



Dracula in Love

Karen Essex

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From the shadowy banks of the River Thames to the wild and windswept Yorkshire coast, Dracula's beautiful, eternal muse, Mina-the most famous woman in vampire lore-vividly recounts the joys and terrors of a passionate affair that has linked her and Count Dracula through the centuries, and her rebellion against her own frightening preternatural powers.

Mina's vampire tale is a compelling journey into Victorian England's dimly lit bedrooms, mist-filled cemeteries and terrifying asylum chambers, revealing the dark secrets and mysteries locked within. Time falls away as she confronts perils far beyond mortal comprehension and must finally make the decision she has been avoiding for almost a millennium.

Dracula in Love Details

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Author : Karen Essex

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From Reader Review Dracula in Love for online ebook

Jenny Q says

First off, the title is misleading. There is no love involved in this story. There's a lot of lust, but no evidence of stronger feelings. And since this is told in Mina's first-person POV, we don't get to know Dracula or his feelings at all. I wanted to put this down around page 50 after reading an awful, cringe-worthy description of masturbation, but I felt obligated to keep reading. The whole novel is like one long mindtrip, and in the end it just didn't make a lot of sense to me--and there were several more cringe-worthy sexual descriptions along the way. I kept reading because I liked Mina and I felt very sorry for her, and I kept waiting for the payoff, waiting for that moment where I could say, That's it--there's the heart of the story, that's the point of it all! But it never came.

Deanna says

My eyes were riveted to the pages throughout the entire read. Does that give you clue as to how much I liked this book? It ought to, but just in case it did not, I loved this story. I feel a tad guilty that I liked this book far better than Stoker's Dracula, as if I am not literary enough for Stoker, but whatever, I cannot deny the trance that Dracula in Love put over me. I cannot deny that it did indeed captivate and keep me throughout the whole story. It sucked me into the story, and the lives of the characters in a way that Stoker's Dracula did not. So be it.

Yes, Dracula in Love is based off a Bram Stoker's Dracula. Yes, that is true, and for me it worked. It worked really good. Even though this story worked for me, I do have a feeling for all you Dracula purists, this book will just not do. For me though, I do believe that the author did a fabulous job with staying true to the essence, and maintaining many aspects of Stoker's Dracula while at that same time taking the freedom to change context from which the story derives, to change the relationships, and credibility.

Right from the beginning, the prologue to be precise, the author puts the story into context. She confronts Stoker's Dracula by having Mina address his version; account of details. Mina makes it clear, that his version is not accurate and because of that she has written her memoir. Stoker is woven into the story in subtle ways to show how he obtained his inaccurate version of events. The building of this context gave Dracula in Love credibility...believability.

For Full Review: Polishing Mud Balls

Doria says

What an awful book. I thought, having read Twilight, that the reading market was sated - no, bloated - with fluff about fey blood-suckers and their fetchingly helpless "prey" (adoring idiot-girls with poor judgment). Sadly I was wrong, as this latest offering proved. As usual with these latest examples of the airport novel genre, the writing is just satisfactory enough to offer up a hope - soon dashed - that the book in question will offer some point of originality, perhaps in character development, or striking plot twist, or some such literary

tidbit. Nope.

However, of all the injuries inflicted upon readers' sensibilities, the egregious use of the name "Dracula" is probably the worst slap in the face that author Essex inflicts upon her readers. I took offense at her abuse of the trust and hope that we readers would naturally place in anyone who dares to wield the title of the great and venerable Vampyr. Her ridiculous assertion - that this beloved and feared Dracula is not what he seems to be but something, er, else made me laugh out loud when I got to that "big exciting plot twist" that she had been so carefully leading up to. I'll save you the time you might otherwise waste in reading her book: her "dracula" (the lower case is intentional on my part) is a fairy.

