

THE OPPOSITE OF LIFE

NARRELLE
M. HARRIS



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Narrelle M. Harris

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THE second book for Brisbane's Pulp Fiction Press shows another step in the right direction.

Following on from the YA adventure of Simon Higgins's *Tomodachi*, *The Opposite of Life* exploits the continuing popularity of romance/chick lit with a paranormal twist. Harris, who has three other books to her credit, shows a deft descriptive touch and an eye for setting as she walks the reader through numerous well-drawn sites in Melbourne on the trail of a murderous vampire.

Melissa Wilson, 23, in debt to her eyeballs after finishing uni, and coming out of an ugly relationship, finds herself immersed in supernatural homicide. Haunted by the death of two siblings, Melissa has the right combination of fragility and sass to carry the story. She also has a tongue-in-cheek approach to danger which at times is endearing, but can also detract from what should – or could – be tense scenes. Vampirism is deftly handled, with the undead existence being an almost zombified refusal to embrace life and all its pitfalls and pleasures. If there is a theme running through the blood-letting and one-liners, it's that as rough as life gets, it's still better than the alternative:

"Choosing to become undead wasn't eternal life, but indifference to life. Life's messy bits were dealt with, but it robbed you of the glorious stuff too."

While the story never really reaches a climactic high, it's a worthy message, enjoyably delivered.

Jason Nahrung