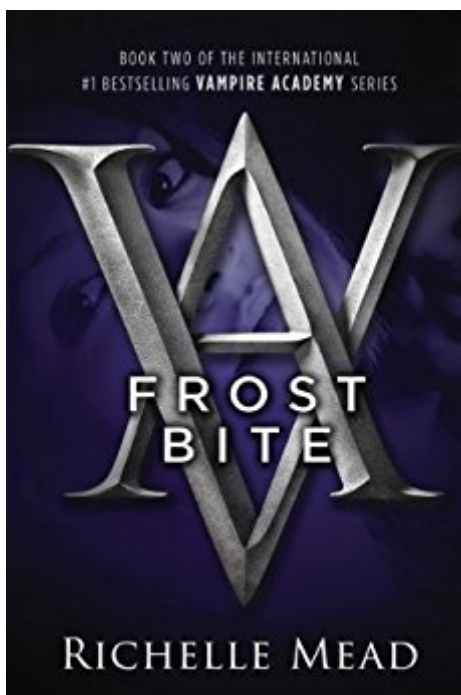


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Frostbite: A Vampire Academy Novel



Synopsis

Rose loves Dimitri, Dimitri might love Tasha, and Mason would die to be with Rose. It's winter break at St. Vladimir's, but Rose is feeling anything but festive. A massive Strigoi attack has put the school on high alert, and now the Academy is crawling with Guardians including Rose's hard-hitting mother, Janine Hathaway. And if hand-to-hand combat with her mom wasn't bad enough, Rose's tutor Dimitri has his eye on someone else, her friend Mason's got a huge crush on her, and Rose keeps getting stuck in Lissa's head while she's making out with her boyfriend, Christian! The Strigoi are closing in, and the Academy is not taking any risks.... This year, St. Vladimir's annual holiday ski trip is mandatory. But the glittering winter landscape and the posh Idaho resort only create the illusion of safety. When three friends run away in an offensive move against the deadly Strigoi, Rose must join forces with Christian to rescue them. But heroism rarely comes without a price.

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Customer Reviews

I read *Vampire Academy* about eight years ago. I was sampling several vampire Young Adult series from around that time, and while I very much enjoyed the book, I didn't pick up the next one and then life happened and I sort of forgot about it. Until now, that is. Since it had been so long since I read the first book, I wasn't really sure what to expect going in to *Frostbite*, and in hindsight, it had a lot of aspects that usually disappoint me, but I just couldn't stop reading. I got hooked. Spoilers follow. Rose and Dimitri discover something terrible: a royal Moroi family has been attacked in their own home and the Strigoi that attacked them must have had human helpers to get past the wards and the family's dhampirs. With this terrible event occurring so close to the holidays, the students of St. Vladimir's are sent to a ski lodge with their families to wait out the holiday season in relative safety. This does nothing to mitigate the Strigoi threat, however, and the Moroi find themselves divided on what they should do after another attack is reported. Stay together in large groups? Get more dhampirs? Or learn to defend themselves with their elemental magic? No one can agree. As if all of that wasn't stressful enough for Rose, she's now unintentionally seeing Lissa's romantic escapades through their bond as if she needed that when her own relationships are up in the air! All that's certain is that the Strigoi need to be stopped before they can kill any more families, but how? Overall, I think it's a pretty good premise for this type of story. It's not pretentious, it's not overly complex, and it isn't biting off more than it can reasonably chew for a novel of this length. It continues the conflicts set up in the first novel well enough and sets up some pretty big conundrums for the characters to hash out in later books. If I'm going to be entirely honest, the basic premise isn't terribly unique, but the bread and butter of this series so far seems (to me, at least) to be the characters and the worldbuilding. I'll address the characters in a bit, but I'll take a moment here to say that Mead has some of the most interesting, solid worldbuilding that I've seen in a Vampire YA novel. She does a wonderful job of setting up the different factions, the larger impacts of some new developments within her vampire world, and arguments within the factions. So for this book at least, I'm happy to take the story as it is since the characters and worldbuilding are so well done. So, there's a lot of recapping. In fact, there's an entire prologue devoted to reminding the reader of what happened in the last book, why Rose and Lissa

are special, and how the Strigoi/Moroi/dhampir society works. As someone who hasn't revisited Mead's world in eight years, I found this to be incredibly helpful and a nice refresher of the important bits of the first book, but I can see how it might annoy someone who isn't dealing with a huge gap between books. Hopefully the repetition eases off in future books because I can see it fast becoming tiring if Rose is always summing up events that the reader has already read.