Yes, you read that right, dracula is a one of the Little People, who flit about and cast spells, and marry mortals from time to time, and sort of like blood, but that isn't really necessary to their survival, but it's sort of nice for when they and their mortals engage in - sex? what is it that they do during those tiresome hot 'n heavy scenes ? impenetrable as far as I could tell. Blood is taken and sometimes exchanged, but not always because it can be toxic for the mortals, but sort of not, and **WHAT IS SHE TALKING ABOUT, THIS MAKES NO SENSE AND IT IS STUPID!!!!** Sorry for the outburst, but reading this book was an exercise in futility and frustration. Essex's dracula doesn't sparkle, but he is just as far from being a vampire as was Edward Cullen. He scared me about as much as a day-old kitten, and had somewhat less personality. He loves her, he withdraws from her emotionally, he hates her 'cause she's pregnant and doesn't know it, (a pregnant sort-of-vampire? again??) but he wants to spend eternity with her, but only after she reincarnates after she dies (but wait, I thought she was an immortal vampire? sort of?), but oops now there's a fight scene, etc. Oh, enough already. Nobody buys this nonsense! And not because it's fiction, but because it is implausible and contrived. There's a difference.

I need to speak out about the recent proliferation of watered-down weak-tea books claiming to be about vampires. Enough already. Enough with the semi-effeminate pretty boy vampires who love stupid girls. Enough with vampires who aren't really vampires, who smell sweet and taste like strawberries, and don't want to hurt you because you are so fragile and they are so testosterone-powerful (despite the lack of facial hair). People, I'm only going to repeat this one more time: vampires are undead, terrifying, and smell like the grave. They are full of blood that they have sucked out of some poor person's body. Not out of philosophical angst, or a moody adolescent snit. They steal the blood of the living because they have an insatiable thirst for our blood, and an overwhelming instinct to survive, to make it through one more horrible undead night, no matter what the cost to humanity. Let's not over-romanticize this, shall we? Let's keep it scary, and - within the realm of fiction writing - let's keep it real.

Oh, another thing that I despised about "Dracula in Love" is the stomach-turning rape scene at the beginning of the book, a horribly commonplace occurrence in books of poor quality, where the author takes desperate measures to shock and appall and hold onto her readers, in a transparent attempt to make them feel sympathy and pity for her main female protagonist. Why do so many female writers of tepid fiction write these elaborate scenes of female violation and degradation, followed by interminable pages in which the female's helplessness is countered or "cured" by some kind of supernatural male solution to all her problems? No wait, please don't answer that.

As usual, I stuck it through, and finished the book, a kind of personal honor code of mine, whereby I feel compelled to finish a book that I dislike, if only to better criticize it when I am through reading it. But it wasn't until the end, when I read Essex's parting shot at Bram Stoker - who is dead and cannot defend himself, what cowardice!!! - that I got just plain angry. She says, and I quote:

"I do not know what will become of [Bram Stoker's] story. Thus far, despite its sensational tone and its

gripping narrative, it has failed to sell many copies or capture critical acclaim. Like almost all works of fiction, I am sure that it will be read by a few, and in the coming years, all copies not thrown out with the rubbish or lost in fires or other disasters, will rot in musty libraries until the shelves are purged to make way for newer and more relevant stories."

The irony of this insult is that it is delivered by an author whose work cannot come close to that of Stoker's, either for literary excellence or sheer terrifying suspenseful drama. I strongly encourage readers to a) skip "Dracula in Love" and b) hie themselves to the "musty libraries" or bookstores that Essex's main character derides so unconvincingly, get a copy of Stoker's Dracula, and read it cover to cover. I promise you you won't be disappointed, the way I was when I read "Dracula in love". And, dear fellow readers, please let's all agree to demand - and read - higher quality vampire literature in the future. It's time I reread Interview With A Vampire, and Dracula, and any number of the other well-written vampire novels out there, just to clear the bad taste of strawberry-tasting blood out of my mouth.

Staci says

About: A new take on Bramstoker's Dracula but told from the POV of Mina.

Descriptive Words: compelling, romantic, sexy, seductive....

Location or characters you met:

* Mina: I liked Mina when I watched the movie "Bramstoker's Dracula" and honestly it was Winona Ryder's face that I envisioned as I read this story. She is a character that I could relate to. She's someone who wants to please others, doesn't want anyone to think ill of her, yet she has this dark side that she's reluctant to admit to or even to talk about with her closest friends.

* The Dark Prince : Call me twisted, but I fell in love with Dracula a bit in this book. He has waited hundreds of years to be with Mina and yet, he doesn't force her to be with him. He wants everything to be her choice and is willing to accept her wishes, even though some of them will break his heart...again.

* Jonathan: I thought he was a namby-pamby...(is that a word?) What a weak man! Some of the things that he allowed to happen to Mina made me want to slap him. And the fact that he had carnal knowledge of more than one woman just meant that they (the temptress) were sent from the devil. Now, if a woman wanted to liberate her sexuality...watch out because they locked them up in the asylum for being nymphomaniacs!

