



Blood Diva

V.M. Gautier

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The 19th century's most infamous party-girl is undead and on the loose in the Big Apple.

When 23 year-old Parisian courtesan, Marie Duplessis succumbed to consumption in 1847, Charles Dickens showed up for the funeral and reported the city mourned as though Joan of Arc had fallen. Marie was not only a celebrity in her own right, but her list of lovers included Franz Liszt – the first international music superstar, and Alexandre Dumas *fil*s, son of the creator of *The Three Musketeers*. Dumas *fil*s wrote the novel *The Lady of the Camellias* based on their time together. The book became a play, and the play became the opera *La Traviata*. Later came the film versions, and the legend never died.

But what if when offered the chance for eternal life and youth, Marie grabbed it, even when the price was the regular death of mortals at her lovely hand?

Now Marie wonders if perhaps nearly two centuries of murder, mayhem, and debauchery is enough, especially when she falls hard for a rising star she believes may be the reincarnation of the only man she ever truly loved. But is it too late for her to change? Can a soul be redeemed like a diamond necklace in hock? And even if it can, have men evolved since the 1800's? Or does a girl's past still mark her?

Blood Diva is a sometimes humorous, often dark and erotic look at sex, celebrity, love, death, destiny, and the arts of both self-invention and seduction. It's a story that asks a simple question – Can a one hundred ninety year-old demimondaine find happiness in 21st century Brooklyn without regular infusions of fresh blood?

Blood Diva Details

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Author : V.M. Gautier

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From Reader Review Blood Diva for online ebook

Linda says

This vampire story grabbed me by the throat and wouldn't let go from the very beginning. Alphonsine Duplessis/Camille St. Valois, as she was now known in present day New York City society, had a fascinating history as a beautiful and charming Parisian courtesan from a very early age. In her first life, during the mid-1800s, she was known as Marie Duplessis and lucky enough to have a patron who saw to her education that led her to more aristocratic and artistic suitors. Unfortunately, she contracted consumption and was on her deathbed when she met Anton, who turned her into a god. He claimed beauty such as hers was a gift to the world and he only wished to preserve it.

The problem was she couldn't get away from her courtesan lifestyle, it was who she was, and the high sexuality of a vampiric life didn't help in that regard. Problems also developed when Camille was questioned during a murder investigation after being identified with the victim from surveillance video in a hotel lobby. Tenacious New York City cops, Cara O'Brien and Jaime Izaguirre, felt she was involved but couldn't prove it. To top this trifecta off Camille fell in love with the highly gifted and handsome human, Dashiell Alexander. I had no problem shoving believability out the window with VM Gautier's picturesque prose.

I was a little concerned that I might not be able to keep up with the opera references. However, I had no problem and actually enjoyed learning about the stories and characters behind the operas. I applaud the way they were woven into the storyline. I found Blood Diva captivating and felt transported into the scenes. I found Camille's dilemmas were complex and emotional. The supporting characters were all well developed and I found myself mesmerized by the dialogue as Camille was trying to work through her issues and find her purpose for being.

This story was a unique look at high society lifestyles in this age of surveillance cameras and other high-tech devices available to today's criminals and law enforcement agencies. I also liked the question being asked of how much longer vampires could go undetected by a modern society with these devices so readily available. I was satisfied with the ending and found it apropos. I would recommend this story to anyone who appreciates a skillfully told story with discernible moral issues.

FYI: This book contains adult language and graphic sexual content that some readers may find objectionable.

Format/Typo Issues: Small number of proofing errors.

Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. December 8, 2014

Carrie Slager says

[Full disclosure: I requested and received a free ebook from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.]

As my regular readers are probably well aware of by now, I love opera. It makes up the bulk of music I've listened to in the past two years or so and since there's nothing on television anymore it also makes up the bulk of movies/performances I watch. I guess you could say I'm an opera fanatic, so when I saw this book on

NetGalley I decided I'd go for it. After all, while I'd never heard of the real Marie Duplessis, I sure loved Violetta in La Traviata. I figured it would be nice to see a different take on the woman behind the legend.

