



# Descent into Dust

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London 1926. Widow Emma Andrews 25 sees black cloud in shape of man around angelic little Henrietta. Valerian Fox recognizes master vampire he hunts, Marius. Hen's nursemaid Miss Harris sets Emma's family against the widow.

## **Descent into Dust Details**

Date : Published 2010 by Avon Harper Collins

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Author : Jacqueline Lepore

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Genre : Paranormal, Vampires, Fantasy, Historical, Historical Fiction, Gothic, Horror



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## From Reader Review Descent into Dust for online ebook

### Sadia says

I love dark fiction, specially when it's set in the Victorian era. There's just something so appealing, and mysteriously romantic about the whole thing. I think Jacqueline Lepore is a fantastic story teller, I'd taken a break from reading for a few months and I'm glad I picked this book to end my hiatus.

It's the story of Emma Andrews, a Dhampir [part vampire, part human] and her transition from a grieving widow to a vampire hunter. The plot is excellent, Lepore has masterfully created a perfect blend of action, mystery and drama. I drank in all the rich details and description, which was apt, accurate and very vivid. Emma is visiting her cousin/friend in a remote village which is said to be plagued by an unexplained illness. She sense from the beginning that something is amiss, there are clues written in Greek all over the mansion, and Emma's niece Henrietta is behaving oddly. Add to all that, the visions or hallucinations Emma sees. Is it all real? Or is Emma plunging into Dementia? Or is it her mother's illness that is taking over her too?

The last thing she wants to do is draw attention to herself, she is already judged by the tragic life her mother lead. Each day brings a new mystery, and Henrietta's constant talking of her imaginary friend Marius has Emma rattled. Who is this mysterious guy? This person who no one has seen? In no time, Emma figures out that something sinister is about but now it remains to be seen that who will believe her? And more importantly who can she trust? Can she trust Mr Fox, the enigmatic and silent house guest who seems to be in the right place at the right time always? Or Sebastian, the carefree and colorful brother of the host's friend?

I have to admit, I'm almost immune to reading vampire stories but this book was go good, it gave me the goosebumps. Lepore's vampires are bad, sinister and very mysterious. Their methods aren't anything new, it's just their motives that are so shrouded in mystery that one can't help but feel dread, anxiety, excitement as they await for the doom to unfold. Using a helpless, innocent child and controlling them completely was so sinister and wicked, it had me chilled to the bone.

This book is about Emma's big journey, her realization of what she truly is and what she is destined to be. When all masks fall and she sees who is strong enough to brave the storm with her and who is not. And let's not forget the beginning of a possible romance too. I enjoyed every word of this book, so much so that I immediately picked up book too as I finished this one.

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### Valerie says

The book started a little slow but picked up and held my interest. The demands of family and many secrets kept Emma in a life she soon found herself unsure of and forging a new path due to the evil that was surrounding her and her young cousin. By the end of the book I was looking forward to the second one in the series

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### Christyn says

*Descent into Dust* was an interesting historical paranormal story with elements of mystery, suspense, horror and even a bit of romance. As a debut novel to a series it does a good job of introducing us to the world, with particular attention being paid to the characters. This brings to mind the old-fashioned vampire stories, and is thankfully not an angst-ridden, woe-is-me romanticized vampire book. Don't get me wrong there is a fair share of angst and dark in this book but it's not overwhelming or overdone to the point of eye rolling. The only thing that really threw me were some of the religious references mostly because I was completely in the dark on those points.

The characters were the most interesting part of the book. Emma Andrews, the main character is human (well, partially anyway) and imperfect and she makes mistakes. It was interesting seeing her character grow and adapt to each situation - it's not something that happened right away - and even at the end she was making mistakes and freezing (but then again, I can't imagine very many "normal" people thrust into those situations that would do any better). I'm still not sure if I like her, but I'm sympathetic (for the most part), and interested in seeing where she goes and how she develops.

Valerian was a dark, broody character who I generally liked - despite his secrets and mysteries. I look forward to seeing him again as his mission isn't yet complete. Sebastian was probably one of my favorites - despite his dandyish nature I found him charming and completely likable. Father Luke was an interesting character who we may see in the future. Uncle Pete was also likable, and will probably also play a role in future stories.