* Dr. Von Helsing and his gang of men- egomaniacs, control freaks, and men who were afraid of strong women.

What worked for me:

* Reading the story from Mina's point-of-view. This was brilliant and I couldn't help but feel sympathy for her and also I was cheering her on to be with Dracula.

* The sex scenes. I will admit to re-reading them more than once! Holy smokes were they scorching!

* I felt immense empathy for Dracula and never really thought of him as a monster. I guess that would probably mean I would let him suck my blood!!!!

* Dark, gothic, and Victorian- what more could you ask for?

* Never a dull moment...this was a page-turner and I couldn't put it down!

What didn't work for me:

* I honestly enjoyed everything about this book. I have nothing bad to say about my reading experience.

Recommend? Yes! For those who don't care for explicit sex scenes then you may want me to black out those passages for you, but if you're a fan of Dracula and find yourself intrigued by a GROWN-UP version of vampire love....then look no further because this is a great read!

My Rating: 4.5/5

Svetlana Kovalkova-McKenna says

Ok, once I got past a nasty near-rape scene that opens the book, but does not seem to serve any other purpose other than to shock and disgust the reader, I was determined to read the book and give it a chance, because the book description promised hours of great read. Well, I should have quit right there. I do not think Mina and Dracula as a "fairies" angle worked for this particular story. There is so much thrown into the plot that clashes together: women's rights, history of psychiatry, medicine, Avalon, Sidhe, Arthurian angle and more. It does not work well together at all, and the sex scenes are kind of nasty. I just had to mention that, because I was so put off by them and failed to understand how it was suppose to serve the plot. The author pretty much took apart Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula" and gave a drastically different explanation to everything that happened in it. The result is a badly militated "Dracula" that did not transform into a new stand alone novel for the author. Reads like poorly thrown together fan fiction.

If anyone wants to read a fabulous retelling of "Dracula" that you won't be able to put down or guess what will happen next, I would recommend "Historian" by E.Kostova. It is a book that uses the story of Dracula to spin an amazing new look into relationship between Mina and Dracula, instead of just twisting and borrowing non-stop from Stoker.

Sarah says

Dracula in Love claims to be a retelling of the Mina-Dracula relationship from Bram Stoker's classic novel, Dracula. However, the story told by Essex is at best misleading and at worse implausible and annoying. Here's why:

1. The characters were inconsistent. Their personalities were all over the place, not a single one of them constant.

Jonathan Harker was a good man, then a bad man, then a good man. Morris Quince was a rotten scoundrel who wasn't.

The doctors from the lunatic asylum who treated women for sexual promiscuity were insane sexual deviates. The irony is lost on no one, I'm sure. I'm still trying to figure out how this fits into the story as a whole,

though.

Let us not forget the supposed "heroine" of the story, Mina Murray Harker, who has this unenviable ability to change her mind in the most drastic and dramatic fashion. I found it impossible to like her.

2. The connection between the characters was difficult to fathom, on so many levels. Many of the events that took place in Dracula in Love simply do not make sense when considered in light of the story as a whole. At the time, I quite enjoyed Essex's descriptions of the asylum, but in retrospect I struggle with understanding its purpose.

3. Despite the title, the Dark Prince himself (that is, Dracula) is almost completely absent for most of the book. He turns up for the last quarter, but then his role in the story is annoyingly and frustratingly told predominantly through dialogue. I couldn't help but feel that the author was in a hurry to finish, either to meet a deadline or simply because she could no longer be bothered with the story. A pity.

4. The reincarnated Sidhe concept had potential: It was a neat idea, but poorly executed. I think Essex could have achieved more with this storyline had she not waffled on and got distracted by other things earlier on in the piece. This portion of the story felt rushed and confusing. I think it was supposed to be that awe-inspiring supernatural twist to the story, but the author's inability to think it through ensured it completely fell flat.

5. The author seems to be lacking focus as the book has far too much filler, making the plot and characters seem inconsistent and undeveloped, especially at the end. Half the time I wasn't even sure I knew what she was talking about! Not even the ending was redeeming: Like most of the story, it was simply confusing and implausible.

6. I had expected a supernatural love story set during one of my favourite periods in history (Victorian England), but what I got instead was nothing more than misleading erotica: Dracula in Love contained a whole lot of lust, but little Dracula and absolutely no love whatsoever.

