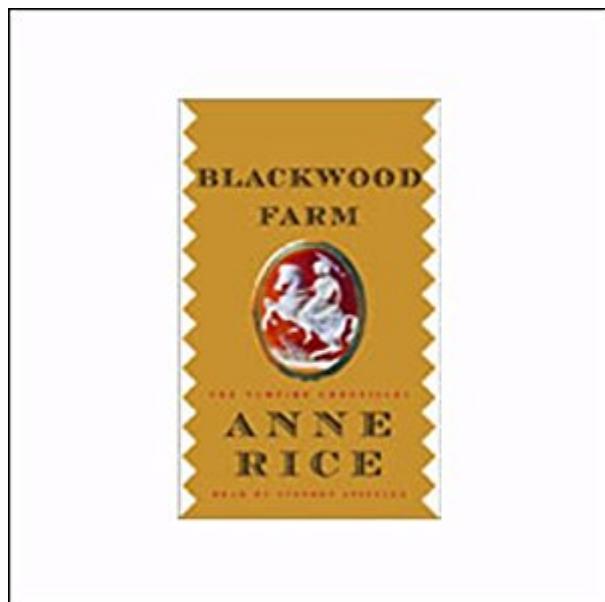


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# Blackwood Farm



## Synopsis

In her new novel, perennial bestseller Anne Rice fuses her two uniquely seductive strains of narrative -- her Vampire legend and her lore of the Mayfair witches -- to give us a world of classic deep-south luxury and ancestral secrets. Welcome to Blackwood Farm: soaring white columns, spacious drawing rooms, bright, sun-drenched gardens, and a dark strip of the dense Sugar Devil Swamp. This is the world of Quinn Blackwood, a brilliant young man haunted since birth by a mysterious doppelgänger, "Goblin," a spirit from a dream world that Quinn can't escape and that prevents him from belonging anywhere. When Quinn is made a Vampire, losing all that is rightfully his and gaining an unwanted immortality, his doppelgänger becomes even more vampiric and terrifying than Quinn himself. As the novel moves backwards and forwards in time, from Quinn's boyhood on Blackwood Farm to present day New Orleans, from ancient Athens to 19th-century Naples, Quinn seeks out the legendary Vampire Lestat in the hope of freeing himself from the spectre that draws him inexorably back to Sugar Devil Swamp and the explosive secrets it holds. A story of youth and promise, of loss and the search for love, of secrets and destiny, Blackwood Farm is Anne Rice at her mesmerizing best. From the Hardcover edition. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been increasingly disappointed in Anne Rice's books. It seems that she, like many authors, is wonderful at starting an engrossing series and less able to continue with it. *Blackwood Farm*, however, harkens back to some of her earlier work and lends fresh blood (heh heh) to the Vampire

Chronicles. Quinn Blackwood, a young (both in human age and in terms of his "change") vampire, has a problem. As long as he can remember, he's been haunted by a sometimes loving and sometimes malicious spirit whom he calls Goblin. Since Quinn's change, Goblin has become more sinister and more powerful. Quinn seeks out the most famous and powerful vampire he knows of -- Lestat, in quite a good cameo role -- to help him put an end to the spirit who is threatening Quinn's mortal friends and relations. What I liked best about this book is that it's essentially Quinn's tale of growing up among the people and ghosts of a rich southern family -- a family with its own mysteries and legends. The characterization of people, spirits and place is deftly handled. In fact, this is one of the things I think Anne Rice does best: weaving character and setting together into a specific atmosphere, and I was glad to see her get back to it after neglecting the practice in her last few novels. I also liked the way she brought together her two major New Orleans mythologies -- the Vampires and the Mayfairs (although it still seems a bit contrived to me, the way that everyone seems to be a member of one or the other group.) I was glad to see what became of Mona Mayfair, as well as Rowan and Michael. I think, however, that it would be difficult to understand everything that was going on without having read the three Mayfair Witches books; a lot of reference was made to the events in those and I know I would have been confused and distracted had I not read them. Another thing I liked was that in *Blackwood Farm*, Rice relies a lot less on the same old tired vampiric events to move the story along. Not only is Quinn a new vampire completely unrelated to and even (for the most part) unaware of the vampires we know from former books, but also his transformation doesn't take place until relatively late in the story. So there's quite a bit less of the Blood-Hunt-Identity Crisis-Yikes I'm Immortal! flavour of some of the more recent vampire chronicles. We still have the requisite Scholarly Tweedy Englishman of a Certain Age to represent the Talamasca. And we're still dealing with people who, even as mortals, have more money than God, which sometimes makes the story hard to swallow. (I wish sometimes we could follow the adventures of a working class vampire who was not so ready to give up his culture of origin.) The predictable ending gets points for getting rid of a character who never should have existed in the first place but loses some points for transforming yet another interesting mortal. On the whole, though, I liked *Blackwood Farm*. It actually reminded me of *Interview with a Vampire* more than any of the other books. I think most people who like Anne Rice will enjoy it.