As to the paranormal aspect of this book - mixed feelings abound. There is too much about it that hasn't been revealed yet, so it's too early to really see where I stand on that particular aspect of the story. (view spoiler) So I have a lot of questions regarding the paranormal aspect of things but I suppose I'll wait and see.

Overall if you're in the mood for something a little darker, with classic vampires (not the pretty romantic ones) plotting something sinister, multilayered characters and a heroine coming into her own - this is for you. It's a fairly good start to a series, and I will read the next book. 3.5 stars.

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## Cj W says

Dhampir:

"The offspring of a vampire and a human, a dhampir is generally portrayed as one with all or most powers of a vampire, with few to no disadvantages."

- Courtesy of Urban Dictionary

### Descent Into Dust

A book from a relatively new author, and psychologist, Jacqueline Lepore.

Emma Andrews, a widowed woman, comes to Avebury to spend some time with her family, and her favoured niece, Henrietta.

It moves into her past, her history of her Mothers mental illness, and also into a romance with a very unlikely character, Valarian Fox, Vampire Hunter.

MY THOUGHTS:

I picked up this book by chance, while perusing through the fiction section at the library, looking for something to read.

I had not heard of the book, the author, or the story, and had no reservations about it at all.

I can honestly say, that I am glad I decided to pick it up.

The book is very well written. I believe, in part, because of the author's psychological background, she writes in ways to grasp the readers attention, which she certainly could have learned in her psych studies.

Also, the romance between her and Mr Fox is very well done. It's very slow moving, not rushed into at all, which I appreciated, because I hate when romance is hot and heavy from the very beginning. There is no real basis for 'hot n heavy' in my mind.

Jacqueline also has a great website, <http://www.jacquelinelepore.com>

You should check that out, it's dark and all creepy like. ;)

This book you can obviously get at your local library, or, Barnes n Noble has it for about \$12, Amazon has it for \$11, or used for way cheaper.

I, being kinda tight on cash, am always in love with the local library option!

- CJ

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## **Vanessa says**

A good old-fashioned gothic Victorian novel!!! The characters are well-drawn and likable, the setting is dark and atmospheric, and the writing is very good. There was definite chemistry between Emma and Valerian, and although their romance is slow and doesn't go very far in this book I found their attraction to be believable.

There are vampires in the story, but they are of the creepy evil "Dracula" kind and not of the "romantic vampire hero" variety. Compared to many more recent vampire novels this one is pretty much "Back to Basics" --- meaning that the author stuck mostly to the myth created by Bram Stoker instead of inventing her own.

Why only 4 stars? Because, well ... there were a few moments in the story where that which happened (or which was being said) didn't seem very plausible to me. It wasn't enough to really annoy me, and it didn't take anything away from my overall enjoyment of the book, but I just don't feel that this is a 5 star book.

Still, I really liked "Descent into Dust" and am looking forward to reading the sequel.

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## **Miriam says**

*When I was young and did not yet know I had a secret. And I think it is time. I feel it is. Time to tell my story. A truly remarkable story.*

Arg. What is it with kids authors these days and their incomplete sentences? Is that supposed to indicate

heightened drama or something? Whatever the intent, it is distractingly sloppy. And on a more story-oriented level, it did not set the tone for everything occurring in the 19th century -- I kept expecting the first few chapters to be background information to a main story set in the present. And although it was actually a decent story, I was continually distracted by the anachronisms in dialogue and behavior. Lastly, a small peeve of mine: the title has no connection to the story. It is a good title, though. And it is a reasonably entertaining light read for those less critical than I.

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## Eve says

A young widow in Victorian England, Emma Andrews is an independent and intelligent woman of means who finds her true purpose when a mysterious plague troubles the village in which her family resides. She discovers that the plague masks an ancient vampire who has come in search of something very powerful that has been hidden for centuries in the English countryside and that somehow he means to use her young cousin, Henrietta, to aid him.