A disappointing read overall.

Geraldine O'Hagan says

This is a terrible book. Not only is it derivative in concept and lacking in style, but it's also incredibly lazy. If you're going to write a faux-Victorian novel then I would think it wise to do at least some very basic research first, in order that it isn't full of glaring errors. With the best will in the world, even if the book had been otherwise fantastic it would have been hard not to laugh at an Anglo-Irish Victorian lady shouting at Dracula "Quit following me!", or the sight of vultures swooping over Whitby going unremarked.

None of the characters seem even half-way believable as either Victorians or people. Plus, having waited half the novel for Dracula to appear he turns out to be an ineffectual, sulking bore. Not as anticlimactic as *The Historian* (Elizabeth Kostova), nor, mercifully, as long. Don't take that as a recommendation though.

Every idea in this book has been done to death elsewhere, and almost certainly done better. A rethinking of Mina Harker? Try 'The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen' (Alan Moore). Mina and Dracula's romance? Try 'Francis Ford Coppola's Bram Stoker's Dracula', if you can stomach Keanu Reeves' "acting". Victorian Mental Institutes/Prisons? Try 'Fingersmith'/'Affinity' (Sarah Waters). Limitations of a Victorian Woman's

Life? Try 'The French Lieutenant's Woman' (John Fowles), or an original text like 'The Woman in White' (Wilkie Collins). That's just off the top of my head. There are so many books I would recommend that you read before this; I couldn't possibly list them all.

Summary : A careless and dull genre rip-off which is neither intelligent nor entertaining, and at times is almost embarrassingly bad.

M— says

Beach Vacation Read #6: My habit of borrowing any ebook that sounds remotely interesting does not always pay off. DNF.

This is dire. It starts off with high purple prose in its pseudo-Victorian way, and it only gets worse from there. The heroine is sexually assaulted by page 11 and spends half her time during the assault fretting about what other people would think of her morals, in particular what her fiancé would think:

In my mind, I saw Jonathan receive the news, his stricken face turning white, shying away from me in disgust. How could any man, even one as kind as Jonathan, look upon a woman the same way after this kind of shame? (pp. 11-12)

This is a sentiment perhaps appropriate for the historical setting, but I found it appalling to read here. Luckily for the heroine, as the scene progresses, she did not need to fear for she was rescued from her rapist by page 13, still technically a virgin, by the fortuitous intercession of a mysterious and alluring man who then retreats into the night in a paragraph that makes me think the author secretly wanted to write a screenplay instead of a novel:

In the distance, I saw a shiny black coach with unlit lanterns and two strong black steeds to lead it. Thunder crashed again, and lightning darted through the open sky. The horses neighed, one rearing on its hind legs, while the other seemed to call out to the heavens. (pp. 13-14)

The prose actually gets progressively worse, until by page 45 the heroine is describing the joy of discovering masturbation (at age twenty-two, the precocious girl). Which leads me to my killscene for this novel, the line of which I absolutely could not read beyond:

I felt nothing but the wet, creamy, hot walls of my own body. (pp. 45-46)

One thing I have to say about ebooks: The format makes it terribly difficult to leaf through a book in the hope of coming across any scenes to reengage my interest. In lieu of that, I checked some other readers' reviews to see if there was any part of this book worth getting back into and found (aside from the fact I am not the only reader to have found the masturbation scene cringeworthy) a blurb for this book stating it was "the novel for Twilight's grownup fans." — according to Michelle Moran, an author I've never heard of before but am now actively avoiding. Only the fact I was reading this on my precious ereader kept me from flinging the book to the wall in disgust.

Quotes pulled from ISBN 9780385533614.

Beach Vacation Reading List (November 2011)

- #1 | Silver Phoenix
 - #2 | The Steerswoman's Road
 - #3 | Kraken
 - #4 | Feed
 - #5 | Witches Abroad
 - #6 | Dracula in Love
 - #7 | A Moveable Feast
 - #8 | Speed of Dark
-

