

Family Pack

Kali Metis

Running Wild Press

(304pp)

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The series fantasy novel Family Pack reveals the long and intricate history of werewolf bloodlines in a captivating manner.

Kali Metis's fantasy novel *Family Pack* is a sequel that's packed with intricate histories and a broadening understanding of the family lines of shapeshifters.

Following the events of the first book, werewolf Luna is left trying to catch up. She is faced with the prospect of in-depth werewolf training with Birger in Sweden even as she struggles with the reality of her fiancé Javier's poor health and the death of her brother Daniel. Meanwhile, in ninth-century Sweden, the story of Birger's youth and the histories of the Lycanthrope Society and the Swedish monarchy unfold illuminating the pasts of some of the werewolves and organizations in play in the modern era.

Family Pack blends the past and present via alternating chapters. When it's focused on the past, its action scenes are fast-paced and engaging. The long and intricate history of the werewolf bloodlines is captivating, and Birger's role in both time periods links the events, resulting in intimacy.

However, the prose is vague when it comes to details about its people, places, and events. And the two time periods, though separated by over a thousand years, are covered with a similar vocabulary. The transformations are glossed over without much sensory detail, and Luna's training, which is central to the plot, happens largely off page.

The novel's focus is unbalanced as well. Key characters and events, including Luna's teachers and multiple battles, are covered in summary form. Meanwhile, nonessential information is repeated, including a reference to Javier's favorite television character. Further, in the middle of the novel, Luna seems ignorant to information that she had at the beginning, requiring it to be reexplained.

Too much of the book is focused on recounting the events of the past, even in the present. Little action takes place in the present, and the scenes that do appear are relayed in an underwhelming tone. The primary villain of the series is absent for most of the volume; when he does appear, he does so with anticlimactic civility. Indeed, the primary conflict for Luna in this series entry has almost nothing to do with being a werewolf; it is more about the inconvenience of flying to Sweden for a few weeks.

The series-continuing fantasy novel *Family Pack* includes a thousand years' worth of genealogical background information, revealing a heroine's true place in the lycanthrope community.

EMILY GAINES (June 28, 2024)

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