In vowing to protect her beloved Henrietta, Emma finds out that she is destined to be a vampire-hunter, with heretofore hidden skills and gifts. However, dark memories of her dead mother's madness trouble Emma for she fears that she too will succumb to insanity. And although she forms alliances with Valerian Fox, another vampire-hunter, and Father Luke, a Catholic priest, Emma knows she cannot quite trust them, as they have their own motives that might in the end, betray her.

In a market bloated with paranormal lit, *Descent into Dust* by Jacqueline Lepore captured my rabid interest with the following opening passages, which are near perfection:

*Come in under the shadow of this red rock,  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.  
T.S. Elliot, *The Wasteland* (1920)*

*Images of shadow and dust—how these words shattered me when I read them in this recently published poem, penned by one who could never know my story. Though the poet was a stranger, his verse took me in its fist and cast me on a rushing flood tide into the past, back to all which I have held in secret for this long time.*

*With these words beckoning, rattling around in my brain and giving me no peace (I will show you fear in a handful of dust), I cannot resist the pull of memory. And though it is many decades later, it all comes back to me; back even to those early days, when the terror was new and I was dangerously untrained. When I was young and did not yet know I had a secret.*

*And I think it is time. I feel it is. Time to tell my story. A truly remarkable story...*

Did the rest of *Descent into Dust* match the near perfection as promised by the opening passages? Mostly yes.

In trying to parse out what small dissatisfaction I had with the novel, I realized that my problem was

surprisingly - the lack of emotional risk needed to amp up the sense of danger. Most of the novel is spent with the ancient vampire off-scene; we only meet him a couple of times, both of which are powerful scenes: one illustrating the power of his seductiveness and the other the depth of his depravity. So before those scenes, the story has to build him up through the danger to the victim, Henrietta. "She is the best of us," one character declares - and yet we meet a bland and not very endearing child. Although I was invested very much in Emma's welfare, I was not so much in Henrietta's (or maybe I'm just a callous reader who doesn't bat an eyelash when an innocent child becomes prey to a monster :))

Although Emma is fully fleshed out, Lepore's other minor characters need more dimension:

What's the deal with parents? How come they are consistently portrayed as being unable to figure out that something's wrong with their children? If my "precious" child were listless and talked all the time about a scary, imaginary friend, I would think I'd perk up and start monitoring her more closely.

Secondly, the stock gay character who's also a dandy. Hasn't this been done to death? The character of Sebastian, who proves himself to be brave in the end, is portrayed as catty, somewhat shallow, and at times very irritating. Can't we have gay characters that are less of a stereotype?

My minor dissatisfaction with *Descent into Dust* is ultimately outweighed by what it does succeed in doing, which is a fresh take on a vampire tale dripping with gothic style and containing elements of "Catholic traditions, world folklore, and Romantic literature" (per the author).

Conclusion: I am very curious to see where Lepore takes Emma Andrews next and I am so gonna buy the next book!

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## **MissSusie says**

There are no sparkly vampires here! This is a good old-fashioned vampire story. Set in Victorian England Emma lives with the stigma of her mother's madness, she has been told her mother went mad and died but events take place that will make Emma question everything she has known and believed.

The cast of characters in the book was a nice mix from Emma's needy sister, the rouge Sebastian, the secretive Mr. Fox, and the even more mysterious Father Luke. As they work together to save Emma's niece Henrietta from what her parent's believe is an imaginary friend but is actually something far worse he is a vampire. Not a beautiful fall in love with vampire but an evil presence that threatens everything they hold dear.

I enjoyed this book it had a nice mix of Victorian propriety and gothic mystery. Emma was an interesting character as we watch her grow into the person she must become which is a Dhampir a vampire huntress. We see her inner turmoil as everything she believed of her life is wrenched away from her.

I look forward to the next installment in this series.

Thank you Librarything Early Reviewers for the chance to review this book!