Kristina says

This was an odd book. I read the author notes and the author wanted to explore the Dracula story from the woman's point of view because apparently Bram Stoker portrays women in a bad light in his novel. I have not read Bram Stoker's **Dracula** so I cannot comment on that. I will admit to skimming much of the book and only stopping to read what interested me. I found the endless details of Min's life as a school teacher boring and her friends boring and the whole interlude with Lucy and her secret lover also not interesting. Because the book is titled **Dracula in Love**, I wanted to read about Dracula being in love, not all the other stuff. That was the compelling part of the book. I was intrigued by the notion that Min is being reborn and Dracula has been waiting quite a long time (centuries) for her to be immortal with him. The whole "Sidhe" aspect was weird, but the whole book is freaking odd so I went with it. The last third of the book was most entertaining to me, learning about Dracula and Min's long history together. The subplots (the women in the asylum, Kate's journalist career) were of no interest to me. Ironic considering the author added those details to balance out Bram Stoker's portrayal of women at that time. Ah well. I wouldn't read the book again or any other works by this author. I found her writing style fussy and annoying. This was a curiosity read for me-- I'd heard about this book somewhere (probably NPR, they have a knack for reviewing odd books. I picked up Nicholson Baker's **The Fermata** because of an enthusiastic NPR review and found it not funny and annoying--and I have a very good sense of humor and a dirty mind!--but the book just wasn't to my taste)and wanted to give it a go. I must continue to express a big ole thank you to the inter-library loan system, otherwise I would have had to buy this book in order to read it.

Misty says

4-ish.

Dracula in Love isn't just a fill-in-the-gaps retelling of Dracula, fleshing out the story from Mina's point of view. No, it is a sort of feminist retelling in which Mina asserts that the story that everyone knows, the story that's been told by men, is false. True to their Victorian beliefs and morés, the men have cast the women of the story as either saints or haridans, relegating them to sidelines to seethe or swoon as they may. But thinking, feeling, intelligent Mina isn't having it. There is so much more to Mina's story, things her husband and the doctors and lovers who have spun the story so far have no idea about. Because for Mina, the story begins long before Jonathan travels to the continent to do business with a Count...

It's been a long, long while since I read Dracula. I was thirteen, and I *devoured* it, but in some ways, it left me unsatisfied. I think that same dissatisfaction may have been the impetus for Essex's reimagining of the

tale, at least in part. I mean, the story is so wrought with Victorian fear of female sexuality and human passions in general, so to have it told by a female character who is neither sinner nor saint but just *human* and humanly flawed, with human cravings - it fills the tale out and makes it more authentic and powerful to me. I really, really liked the idea of getting Mina's side of the story, and of having Mina be less passive and perfect and more passionate and strong. In that respect, I got what I wanted out of the story.

But what I wasn't expecting, and what I found most fascinating, was her interactions with the men of the story, human and inhuman alike. Dracula's role in this is not the demonic, power-mad, lustful creep of a villain. Or at least, not for the most part. There is certainly a fair amount of lust and a good deal of power and submission. But he bears no resemblance to this guy in looks or manner. Though he is somewhat...unnatural, I guess you'd say, he's not really the villain of the piece. Dracula doesn't appear to be all-encompassing evil. He was terrifying to the Victorians for what he made them confront (lust, mortality), but a thinking, passionate woman need not necessarily fear, so Mina's reaction to him, slowly evolving, intrigued, is appropriate and enjoyable.

All of the domineering men, Drs. Seward and Von Helsing, Arthur Holmwood/Godalming, even sometimes Mina's husband Jonathan, they're the ones you have to watch out for. And they're the perfect types of villains to creep the bejeezus out of me, because they are overzealous fools given unchecked power they shouldn't have, over people who have no real defense against them. Reasons this makes my skin crawl more than monsters under my bed: a) they feel completely justified in the awful things they do, b) their victims have no real recourse, because in the eyes of the law, they *are* justified, c) just by virtue of being men, they win control, and anything one could try to take control back would further cement their authority and add to their claims that everything they're doing is justified, and d) they are 100% real. I mean, not these particular characters, of course. But men like them, Victorian psychiatrists and the like, really did exist and practice horrific things on people whom we would consider completely sane. It's this horrible vicious circle that meant that any woman in the Victorian era who had the audacity to express a lustful thought was fair game for their experimentation and "curing" and if she dared stand up for herself and fight, it was further proof that she was insane and needed curing.

