

KIRKUS

REVIEWS

**Hays, Clark and
Kathleen McFall**

**BLOOD AND
WHISKEY**

**A Cowboy and Vampire
Thriller**

Pumpjack Press (362 pp.)

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Lizzie, Elita and the rest of the gang are back for blood in the second book of Hays and McFall's (The Cowboy and the Vampire, 2010) series.

Following the climactic events of the first book, Lizzie Vaughan doesn't get much of a breather. When a friend's niece disappears, her Adamite (read: full-blooded human) boyfriend, Tucker, is still coming to terms with the fact that his woman is a vampire. While he leaves town to investigate, Lizzie is having trouble resisting the urge to kill, as the baby she carries—the one no one thought was possible—makes her hunger unbearable. Meanwhile, powerful elders are arriving in the western town of LonePine to decide if the prophecy has come true. Is Lizzie really their new queen, the one who can save vampirekind—or at least their own Messianic bloodline? Introducing racial issues isn't the only adjustment the authors have made to the vampire mythos, but it's more than just the details that set this series apart. Rather, it's the

way the authors utilize those details to create meaningful conflicts and world-altering choices for the characters. While a number of existentialist underpinnings give the series some depth, the book is first and foremost a thriller, upping the ante in every chapter as bullets fly and relationships strain under the weight of old loyalties and new revelations. In a way, it's a shame, since more time isn't spent exploring the existence of this meta world where consciousnesses wait out the daylight hours and immortality has all sorts of ramifications for human spirituality. But with strong writing, funny characters (no irony is lost on one vampiress who takes to sporting a "Future Farmers of America" jacket) and plenty of action, it's hard to fault the authors for keeping the focus on a story this riveting.

Those who missed out on the first book will really have to hang on if they want to follow what's happening, but it's worth it for this tale of love and blood in the modern West.