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## Amanda says

This was a random choice from the new fiction shelf in the library. As vampire novels go, it was about average. It was entertaining, there were some thrills and scares, and it's certainly set itself up for a series. The plot was done moderately well; it was somewhat predictable, but there was a darker/creepier tone to the book that helped me ignore that as a reader. I particularly liked how Emma, the protagonist, is known to have a mother who went mad, and so everyone around her is waiting for signs that she, too, is going mad - added some nice tension between her and other characters. The core idea (a vampire hunter who is half vampire herself) is nothing new, and in fact I think Jeaniene Frost does a much better version of that in the Night Huntress series. I do give Ms. Lepore kudos for somehow pulling off a character named Valerian Fox, though his back story definitely needs some work - I would hope that is addressed more in the future books of this series. Also, she spends a bit too much time trying to impress the time period upon the reader, in a kind of stilted way. It doesn't make it feel authentic or natural, but ends up being a bit distracting, like she's trying to prove she did her research. I think she should've focused a bit more on character development and relationships instead of setting. The most developed and interesting character in the book was a little girl of about 8 years old, which is a problem when she's not the narrator. But overall, an easy, mostly enjoyable read, perfect for a rainy afternoon when you just want to knock through a quick novel.

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## Sarah Mac says

*Descent into Dust* is a silly read, but it could've been worse...hence the 3 stars. It's a cheesy sci-fi movie on paper. You know you should change the channel, but the entertainment factor is just enough to keep your finger off the remote.

So. Bad things first.

The narrator's voice is bland, the historical setting is extremely thin wallpaper, the non-action scenes drag like heavy boots in mud, & the dialogue is (often) ludicrous. The goofy thread of Dan Brown church conspiracy is totally unnecessary; the vampires & their Evil Plan(tm) should've been enough to propel the plot without secret societies & symbolic paintings. Important information is withheld from the characters for no good reason & key conversations are postponed for flimsy suspense-building -- made even flimsier because the main characters are a perfectly matched pair of brain-dead bimbos. Our heroine is a standard bluestocking Mary Sue with extra-spesh Dhampir abilities (of course), while our hero is a nose-wrinkling Gary Stu with an annoying tendency to wallow in emo -- because that makes him romantic. \*eyeroll\*

That said...

The vampires were un-romantic, un-sexy, soul-sucking villains, which you don't see nearly often enough in newer paranormals. Aside from Emma's annoying Spesh Dhampir Disease, the author goes for classic undead hunting a la *Dracula* -- garlic, stakes, mirrors, crosses. And excepting that goofy bit with the snakes, the action scenes were decent with some fairly graphic details -- which is as it should be, given the nature of the vamps. (Apparently the book hit a better stride when it wasn't poncing around with bland conversational filler. Go figure.)

I can't say I'd particularly recommend it, but you could read worse in the latter-day Avon publishing catalogue.\*\* The pacing is the biggest flaw, IMO; too much filler that was trying to lighten the mood

between bouts of darkness, whereas a shorter, steadily oppressive atmosphere would've better served the plot.

**\*\*No lie.** Have you seen the newest crop of Regency roms? Even the *blurbs* are painful.

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### **Zimt says**

There are not enough Dhampir Stories out there. But every Dhampir Story is unique and interesting. And the same saying goes for this one as well.

So, it is a Story about vampires in an historical setting around 1862-1865.

Our Dhampir is actually a vampire hunter, but she doesn't know a thing.

Emma doesn't know about being a Dhampir, about Vampires and so on and on.

This situation gives the whole book some kind of sly humour.

All the better, because generally the book is very dark and mysterious. The danger for the child is quite serious and the acceptance of the uncommon from the relatives of Emma is poor, indeed.

If your looking for romance, well there is some, but it is sad at first and then the action is over-shadowing it, for me it had just the right amount for a series. Nothing is solved and everything is possible, I have high hopes for the second book.

There is also still a lot of potential for more books, even so, the plot is at the end completed. It's clear that Emma needs some time now, until there can be another step forward.

Mr Fox, well, he is the unpredictable character, I believe. It's hard to tell in which direction he goes next. I thought, it was a bit unusual, but very well done by the author.

The making of, of the book was greatly done. I liked the cover-Art and the style inside.

An awesome new voice in this type of Story.