I think this is where Essex's book shines. Her human characters can be pretty monstrous, and her portrait of Victorian life and what it meant to be a woman, especially a passionate woman, is very well realized. You can tell she has done a lot of research and a lot of work to bring Mina's world to life. Mina herself straddles the line between proper Victorian woman and fully-realized, passionate woman. She has friends in her life who aren't afraid to express their passions and break the mold, and they are presented in realistic ways, as forward-thinking suffragettes, etc, lending more authenticity to the tale. Because of them, Mina doesn't feel out of place, and the story doesn't feel false or as unrealistic as it could have, given the setting. It was reminiscent of the original, but modern and feminist and womanly enough to be believable. I'm sure Mina *would* have struggled with some of the things she struggled with, and the feelings and dreams and ordinary experience of sexual awakening and how startling that is for her. From this aspect, it is very well done.

There were some minor setbacks for me. There were times, especially in the beginning, when I just wanted the story to move on. I am not a big fan of excessive description; I am all for setting a scene, and for showing, not telling, but I get more than a little antsy when I feel like useless description has brought the action to a halt. This is a style preference, and I know there are plenty of readers out there who love to have all the minutia described so that they can really *see* everything in detail. But for me, there were times when I wanted to skim or set the book aside because it wasn't getting on with it at a quick enough pace for me. This was less a problem for me as the story moved along and got into the meat of it, especially once they reached the asylum.

I think there are also those who will be put off by the sexualization of the story. I never found it to be pornographic per se, but it certainly leans toward the erotic at some points. I think this is in keeping with the original in a weird way, since it was so very much about repression and forbidden sexuality (ie, everything that screams Victorian...). While it's never what I would really call explicit, it will most certainly make some people blush; I wouldn't suggest reading it to your grandma. (Well, I *may* have read this to my grandma. She would have cracked up.) There were times when everything was a little over the top for me, or a little timed ("It's been X pages, time for some writhing..."). But overall, I found it an interesting way to modernly explore what was actually a sexualized tale à la Victorian morés.

I don't remember *Dracula* enough to really compare specifics, but I think it's certainly an interesting riff on the story. Especially to have Mina telling the tale, firmly and with conviction, because Mina was always the focal point for me anyway. The added gothic elements, like Mina's lifelong bouts with supernatural and Essex's take on the vampire mythology, as well as the very creepy, very gothic and very authentic use of early psychiatry, really brought the book to another level, and made it creepy in a new, modern way. (That sounds like a contradiction, that the use of the Victorian beliefs made it creepy in a modern way. But I think you know what I mean. I hope.) It didn't completely sweep me off my feet, but for the most part, I was pretty pleased with Essex's take and the Mina she presents. If you're not adverse to a little lovin', and you enjoy the gothic ambiance, I'd recommend this one.

Traci says

Okay, feminist *Dracula*. Where do I start with you?

I think I read *Dracula* for the first time at around eight years old. I can remember the exact book, where I got it, what I felt... everything. And I loved it. It's a classic. And in case you've been living under a rock for forever, it's a Victorian novel. And yeah the biting is a metaphor for sex.

I mention this for two reasons: one, because this novel contains some very un-Victorian ideas and there's less metaphor for sex and more actual sex. And it wasn't the most awesome sex. But we'll get to that.

Yes, *Dracula* is a pretty sexist novel, when you get down to it. But rewriting *Dracula* to make all the male characters the bad guys because they're oppressing female sexuality and using a classic novel to stick it to the man is reaaaaaally not going to rewrite history. Women were oppressed, sure. Making Mina a forward-thinking woman doesn't change that.

I'm not saying the entire book was bad. The writing was actually pretty well done. It doesn't flawlessly follow the source novel but it's close enough, and that's fine, considering it's a rewrite and all that. And part of me is really glad to see a novel from Mina's point of view because it's Mina but on the other hand I don't think (view spoiler)

Just... yikes. I feel like if this was going to be done (again), it probably shouldn't have been done like this.

Theresa says

Everyone remembers Bram Stoker's "Dracula". It was a tale of horror and everyone knew that vampires were the "bad guys". But were they? Karen Essex takes Stoker's tale and gives it a twist. Following the same timeline, using the same characters and written in much of the same format "Dracula in Love" gives a total different view.

In the Prologue of the book, Mina Murray Harker states:

"Unlike most people whose lives remain private, my story has been written by another, sold for money and offered to the public for entertainment. The author of the fiction claims to be above reproach because his records are "exactly contemporary". But these "records" are falsified documents, based on the the lies of a cabal of murderers desperate to conceal their dark deeds."