What was really clear from the beginning is the Gautier loves opera and she loves the book by Alexandre Dumas fils. She has this excited energy about both of them that you really just can't fake. However, to me it seemed like her love of opera sometimes exceeded her knowledge of it. When referring to a famous aria from Verdi's Rigoletto she called it "Dona e mobile", which is not correct Italian. It should be "La Donna e mobile". At another point a vampire tells her he calls blood l'elisir d'amore because of the Rossini opera; that's not really possible because Donizetti wrote the opera in question. Some other errors like saying "vencere, vencere" is the last line of the aria "Nessun Dorma" can be attributed to the lack of knowledge of characters, but the two examples above should have been caught in the editing process.

For all of my nitpicking, I really did enjoy Blood Diva. Marie/Alphonsine is a great character and is very three dimensional. She struggled so much with her transition to being a vampire and now she struggles with being a vampire because she's falling in love with a human. A human that doesn't (and can't) know about her past. Marie also really struggles about what she's forced to do for work because sometimes the elder vampires (in order to gain funds for the communal fund to help other vampires) sometimes make her revert to her old profession. It's actually kind of sad that she was gifted an immortal life on her deathbed and yet, for all that she's seen and learned, she's back where she started 200 years ago.

This is mostly a character novel, so it helped that both Marie and Dashiell were three dimensional. The one thing I really loved was that their relationship was intense and beautiful, but that it also had its rocky moments. Contrary to how they're portrayed in many novels, relationships are rarely straightforward and couples in love do argue. Marie and Dashiell certainly argue, but you can always feel that they love each other. Considering their relationship takes up most of the book, I really appreciated that Gautier spent so much effort on it.

The plot was pretty good right up until the end. As I've said, this was character driven so of course it's going to be slower than a plot-driven novel, but Blood Diva never really drags. The characters are far too interesting for that. My only problem is that the ending left me unsatisfied. It fits with the theme throughout the book of Marie's fictional incarnations, so I don't mind that the ending was not necessarily the most cheerful ever. I just felt unsatisfied, like "I read all that only for it to end like this?". It didn't feel like there was much closure, really.

Still, Gautier's writing style was beautiful, her pacing was excellent as well as her characters and she had that kind of excitement that you just can't fake. Despite the ending and the little mistakes I really, really enjoyed Blood Diva and I hope that Gautier, whether under this pseudonym or another, writes more novels in the future.

I give this book 4/5 stars.

Jason says

I am a big fan of vampire books, in my opinion the best are by Anne Rice, I can even enjoy all these paranormal YA vampire books even though they are really simple and lazily written.

Blood Diva is right up there with Anne Rice's vampires, you can really feel the history of the characters and

you find yourself wanting to know more about the lives of the other vampires in the story.

Everything about vampires, the story includes changing into vampires, feeding and how they are like a family set is really interesting, so much so that at times you can almost consider that vampires are real.

There is plenty of sex in the book but it is all important to explaining how the vampires bond with each other, it is all part of their animal instinct.

I am hoping for an encore performance I would also really like to see stories explaining the lives of Anton, Pierre, Jane and Ana. The story is strong enough to become as big as the world created by Anne Rice.

Vampire fans have gotta read this book.

Barbara Scott-Emmett says

I wasn't sure how I'd get on with this book at first as the opening is quite startling. It didn't take long to realise I was in competent hands though and I just couldn't stop reading.

A combination of historical novel, police procedural, and erotica, with vampires thrown in - what more could you want?

????????? says

My thanks goes to the author for the ARC via NetGalley.

Unconventional doesn't even begin to cover it.

As somebody already pointed out, the author makes a great effort to avoid the word "vampire", referring instead to "our kind" (which does end up just the tiniest bit overused), but there is little doubt as to the creatures the novel is dealing with.

The prologue sets the mood wonderfully and does a good job drawing the reader into the plot - the rest of the book really delivers everything the prologue promises, and that's really satisfactory.

As far as the representation of the vampires is concerned, even with my limited experience, it strikes me as unique and wholesome. They're portrayed as magnetic, sexually charged beings whose presence is bound to be noticed in a room; an exciting exploration of the image of the sophisticated vampire.

At times indeed, I couldn't help but notice how the myriad ways in which humans seem to be falling behind are highlighted - pathetic creatures with their inferior strength and immensely short, puny lives. It did bother me a bit at times, since we humans are vain and like to have our value affirmed, and no matter how graceful a species is, the fact that they may choose you for the next meal that sustains them would make anyone have second thoughts. However, there are efforts made at restoring balance. After all, the point of view is that of the divos, especially of Alphonsine, who faces life decisions and moral choices of staggering impact. She is a

character of complexity far, far greater than you would find in the clichéd story of a lovestruck non-human torn between species. Furthermore, it's stressed multiple times that her kind admire and support the humans' artistic potential, from which they, too, profit - Alphonsine is an avid opera-goer, and that theme is finely woven into the story.

