

Ninth Grade Slays #2: The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod

By Heather Brewer

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The second graphic novel in the series of adaptations of Heather Brewer's *New York Times* best-selling series.

Freshman year stinks for Vlad Tod. Bullies still harass him. The photographer from the school newspaper is tailing him. And failing his studies could be deadly. A trip to Siberia gives study abroad a whole new meaning as Vlad connects with other vampires and advances his mind-control abilities, but will he return home with the skills to recognize a vampire slayer when he sees one? In this thrilling sequel to *Eighth Grade Bites*, Vlad must confront the secrets of the past and battle forces that once again threaten his life.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Heather Brewer was not your typical teen growing up, and she's certainly not your typical adult now. She insists that growing older is mandatory, but growing up is optional, and she has a *New York Times* bestseller tattoo on her arm. In addition to The Chronicles of Vladimir Tod and The Slayer Chronicles, she is the author of *Soulbound* with Dial. She lives in Missouri with her husband and two children. Visit Heather at www.heatherbrewer.com.

Tony Lee adapted *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* into a graphic novel for Del Rey Publishing, which was a *New York Times* #1 Bestselling Paperback graphic novel. He also adapted Anthony Horowitz's *Power of Five* series into graphic format for Walter Books. His *Excalibur: The Legend of King Arthur* has been nominated for the American Library Association/Young Adult Library Services Association 2012 "Great Graphic Novels for Teens."
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Dedication

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This one's for Jacob,
because high school sucks

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Vlad and I couldn't do it without you.

1

HUNTER FOR HIRE

JASIK GRIPPED THE PHOTOGRAPH in his hand and scanned the face of the boy. Except for his pale complexion and clever eyes, no one would suspect the teen was anything other than human. But Jasik knew differently.

“This is him, then?” He looked up to the man behind the desk, who nodded once.

“Vladimir Tod.” The man’s voice was hoarse and raspy.

Jasik slipped the photo into his shirt pocket and cleared his throat against his fist. “I will need provisions, of course.”

“I will provide whatever you need.” The man wore a bitter, pinched expression on his face.

Jasik crossed the room and looked out the window to the city streets outside. It was dark, despite the many streetlights. People moved like ants on the pavement below, avoiding the small pools of light. There was almost no telling which were human and which vampires. Jasik wondered briefly if the sun suddenly rose and bathed them all in light, whether they would scurry away and seek their darkness elsewhere. “Might I ask how you came to know of my services?”

The man behind the desk coughed into a handkerchief before answering. When he removed the cloth from his lips, it was stained with glistening red. “Let’s not play games, Jasik. I’ve known for many years that your . . . talents . . . can be bought. Will you hunt this boy, or not?”

Jasik glanced back at the man and smirked. “My talents are expensive.”

“I assure you, there is no price that I am unwilling to pay.”

The man behind the desk leaned forward and flipped open his checkbook. After scribbling for a moment, he paused and nodded to Jasik. “All you need to do is provide me with the number of zeros.”

Jasik faced the desk and glimpsed the check. The ink had not yet dried before he said, “Three more and you’ve got a deal.”

2

THE HUNGER

VLAD SQUEEZED HIS EYES shut tight. He was awake, but he wasn’t incredibly happy about it. Weekends, even summer weekends, were meant for sleeping in ... especially when those weekends were spent hanging out super late under the full moon because your vampire genes won’t let you go to bed before they’ve had their fill of nighttime. Even more so when you only had a matter of days before the joy of summer would be over and the dread of school would begin.

A low, buzzing sound drifted over his face, paused, then moved again toward his right ear. He popped open one eye and glared in disgust at the housefly that was hovering about the room. So that’s what had woken him.

The fly fluttered over and landed on the tip of Vlad’s nose. He swatted it away, and when it took refuge on his pillow, he smacked his hand down to squash it, but missed. Vlad grumbled obscenities under his breath. What did the fly have against sleep, anyway?

Flapping its tiny wings, it buzzed across the room and landed directly on the center of Henry’s forehead.

After a moment of hesitation, Vlad crept over to Henry's sleeping bag. He raised his hand slowly, giving the fly one final chance to move. He whispered, "Don't think I won't do it."

The fly responded by washing its gross little fly face. If it could have spoken, Vlad was almost positive it would have laughed at him.

Vlad brought his hand down fast and hard. The slapping sound his palm made when it hit Henry's skin echoed throughout his bedroom but was shortly covered by a yelp from Henry, who sat up, clutching his forehead. "Dude!"

Vlad straightened his shoulders, triumphant in battle. "There was a fly."

Henry rubbed his forehead, snarling in disgust. "Well, did you at least kill it?"

"Yeah, I think so."

The fly buzzed past his ear and out the door.

Vlad swore again but was cut off by Henry. "I smell bacon."

But it wasn't the smell of bacon that called to Vlad. It was the promise of a steamy mug of O positive and a gooey cinnamon roll, Aunt Nelly's specialty. One big plus of living with Nelly—who was actually no relation to him at all, but his mother's best friend for years and years before his parents had passed on—was that she could bake cinnamon rolls so sweet and delicious that if she had the determination and funding, she could easily give Cinnabon a run for their money. Just stay away from her meat loaf.