She then continues on with the "real" story. The story of her life, her engagement, Lucy, the doctors, and of course, The Count. This story is a tale of erotic obsession and a romantic love that goes deep - centuries deep. It is also a tale of horror and sadness and a realization that all is not as it seems.

I adored the original "Dracula" and really was wondering how Ms. Essex was going to pull this one off. Ah, she did an impeccable job making me wonder and feel that her story was really the truth and the other was just a fabricated lie to make money. Oh, yes. Mina's story was powerful and captivating.

I took my time reading this novel. It screamed that it needed to be savored, and savor it I did. This book will be one that will stick with me for a while. Being a Dracula fan (it's one of my favorites) this novel shook and twisted my views of many of the characters. It now feels like it belongs with the original story - like the flip side of the coin.

If you haven't read Stoker's "Dracula", don't worry. You won't feel you are missing a thing, but you will most likely want to read it after you've finished "Dracula in Love" because you'll need to know what is in the original story. If you have read and enjoyed Stoker's Dracula, you will want to read this version!

This is one of my favorite reads this year! Highly recommended.

Parental warning: Contains some descriptive sexual content.

Amy says

The dustcover of this book promises "Karen Essex breathes startling new life into the characters of Bram Stoker's Dracula." While it's true her novel is a retelling of the Dracula story from Mina Murray's point of view, there's nothing startling or lively about her characters.

I was intrigued at first, reading through a few chapters with hopeful enthusiasm. Fifty pages in, I was both dissatisfied and bored. The only thing 'startling' about the book were a few egregious sexual scenes and the complete absence of Essex's Dracula character.

The author's characterization of the main character, Mina Murray, was downright maddening. She vacillated so swiftly and dramatically, a reader could get motion sickness: Mina was strong! No, she was weak, and cried, and had to be carried (a lot). She had decided! No, she had changed her mind - sometimes in the same

paragraph. She raged and fought, she wept and succumbed.

The whole premise of this book is that Dracula had not just desired Mina, but had loved her. Essex gives us nothing in her characterization of the 'heroine' to love. Frankly, I disliked Mina from the beginning and learned to loathe her by the end. And although Essex insists that the characters of Count Dracula and Mina Murray love each other, there was nothing in their interaction that convinced me of the fact. I saw lust and desire, but nothing of a more tender nature (well, except for the parts in which he carried her, and frankly, I think that was out of an impatient need to get to the next part of the story).

Dracula was no better presented. He wasn't just brooding, he was pouty. He would MAKE Mina remember their love across time. No wait, he would be patient and let her remember on her own. The only thing Essex's characters did consistently was change their minds.

I'm not sure how or why I finished reading this book. Normally, any reading material that made me this frustrated would have been abandoned halfway through. Essex had a rather complicated sub-plot regarding Mina Murray's origins, however, and perhaps I was curious to see where she might take it. Like Essex's characterization, this subplot could have been written plausibly, but in the end, fell short, made me roll my eyes, and think 'Oh, puh-lease.'

I finished Dracula in Love at 1am last night, with a muttered, "Well, *that* was a waste of my time." and promptly fell asleep. It didn't thrill or frighten me. It didn't seduce or titillate me. All I can say is, I'm glad I got this from the library rather than spending my hard earned money on it.

Sheila says

[sidhe (hide spoiler)]

Willow says

I think Karen Essex has some beautiful prose. She has a sensual, seductive, and wonderfully descriptive way of writing that lured me in and made me think this would be a wonderful book. I love gothic books, and "Dracula in Love" is definitely that.

The problem with this book is there isn't much of Dracula in it. Two-hundred words in, and he still hadn't made much of an appearance. The book wasn't really about him, or his love. Yes, I got caught up in the rather fascinating story about the horror of hysteria and how women could be so easily incarcerated in mental hospitals, but I feel like if Essex wanted to write about that, she shouldn't have dragged all the characters from Dracula into her story. People who are attracted to Dracula usually want to read about vampires, blood and hinted at sex, and there just isn't enough of that in this book.

Anyway, I was still happily reading along, when all of sudden this book takes a swan dive into WTF. Talk about a lame ending. It was too rushed, too unbelievable, and had me rolling my eyes. It was almost like Essex was getting to the end and she realized, oops, I need to put Dracula in my story. Then she rushed through this implausible narration that I found I didn't care about. For a book to start off so well, I thought it ended badly. I still will give the book three stars though. :D