Now to the abundant titillating, graphic sex scenes that are difficult not to address in any honest review - the only thing I did mind about them was the fact that I would have enjoyed the book more had they made way for some action scenes and detective work. The character of Cara seemed severely underused, I fully expected her to act as Alphonsine's human counterpart and intellectual rival, using her potential to detect the truth about who this mysterious woman she feels drawn to is. Instead, she's manipulated into staying in the background time after time, and plays the part of the sincere human friend and supporter who, granted, succeeds in showing Alphonsine a relaxed, innocent, warm side of life that love can't give her (being, as it is, constantly juxtaposed with anguish and fear of the future). The denouement of the love story itself is refreshing and bold, defying all expectation.

What I found especially captivating is how the story goes full circle in a stunningly symmetrical fashion - a device both aesthetically pleasing and used well to point out the changes that occur, especially in relation to the main character. Furthermore, the fact that the story draws on real people and events, all quite skillfully inserted into the narrative, only adds to the overall quality and appeal.

I would genuinely like for this story to be big among fans of the genre (although it'd be criminal to confine to just one genre), because it's quirky and unusual, and, the aforementioned qualms aside, seriously enjoyable. I would be extremely interested in any subsequent material - also, imagine it made into a film!

Bookmuseuk says

The prologue sets the tone; hunter traps victim. But this weak-seeming victim proves to be an experienced, far more successful killer. A sweet turnabout, indeed, and it's not the only one you'll find in this intriguing novel.

The successful killer, Alphonsine, is a forever youthful divo, a hedonistic, blood-sucking vampire, one of the society of undead living cheek by jowl with their unsuspecting human prey. Through the ages vampires have used their powers to amass wealth, hide crimes and make inquisitive humans disappear.

Blood Diva tells of Alphonsine's turning in 1846, and of her flamboyant life leading to the present day. With her we experience the vampiric joy of drinking sacramental blood. We taste of the victim's soul – the sweetness of a child's, the candied grape flavour of young men, the remnant of innocence-lost in the blood of a serial killer, and the sadness and defeat in the blood of the old. We learn how human death can be softened, made easy, even joyful by the venom secreted by their killer. Alphonsine presents the sympathetic face of vampirism.

But modern times bring changes. Twenty-first century vampires, being in a minority and practically defenseless in the daytime, keep a low profile. And the myth of not being captured on film or video is exactly that – a myth. This means that with the rise of internet use and the spread of social networks, photographic images remain a permanent record of this long-living species; threatening exposure. Also, with the highly sophisticated medical tests adopted by police forces, vampires have to acknowledge that detection is inevitable.

How long will they be able to remain invisible? Is the new technology the ultimate threat to the vampire way of life?

When Alphonsine falls totally in love with a human, she becomes aware of the futility inherent in a stagnant, never changing existence, and starts to think the unthinkable – vampires are not the superior beings. For the first time in many blood-soaked years, she sees vampires from the human point of view: sordid killers seeking discountable prey – prostitutes and down-and-outs. She has hunted humans in a ravening pack, both in dark streets and at sacrificial blood-feasts. She has killed children, killed uncountable lovers. How dare she imagine herself superior?

Loving Dashiell, she sees exactly what she has become, and contemplates a shorter lifespan. She decides to endure the harrowing, possibly fatal treatment that will return her humanity, and allow her to marry Dashiell and spend her final years with her lover.

But when her past catches up with her, all bets are off.

Blood Diva is a compelling tale that walks with Alphonsine from decadence and pleasure seeking to despair and a desperate search for purpose that will inject meaning into an unsatisfying existence.

Amelia says

3.5-ish, leaning higher. I think this is the second-ever vampire book I've ever read, after Interview with the Vampire (read many, many years ago). I picked it up because a couple of people mentioned it in a discussion. It reminded me of why I generally don't read books about vampires: too darn many sex scenes.

That said, all of the sex scenes were plot-relevant, or at least integral to character development. The plot was intriguing, especially the contrast between mortal and divos/vampire modes of being, and the problems the vampires had with the modern age.

Would recommend, but would also recommend that the author do one more pass to clean up some messy punctuation, which I noticed most early in the book.