"Frostbite" picks up not long after "Vampire Academy" leaves off, and man does it not wait to throw us right into something. Rose and Dimitri get us off to an exciting beginning and from there, things transpire in a confused flurry for Rose as she faces one conundrum after another: her continued training with a mentor with whom she shares a forbidden attraction, a sometimes-uncontrollable mental bond with her best friend, the arrival of her mother and all of the pesky problems that come with her, the sudden romantic attention from her best friend, and the lingering emotional trauma of what she witnessed of the massacre. It's a good setup and I found myself easily pulled back in to Mead's world of teenage drama and vampire intrigue. The ending holds that same gripping quality. As soon as Rose and Christian leave the lodge to track down their wayward friends, things kick into high gear. It's easy to keep flipping through the pages as Rose and friends figure out how to outsmart their Strigoi captors and the humans that help the evil vampires. The beginning and end of "Frostbite" hold up very well, providing excitement and entertainment as they either introduce the book's conflicts or push you to the novel's climax. The middle, unfortunately, doesn't fare quite so well. This is an issue that I feel I encounter a lot with Young Adult novels: while the introduction and conclusion are engrossing and keep the story moving, the middle stalls to either let the heroine play dress up, train, or lament her relationship woes. Since Rose is far too awesome to worry about dressing up (save for once, but she's justified and the reaction isn't the typical "protagonist realizes she's hot" cliché) and her training is put on hold while they're on vacation, this time is spent putting Rose through relationship turmoil. I'll touch on the romance in a bit, but suffice to say that it all goes on a bit too long. In fact, it's the reason I gave this book four stars instead of five is that I started to get annoyed with how much time was spent with Rose trying to figure out how she felt about her different romance options. Once things get going again and she brazenly breaks out of the ski resort, the story gets back on track, but it does crawl to a painful slog until that point. That being said, overall the book is very easy to

read. Mead just has this style that goes down smooth and, despite the drooping middle portion, kept me happily turning pages. I never really had to stop and reread passages to figure out what was going on because it all flows so well and is written so clearly. Additionally,

Frostbite gets some bonus points for me for holding up relatively well on its own. Too many second books suffer from *"Middle Book Syndrome"* – that is, the unfortunate tendency for the novel to neither wrap anything up nor introduce anything that ties particularly well into the first or last books – but this book isn't one of them. With all of the recapping that Rose does, you probably wouldn't necessarily need to read the first novel to understand what's going on in this one, and everything wraps up pretty well by the end of the story that if you wanted to stop here, you probably could – although with the rising threat of the Strigoi, I don't know why you'd want to!

It's impossible to discuss the plot without touching on the romance because, oh boy, is there a lot of it. My generic blanket disclaimer that I put in pretty much all of my reviews is that I generally dislike romance and, especially in the YA world, often think that the characters' relationship drama tends to usurp the story. That and, frankly, a lot of romance isn't well written or convincing and feels shoehorned in for no reason other than to check the "romance box". So, with my bias out of the way, let's sum up who's dating or lusting after whom. Lissa is still with Christian, though the introduction of Adrian – a brooding bad boy Moroi with a secret – throws a brief wrench in the Lissa/Christian romance. Rose has the most tumultuous love life that I've seen in a while. She's still lusting for Dimitri, her trainer, and tries to start a relationship with Mason, one of her best friends who is absolutely crazy about her, to distract her raging hormones. She also has some funny feelings for Adrian, but they don't seem to amount to too much. Dimitri rekindles an old flame in the form of Christian's aunt, Tasha, and Mason seems to be getting some attention from a few other girls in Rose's year – and of course both of these developments throw Rose into a tizzy. I should have absolutely hated all of this relationship drama, yet I oddly didn't. I don't know if it was the fact that the characters are all pretty intriguing, that Rose is such a genuine narrator that it's easy to get swept up in what's going on, or that – unlike many YA novels I've read of late – Rose actually makes some adult decisions regarding the love triangle that emerges. I loved that she realized that she

