



2009

### Pretty Dead

Megan Harris

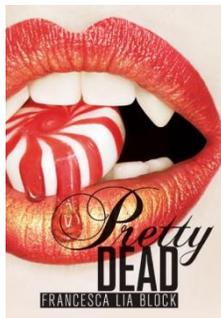
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Block, Francesca Lia. *Pretty Dead*. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061547850. \$16.99. 208 p.

Reviewer: Megan Harris

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Occult fiction

Subject: Vampires--Juvenile fiction; Supernatural--Juvenile fiction; Death--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Charlotte has lived over one hundred years as a vampire with unlimited wealth, striking beauty and eternal youth. She befriends a local human teenager, Emily, and her boyfriend Jared. Despite attempting to keep her vampirism a secret from them, Charlotte can't seem to curb Emily's growing suspicion. When Emily dies, Jared rushes to Charlotte and asks her to change him into a vampire. Charlotte refuses, but drawn together by their mutual sadness at Emily's passing and strong attraction to one another, the two begin a love affair. Charlotte describes how the loss of her brother made her prey to the vampire William. She spent the century with him, until her recent escape. After hearing the story Jared still expresses interest in becoming a vampire. Meanwhile, William appears as a teacher at Charlotte and Jared's high school, and Charlotte begins to exhibit increasingly human characteristics; sweating, blushing, warmth, and injury. When Jared disappears, Charlotte finds him with William and Emily, who is now a vampire. Charlotte realizes that once William changed Emily, she herself would return to human form. Jared becomes disgusted with Emily's inhumane vampire behavior and returns to Charlotte, now human.

Block uses vampirism to describe experiences with sexuality. Refreshing, however, is the perspective from a female vampire's point of view, describing the female sexual experience, where most novels focus on male experiences. Block's heroine lives in a dark, somber world, described with a mature voice. Teenagers will appreciate the love triangle, and the rich descriptions of the events which shaped the last century. While the text can seem a little self-important, with almost no humor and constant heavy emotion, it presents a quick and enjoyable read, due to the detailed descriptions of characters and locations. Note: Mature sexual content and language.

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