

KIRKUS

REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

SURVIVING CURTIS HALL

The Lure of Blood

Matthies, L.A.

iUniverse (256 pp.)

\$26.95 hardcover, \$16.95 paperback, \$9.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1475952674; October 5, 2012

BOOK REVIEW

Star-crossed lovers—lacrosse player, vampire—wrangle in this sprightly fantasy.

Transferring for his sophomore year to fictional elite New Jersey prep school Curtis Hall, Tristen McCoy takes the Gothic campus by storm with lanky good looks, smooth charm and awesome lacrosse chops that win him the team co-captaincy. Arriving with him are his sweet, lunk-headed teammate and best friend, Billy, and Billy's insouciant girlfriend, Sasha. Together they explore the labyrinthine social dynamics and odd folkways of their new setting. Of course, no fictive conclave of hormonal adolescents would be complete without a clique of unfathomably old yet preternaturally nubile vampires, here led by ancient hottie Marcella Venier and her bombshell sidekick, Skye. They are drawn by the preppies' stimulating company and intoxicating hemotypes, which they hope can be distilled into a sun-protective elixir. (Bimonthly blood drives are the core of Curtis Hall's social calendar.) The 716-year-old Marcella can't help falling for the 16-year-old Tristen and his love poetry, but alas!—her tragic back story warns her to keep her distance lest she suck him to death in a fit of uncontrollable passion. Fate throws them together when Marcella's evil brother, Pietro, and his fanged gang show up and students start to disappear. Matthies's first novel mashes together *Twilight*-style teen soap opera with Harry Potter-like magical folderol—labyrinths, secret tunnels, glyphic codes—while giving the tropes of the teen-vampire romance a light-handed makeover. There are occasional outbursts of grisly violence, but they take a far back seat to the central business of impressing the opposite sex with flirty banter and weathering the ensuing relationship crises. The friction between the teen's laconic text-ese and the vampires' Victorian curlicues—"I will crush your skull along with all those you sire, you regrettable miscreant"—warms up the story's vigorous prose style. Matthies crafts sharply etched, appealing characters whose struggle to survive both physically and romantically makes for an entertaining yarn.

Enjoyable young-adult light fare.