I've always found Anne Rice's initial novels much more engaging than her sequels so I looked forward to reading the saga of her latest New Orleans characters, the Blackwood family. Unfortunately this bridge between her two main storylines is a shaky one. *Blackwood Farm*

suffers from having far too much in some aspects and far too little in others. What's lacking are the suspense, mystery and great storytelling of "Interview with the Vampire" and "The Witching Hour". What's over-indulgent are the many characters from other Anne Rice novels awkwardly thrust in. (Even the most fascinating characters can become annoying when they water down the main story and force the author into convoluted explanations of their backgrounds.) Unless you're greatly impressed with the gimmick of piecing all the details together, Lestat and the Mayfairs detract from Blackwood Farm more than they contribute. Another problem is the narrator, Quinn, whose flowery dialog makes him seem out of place even in his own story, which is set in the modern world of email and AIMs. The character and the setting just don't match up. Neither do his actions. Halfway through the novel he makes some extremely bizarre choices that really shattered my belief in the entire story. Set back a few decades, the story of Quinn and Goblin might have been a good one, but it seems to have been abandoned midway through in favor of cameo appearances by more famous Rice characters and an ending designed to set up another book. Blackwood Farm reads like an unintended parody of Anne Rice's better novels.

Long ago, after reading "The Tale of the Body Thief" I pooh-poohed my disappointment with that work by reasoning that every author has her bad novel. I optimistically hoped that book had been the one and only. Alas, her later works have shown me that "Thief" was proof that all Ms. Rice's best tales had already been told and that she is now a dry well. Like another reviewer admitted before me, I was drawn by the first pages of this novel. This powerful fledgling vampire seeks out Lestat for his help, hoping that the Brat Prince won't obliterate him on the spot for his audacity. "Sounds great," I thought. "Will Lestat glower at him, making him fear for his preternatural life? Will he toy with Quinn, allowing him to tell his tale with the promise to spare him if it moves him sufficiently?" No, nothing so interesting occurs. Lestat is instantly drawn to this young creature, declaring himself in love. (As does every other stinkin' character of hers do regarding every other character. Lestat loves Quinn; Lestat loves Aunt Queen; Quinn loves Stirling; Quinn loves Mona; Mona loves Quinn. Doesn't anyone in Rice world ever take an instant dislike to people?!) We are then "treated" to pages and PAGES of Quinn's spoiled brat life story, only to get the sense that Ms. Rice herself got bored with her own tale and slapped a hurried ending onto it to get to the publisher's in time. Whereupon the editors must not have had time to do any cutting, because that had to have been the biggest look-how-many-words-I-can-spew fest she has indulged in to date. So spare yourself the heartbreak. Cling tightly to those early Rice vampire novels and pretend she never wrote anything else. That's my plan.

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