They raced out the door and down the stairs. By the time they reached the kitchen, they were panting and famished. Henry spotted the plate of crisp bacon on the table and grunted. "Food."

Vlad opened the freezer and grabbed a bag of blood. He plucked a coffee mug from the cupboard and nudged Henry out of the way as he headed for the microwave. "Food."

Aunt Nelly turned from her spot at the stove and chuckled. "I take it that means you boys are hungry?"

But neither Vlad nor Henry answered with any sound that could be classified as a yes or a no. Henry was too busy chewing on several slices of bacon at once, and Vlad had his head tilted back as he gulped down some warm O positive. It slid down his throat easily—it was always better warm—and when his thirst was quenched, he smacked his lips in satisfaction and reached for a cinnamon roll.

Blood and frosting: the vampire's answer to coffee and donuts.

"Deb mentioned that an entire freezer of blood is about to expire at the hospital. With your appetite lately, Vladimir, I'd better sneak out as much of it as I can." Nelly placed more bacon on the platter and sat a plate of eggs in front of Henry. She flashed Vlad a look of disapproval. "You've got blood all over your shirt."

Vlad looked down at the two dime-size red circles on his shirt and smiled sheepishly. "Sorry. I was really hungry."

Nelly's gaze softened. "Just be more careful next time. Contrary to popular belief, laundry doesn't top my list of favorite things to do."

Henry swallowed and reached for the pitcher of orange juice. "So did you get your schedule yet?"

Vlad nodded and sighed with an air of gloom and doom. “I got Mrs. Bell for English, first period.”

Henry offered Vlad a sympathetic glance. “Looks like you’re not alone. I’ve got her, too, and from what my mom said yesterday, so does Joss.”

“When’s your cousin supposed to get here anyway?” Vlad stuffed most of the gooey cinnamon roll into his mouth and chewed. The truth was he was kind of nervous about Henry’s cousin moving to town. There was always the slight chance that Joss would interfere with his and Henry’s time together, or worse, that he and Joss might not get along.

“Sunday. Oh, and just so you know, don’t count on seeing me much that day. My mom’s on some family togetherness kick.” Henry rolled his eyes.

Vlad followed suit. “How annoying.”

Nelly flashed him an incredulous glance. “Vladimir!”

Vlad took a sip of blood and raised an eyebrow at Henry. “I mean, how lovely of your parental figure to insist on enjoying quality time together. You should be grateful.”

Both boys broke into hysterical laughter. Nelly chuckled and shook her head. “All right, smart mouth. I’m getting the mail. Henry, watch Vlad while I’m gone. He’s a trouble-maker.”

Vlad’s jaw dropped in mock exasperation. “Nelly!”

Nelly smiled sweetly. “I mean, he’s a wonderful boy who brightens my day and makes life worth living.”

After she slipped out the front door, Vlad eyed the wicked glimmer in Henry’s eye suspiciously. “What?”

Henry’s grin broadened. “Did you call Meredith yet?”

Vlad straightened his shoulders proudly. “Twice, actually.”

Henry watched him for a moment, the surprise in his eyes quickly giving way to suspicion. “You talked to her?”

Talk to her? Vlad hadn’t yet figured out a way to remove the lump that had taken up residence in his throat ever since she’d leaned in for a kiss after the Freedom Fest dance and he’d backed away, babbling like some kind of deranged lunatic. Talking to her was the least of his problems. First he needed to figure out how to breathe whenever she was near.

Vlad slowly stretched his hand out and picked up his mug, then took a long drink before returning it to the table. When he was finished, he met Henry’s eyes and sighed. “Nope. Hung up both times. I think she heard me breathing once though.”

“That’s progress.” Henry sighed. “You know she has caller ID, right?”

Vlad’s eyes grew wide. There it was again, that lump in his throat. “She does?”

Henry answered with a tone of indifference. “Yeah. But dude, check this out.” He grinned wickedly and lowered his voice to a tone of conspiracy. “Last night, Greg told me something interesting about the upperclassmen girls.”

Vlad leaned up against the counter and tried to act like he wasn’t completely curious. “Interesting? Like how?”

Henry leaned closer. “He says that if you can get invited to one of the senior parties, that some of those girls take pity on the lower classmen and they’ll—”

Aunt Nelly walked into the kitchen. In one hand was a stack of envelopes, in the other was a small brown box. She glanced at their frozen, startled expressions and raised an eyebrow. “What are you boys talking about?”

They answered in one wavering voice, “Nothing!”

Vlad eyed the envelopes hopefully. “Anything from Otis?”

Nelly sighed and shook her head as she flipped through the stack. “Honestly, Vladimir. Your uncle has written to you at least once a week since the day he left Bathory. Do you really think he’d forget about you now?” She pulled a thick parchment envelope from the pile and held it out to him with a smile.

Users Review

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