

Fat White Vampire Blues

by Andrew Fox

In New Orleans, Jules Duchon just wants to be left alone to drive his cab (when he's not tooling around in his Cadillac), listen to his music (he has an extensive blues/jazz collection), and do his vampire thing on the occasional homeless person or passenger. He also weighs 450 pounds. And has an equally overweight mate Maureen. And a cross-dressing ex-partner, Doodlebug. Those of you expecting an Anne Rice redux, please exit here.

Why does he weigh so much? Well, so the tweak on vampire lore goes, Jules mostly dines on the black residents of New Orleans. Rich, fatty food leads to rich, fatty blood which leads to a fatty vampire. Of course, his predilection for dining on black folks leads him to crossing paths with one Malice X, a young black vampire upstart. Malice X gives Jules the ultimatum: stick to eating your own kind, or else. Well, apparently, even for long-lived vampires, once you go black ... Thus setting in motion a comic romp of Jules' misadventures of fleeing for his life, exile, and learning to be a modern day vampire.

I did mention that this isn't an Anne Rice novel, right? No, this is a flat out funny novel (putting to one's mind John Kennedy Toole's *Confederacy of Dunces*, with vampires), and though the main protagonist is prone to moping about himself and the state of being a vampire, it is played to comic effect. He has let his vampire skills deteriorate so much, he has to relearn much of them (and I won't spoil the joke of what his hypnotic stare has become).

Jules' prejudices, and racial politics period, come into play during the novel. Jules is racist in the "I can't be racist, my best friend's colored" mold. But along with his laziness, insecurity, and other outmoded ideas, his character's growth comes from being dragged into this century. Fox has turned the image of vampires as sexy creatures of the night completely on its head. The novel veers from the comic to the horrific, with the two often intertwining, and proves an entertaining read.

(4 out of 5 bookworms)