couldn't force Dimitri to love her if he had eyes for someone else and, on that same line of thought, that she couldn't force a relationship with Mason if she didn't truly love him. So, yes, there's a lot of romance drama, but it's so convincingly written that even I, someone who will happily admit to hating romance as a whole, found myself completely engrossed in it. That's not to say that I didn't have problems with it. For one, it all goes on entirely too long. Sometimes Mead is a master at sneaking in some sexy thought while Rose is on duty (usually relating to Dimitri, but hey, I think he'd set any heart racing) and sometimes she's a bit bad about having Rose only think about her relationship woes. This ties into my issue with middle portion of the book because while the ski lodge vacation brought light to some fascinating developments in the Moroi world, it also conveniently relieved Rose of any of the obligations so she could focus solely on her romance dilemma and it does go on for a while. It doesn't really matter how much I may be enjoying the characters, if the protagonist does nothing but lament about her choice of guys, I'm going to start getting fed up. Also, the love triangle did little to win me over because, while I'm pleased that Rose came to a decision without one of her potential beaux dying (sort of), undergoing a drastic change in personality, or falling out of love with her, I'm frankly sick of seeing them. Especially in this case since the outcome was never really in doubt. Mason never stood a chance, so I wish there wasn't so much time taken to convince us that he did. And as an aside, things do get pretty steamy for Christian and Lissa. I will never buy that reserved, proper Lissa has now had sex with two different guys while flirtatious, outgoing Rose is still a virgin, but that being said, I'll concede that Mead knows how to write a sensuous yet still age appropriate sex scene. I rather pitied Rose for accidentally watching it, but it lent a certain maturity to the novel and Christian and Lissa's relationship. I'm not really a fan of kids getting it on, but I feel that the author handled it well while making it both steamy and responsible. One thing I loved about "Vampire Academy" and continued to enjoy here is the fact that Rose has relationships beyond romantic ones. Her friendship with Lissa still plays a prominent role, even if she's feeling a little neglected by her bestie as of late. Her mother and their attempts to reconcile their differences (or, more accurately, their similarities) to forge a new understanding with one another were fascinating to read. I feel that parental figures are far too often absent in YA novels either they're dead, or they don't care about the protagonist, or the protagonist never knew them, or I even

remember one book stating that the main character's grandmother was into "women's rights" and therefore stayed out of her life so I was delighted to see Rose's mother become a central figure. I was also very impressed by the handling of Mia, Rose's social rival. Over the course of the novel, Rose goes from absolutely hating Mia to having a certain amount of admiration for her as Mia deals with her grief over her mother's death and puts her elemental magic to effective use. It would have been easy for Mead to continue their rivalry, but instead both girls rise above it and become better people in the process. To sum this all up, it's great to have a main character who maintains relationships outside of her romantic ones and I really, really wish that more YA authors would take note of this. With that out of the way, let's move on to characters. Our main character is Rose, and damn, do I love Rose. For starters, I adore her confidence. I'm sick of YA protagonists that lament their plain appearances (brown hair, brown eyes, pale skin, yadda yadda), who constantly tell themselves that they can't do things, and who need to have their hands held by the (usually) men in their lives. Rose isn't any of this. She's a girl who describes herself as a nine out of ten in appearance (and a ten on a good day!), loves her curves, and wouldn't change her brown hair for the world. She knows what she's capable of as far as her combat skills go and she's happy to leap into the fray to demonstrate them. Guys giving her attention may serve as an added ego boost, but she doesn't require it to be happy with herself. I liked this about her in the first book, and I like it even more here. I've read some complaints that she's sometimes immature, but that's another thing that I enjoy about her character: she's often a very genuine teenager. Sometimes she lets her emotions control her; she lashes out at someone who's hurt her; she'll impulsively kiss someone; she allows herself to be goaded into anger when she should know better; sometimes she's just plain irrational. But you know what? That's how teenagers are. And you know what else? People react as they realistically would to Rose's occasional lapses in control and, as a result, Rose grows as a character. She reaches some mature decisions regarding her relationships (both romantic and platonic), she learns that her mother is a person with a past and deserves to be treated as such, she's gradually forcing herself to not just jump into things and to think her actions through, and she confronts her own limitations time and time again and learns how to surpass them. Even in this book, she shows a remarkable amount of development and I look

forward to seeing where she goes from here. She's also a fantastic narrator. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that she makes the book as delightful a read as it is. I'm always of the opinion that a novel should only be written in first person if the narrator has either a unique voice or an interesting bias. Rose has a wonderfully snarky way of presenting what's going on. Mead knows how to hit just the right amount of sarcasm to give the book some flavor without making the protagonist come off like a prickly, whiney snatch and it does wonders for the novel. To go farther, I'd argue that without Rose's distinct voice, "Frostbite" would be just another YA vampire novel with an average plot and above-average worldbuilding.

