



Suckers

Z. Rider

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The vampire mythos hasn't been this creepy since Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula*. In Z. Rider's horror debut, bandmates Dan and Ray are on the last leg of a long tour when they take a shortcut down an alley one night and are attacked by what they think is a bat. Then Dan starts getting sick: headaches, dizziness, and a buzzing in his head that sounds like a swarm of bees. Until one night he snaps and, in a delusional fog, attacks Ray. Dan wakes up in a hospital feeling completely better, and for awhile, everything seems fine. Until the headaches return and he discovers the only thing that helps is blood. It soon becomes clear, too, that whatever bit Dan is still out there and still attacking more people.

Set in three parts, suspense and fear build slowly at first, mirroring the sense of entrapment Dan and Ray feel, and then faster through each subsequent section. The book refuses to be pigeonholed. Borrowing heavily from vampire lore, it also pulls in elements from horror science fiction like *Alien* and apocalyptic fiction, à la *The Walking Dead*. The characters set this book apart. Missing are the traditional stereotypes: the outdoorsman, the brain, the beautiful love interest. It's refreshing for the protagonists to not have all the answers; Dan and Ray are just two musicians equipped with Google and the nightly news. And their relationship forms the book's core.

Rider is an excellent writer, peppering the text with descriptions of the grotesque: "Hot and rubbery and writhing—not the thing itself, but underneath its skin, like it was a coarse leather pouch dug from a hot riverbank and full of squirming things."

ALLYCE AMIDON (Spring 2015)

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