Crystal says

Was giving an ARC via e-mail exchange for an honest review.thanks again :)

First off,I love the cover..it is beautiful and its one of the reasons why I wanted to read this book. It was a good read and well written but I am sad to say that I just wasn't sucked in as much as I thought I would of been.I would still recommend this book to anyone though :)

Alicia says

3.5 Stars for Blood Diva.

This was a really well-written story of a beautiful Parisian courtesan-turned-vampire struggling to balance her modern-day love for a mortal with her need for unattached sex and blood.

What I found really interesting about this story is that there really isn't a plot. *Blood Diva* opens with an introduction to Alphonsine, a beautiful vampire who was at one time a renowned French courtesan. She has some mind-reading abilities and can sense a man at the bar is dangerous... a serial killer... and so she does what comes naturally to any vampire and prevents the killer from harming anyone ever again. Yay Alphonsine.

Afterward she's introduced to the mortal who will change her outlook on life and police who are investigating the death of the serial killer. Police follow her around as she maneuvers the glitterati hipster art world (is that even a thing?) of New York and Williamsburg while she has some pretty intense and epic sex scenes with her beautiful mortal.

And then the story is spliced right down the middle with the story of how Alphonsine was turned into a vampire. I found that portion very interesting and enjoyed the world-building here.

I could find absolutely ZERO fault with how this story was written - the prose was clean, concise, descriptive. It wasn't flowy or unnecessarily descriptive. V.M. Gautier's style is precise and perfectly executed.

The only thing that wasn't just good ol' fashioned satisfying about this story was the intensity with which Alphonsine falls in love. She's gotta be over 150 years old, and she's fallen in love several times before. But when she meets her latest love interest she falls head over heels in the most inappropriate of ways. She KNOWS it will never work with him. She KNOWS she can't be honest with him about her lifestyle, nor can she make him like her. She KNOWS that having a nocturnal life can only last for so long.

Sadly, it takes a bit too long, in my opinion, for her to seek out the only option that will allow them to have a normal life together.

There's LOTS of foreshadowing here so if you pick up what's being put down in regards to Alphonsine's other love interests, you'll soon figure out how this one is going to end. And it does.

I can't say I didn't enjoy it. I just felt like it took a bit too long to get to the point.

I received an advanced copy of *Blood Diva* from Netgally in exchange for an honest review.

Mad about says

To start with, love that cover! So different and relevant to the story.

Marie used her assets to her advantage and made her money through the adoring men that visited her but illness was rife back then and she was the victim of it. Darker forces saw her allure as a useful commodity and offered her another chance at life which she couldn't pass up.

Centuries later she's still the life of the party and adored by all, the times may have changed but her occupation not so much. A rising star catches her eye and brings forth emotions she's long forgotten and

thought beyond her reach.

Very interesting concept with the timeline of the story flitting between modern day and the past giving it more depth and connection to the characters.

Ana (Marie) is easy to relate to and you really root for her even with her barbaric acts against humanity. Her whole nature wars against what it is to be human so there's a complete detachment from humans, they're essentially the cattle.

It's a gory romance that I wish had the happily ever after but the ending leaves it open for a sequel which would be interesting but difficult to continue the story on.

Raina Collins says

Reviewer for Paranormal Romance and Authors that Rock

I give it 3 fangs.

Blood Diva is a stand-alone book. It is meant for mature readers.

Alphonsine (also known as Marie) starts out given the choice of dying of consumption or becoming one of the immortal. In the end she chooses immortality. Unlike the other immortals who have seem to have lost most of their humanity, Alphonsine tries to fight to keep hers.

Alphonsine meets the beautiful and talented Dashiell. They seem to instantly fall in love with each other. But Alphonsine has to live two separate lives if she wants to keep him. She must decide on ending the relationship, taking Dashiell's life or go through an unknown process that may make her mortal again.

There are several side characters that make this story. Cara is a detective that keeps stalking Alphonsine. She knows Alphonsine is guilty of a murder, but there is no evidence.

Pierre is as close to a friend/lover that Alphonsine has. Even though all immortals love one another, some just seem to bond more.

Anton is her creator, but Alphonsine can't seem to forgive him for bringing her over. She just won't admit she really wanted it.

Ana and Jane help Alphonsine to understand her new life and are there later on when she needs them.

There is quite a bit erotica to this book, which was okay, but I would have liked to have seen some more action as well.