It's also very clear that the narrator is a teenager. I've read books where the whole teenager voice thing isn't done very well (Marked comes to mind) but it's implemented properly here. Even if I knew nothing about Rose, I'd still read this and know that it was coming from a teen trying to find her place in the world while slogging through her problems and proving that she isn't a kid anymore and that's what first person point of view is meant to accomplish. I just hope that Rose's attitude continues in future books. The other characters are fleshed out very well and I was quite pleased by the fact that all of them seemed to play some sort of role in the story. No one is there simply to be there even Adrian, who I had thought was introduced just to be the brooding bad boy, ends up revealing a secret related to Lissa's use of the mysterious fifth element, Spirit. The characters all seem pretty well-rounded, and the ones that Rose comes into regular contact with have their strengths and weaknesses. In short, they feel remarkably real and move beyond whatever hole into which they might otherwise be placed. Perhaps the Stirgoi can be largely summed up as "evil" and a portion of the Moroi nobility as "entitled" or "snobbish," but that's possibly because Rose doesn't interact much with either group, so we don't see much of them beyond those snippets. Mead does well with characters, I'm finding, and not just the main ones. I can't wrap up this review without touching on the death at the end of the book. It's Mason who meets his end (which is why Rose is never able to tell him that she doesn't have feelings for him). Perhaps it's just because I wasn't as into Mason as some other reviewers seem to have been, but I didn't feel especially distraught

over it. It happens tragically quickly and, while I personally may not have been too affected, I did appreciate Rose's grief. Her heartbreak over losing her best friend is profound and is, I assume, something that will continue to impact her throughout the coming novels. Overall, I enjoyed *Frostbite*. The story is well suited for a novel of this length, some new revelations and conflicts come into play, and the characters are wonderfully fleshed out. Rose continues to be a very convincing narrator with a voice of her own who isn't just growing in skills, she's growing as a person. I have to take some points off for the dragging middle portion that focuses way too much on Rose's relationship drama and for the emergence of a cliched love triangle whose outcome was never seriously in doubt. Still, I'm very much enjoying the *Vampire Academy* series so far and look forward to where this world of Strigoi, Moroi, and dhampirs will go next and what role Rose and her friends will play in it. I'd give it 3.5 stars, rounded up to 4 because Rose's narration is just plain fun sometimes, and why do I read if not to have fun?

The *Vampire Academy* series is adored by many, many readers. I liked the first book, *Vampire Academy*, especially the end, and was intrigued enough to put *Frostbite*, the follow up, on my to be read list. It wasn't at the top of my list, but man, after reading it, it should have been. *Frostbite* by Richelle Mead takes place soon after *Vampire Academy*. Rose still has strong feelings for Dimitri, her best friend, Lissa is still trying to figure out her newfound powers and her burgeoning relationship with Christian, and Mia, the mean girl, is still mean. That said, everything shifts in such a dramatic and moving way, that I was completely floored. I don't want to talk too much about the plot because there are so many wonderful moments that you just have to read it and experience it for yourself. Rose, to me, was more likeable, because she is growing up. She still has the daredevil, impetuous side, but she also is learning caution and restraint from Dimitri. Her other friend, Mason, (who I had a bit of a crush on), wants more. The evil Strigoi race is attacking the Moroi and their friends, and Rose will do anything to keep her friends safe. My heart pounding in my chest probably the whole last 25% of the book. The rest of the book was absolutely wonderful as well. All the characters get more fleshed out. We get introduced to a new character, Adrian, who has many secrets of his own. Mia becomes incredibly three dimensional, which I loved, and she may be one of my new favorite characters. Rose and Lissa are coming into their own, and it really shows in this book. Rose's internal monologue showed the intense coming of age-- and how she grappled between her feelings of anger towards her mother and her admiration for her. And then in the end,

how this life may be much less glamorous than she ever imagined. I was incredibly impressed with this book, and I'll be sticking around to see more of these characters. Mead is talented, and deserves her many fans.

Today I behaved like a kid at a candy store, completely happy and slightly deranged, because my copy of Frostbite arrived. Then I opened it and four pages fell off...No. I'm not kidding. However, this is a manufacture error and has nothing to do with the awesomeness that is this comic. Three very important things I was hoping for and got. 1) Mason: with his red hair he looks absolutely gorgeous in a green shirt. The scene where he dies made me tear up all over again. 2) Adrian: who made me swoon all over the place. He looks exactly like I imagined him while reading. I wish he'd gotten more great lines though. I still got shivers when he appeared saying "little dhampir" *squee* 3) Dmitri and the promise of things to teach. Oh yes. That last two page drawing totally made my day.

Mwuahaha. Now, MOAR PLZ!

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