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### **Nancy says**

Random library selection, pretty decent. I guess its the start to a new series, but it worked pretty well as a standalone. It is set in the mid 1800s and is written as though it was written in that time, as well. So, I didn't click well with the writing style, b/c I'm not a fan of older authors. The story however was good. The only big problem I had is that the villian's name was Marius. Marius, in my head, is and Anne Rice character thru and thru, and the author should have thought of a better name. The description on the book also makes it seem like Dracula himself will play a part, but he really doesn't. Overall a decent book; gothic horror fans will like this one. I also think it would make a good movie, it has the right atmosphere. I have a coworker who likes vampires and older literature, I think I will recommend it to her.

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### **Aimee says**

Emma Andrews discovers all manner of horrors when she goes to visit relatives at sprawling estate in 1860s England. Haunted by her mother's madness and her own fears of suffering a similar fate, she must learn to trust her instincts when begins seeing things that no one else can. She and Valerian Fox must join forces to battle an ancient evil in order to save Emma's cousin, Henrietta, from a horrible fate. Along the way, she discovers the truth about her mother's madness, and therefore the truth about what she really is.

As a heroine, Emma leaves a bit to be desired. I stopped counting how many times she said, "I froze," or "I was helpless," etc., etc. She spends most of the book frozen and helpless. She has some flashes of kick-ass heroism and manages to keep Valerian, herself, and Henrietta from getting killed, but she could have done more. I understand that she is hampered by her lack of knowledge about her own past and her own powers, but a little less "woe is me, I don't know what to do" and a little more action would have been great.

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## Kenci says

I expected to love **Descent into Dust**. What a great premise! A Gothic mystery in the style of Bram Stoker brimming with traditional vampire lore and a Victorian vampire hunting heroine. Sadly, it just never drew me in. It felt rushed. At times it even felt campy (the perfectly proper Victorian heroine going bad a\*\* Buffy on some evil foes). The characters never felt fully developed – more like roughly sketched. While they each had potential, I never felt connected. I never felt anything to make me care what happened. And while the writing was good, it never created the ominous and foreboding ambiance that I was expecting and hoping for. I wanted to be scared! But I never found myself holding my breath in fear or anticipation. I think this new series has possible potential but I don't see myself continuing with it. We'll see. It was disappointing.

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## Tracy says

I really wanted to like this novel, and stuck with it until about page 267, when I realized I was too bored to continue. The pacing seemed too slow, and I was left annoyed again and again by Emma and Valerian Fox's "proper Victorian manners" where nothing was ever really said, till much later. They were start to talk, but then Emma either wasn't sure about Fox, then he pissed her off and angered her and then they didn't speak for a few chapters. Then the very last straw: apparently Fox had intense feelings for Emma but she either wasn't interested or had decided it wasn't "appropriate" to reciprocate his feelings, or the timing was off. I was seriously annoyed with Emma, not just for this but with her storytelling as a whole. The stupid "plan" where she explains what dumbass fool she was (and by the way, why didn't Fox, with all his experience, talk her out of it?) that got her banished from the Manor, and her exile to the Monastery in France that apparently sympathizes with "the Dhampir" just made me annoyed and bored.

There were a few good scenes, and some potential for Emma to be some great vampire hunter (though some of exaggerated mythology—Spring is a time for evil, only a "Dhampir" [the child of a vampire] could become a vampire hunter because only a "Dhampir" can have special power—was hard to take), but there was a ton that was overdone too. The pages and pages and pages of Emma in Marius' grasp, wanting him to bite her after she looked into his eyes so overshadowed Fox's attack, Emma's attempt to stop Marius, and Father Luke's intervention.

So I was just disappointed by this tale. I had started to think I'd want to read the next in the series/trilogy/whatever it is, because as mentioned, some parts were decent and compelling. I honestly think this novel should have started with Emma in France, reflecting on what had brought her there; that could have been Part 1, and then Part 2 could have started when Fox shows up to take her back to the Manor. (I skimmed the rest; I assume Marius is somehow foiled. I know Fox reveals he was bitten by Marius when he was young, and has the potential now to become a vampire servant or a vampire, if bitten again. This too, I found so ridiculous and far-fetched.)