The story is long and picks up a lot of speed at the end. If you like the opera and play scene, this is definitely a book for you. The author really did a lot of historical research that really paid off in this book. I really enjoyed the ending for Alphonsine. If there is to be a second book I hope it actually tells the story of Pierre or Anton.

Carolina says

Originally published at: A Girl that Likes Books

I asked and received this book through NetGalley for free. This review is not sponsored nor influenced in anyway. This book is expected to be published on August 10

First impression

When I read the description of the book at NetGalley I was really captivated: a French Courtesan from the late 19th century, becomes a vampire, she finds love and might want to go back to being human (this was a new thing). The book is also described as humorous, dark and sometimes erotic (usual on a lot of Vampire related books) and ends up with the question: can she find happiness?

And then I started reading the book...I found very little humor in the story. Some differences in personality amongst the vampire characters...and A LOT of sex, I would even say, TOO much sex.

Final thoughts

She understood it was her role as a woman to visually stimulate him[...]

Let's clarify first that I do not consider myself a prude. I am ok with sex scenes both in books and movies, even when they might be a bit graphic...but having a book that had sex scenes almost every other third page without this giving much or sometimes anything to the story I don't like. It bothers me as much as Sci-Fi books throwing out of the blue invented words just so it looks Sci-Fi. No, you shouldn't need to build your story around gimmicks like this, and for me Blood Diva ended up being a book that relied almost solely in the sex part.

Other thing that was overused on the book was based upon their non-blood diet, which is vegetarian. So far this is fine, but I got tired of hearing about the organic this and the organic that, and the organic I don't know what. Again, it became a crotch in the story, and seriously, the idea of the vampires not being able to digest "dead blood" explained perfectly why a vegan diet, fine. But even then, do we really need to be told every time that they eat it was organic vegetables/fruits?

The character of Alphonse had potential, she often felt to me as a very (potentially) interesting character. But again, most of the characters were hardly developed. "Her kind" (which I think was an attempt to not overuse the word vampire, but it ended up being an overused term) was full of very different personas, but I never really got to know any of them because the moment they would be together they would humping like bunnies.

You might ask then, why I am giving 2 stars if there is so much I didn't like? Well, the book had potential, the part about her wanting to give up her immortal life was different, an approach I was not expecting and the consequence of this was probably the only twist I didn't see coming. I wish the opera related part of the story would've been worked a bit more, I think it would've give a lot to the story.

Frank Mundo says

A game changer for vampire books.

This is a fabulous book. I imagined the writer knowingly smiling the whole time she was writing. My favorite part is hard to say...there's just too much going on. It was either the world building, the genre bending, the dynamite writing, the speculation, the spectacle, the sex, or the thoughtful love- and life-affirming humanity and quest for destiny that only a 2000 year-old courtesan vampire could explore. The premise, the work, the execution...just fabulous. And I don't know jack about opera, Marie Duplessis, Dumas fils, or any of it. This was my favorite read of 2014. Do yourself a favor and check it out.

Wart Hill says

I felt...extremely bored when I should have been intrigued and interested. Not my thing.

Al says

Fictional vampires have run the gambit from the garlic-dodging bloodsuckers who don't come out in sunlight to handsome and sparkly creatures, hanging out on the Olympic Peninsula. *Blood Diva* gives us yet another twist on vampire mythology.

The story starts with the protagonist, a real-life historical figure, Marie Duplessis, on her deathbed in Paris. While some may be familiar with Duplessis and her history (which might give the story even more appeal), other than the little I picked up before reading this book I wasn't, and didn't feel as though it mattered. Mostly set in the modern day, predominately New York City, the little touches and details the author integrates in the story are likely to resonate with fans of the art world and opera, yet I'm neither and still found much to enjoy.

Beyond being an excellent story with some hot sex scenes, for those who like that, a clever and entertaining take on the vampire myth, and a love story, for those who look beyond the surface there is more. What does it mean to be human? Are some of the Earth's creatures more important than others? (Put another way, if it is okay for us humans to kill "lower" animals for nourishment, would the same logic justify "higher" creatures killing us for the same reason?) If you could live forever, would that be a good thing and what would you be willing to give up to do so? Marie grappled with all of these questions. After you read *Blood Diva*, maybe your answers will be the same. Or maybe not.

**Originally written for "Books and Pals" book blog. May have received a free review copy. **
