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Zoe is 16 and facing bereavement: her mother is dying of cancer, and her father seems to be excluding her from her mother's hospital bedside. No one dares speak to Zoe about the family tragedy, and she is isolated by grief, anger and fear. Then she meets the alluring, enigmatic Simon ("His eyes were dark, full of wilderness and stars"), who has an uncanny ability to recognize her feelings. After a series of nocturnal meetings, Zoe learns that Simon is a vampire kept alive by his thirst to avenge the death of his own mother three centuries ago. Drawn to him by an empathy charged with both longing and fear, Zoe agrees to participate in a dangerous scheme to trap Simon's mother's supernatural killer. The two emerge from their encounter able to mourn and acknowledge their losses. First-novelist Klause is excessively ambitious in her juggling of genres and themes; as a result, her suspense is uneven, her love story inadequately rooted and her resolution just a bit pat. Nevertheless, the use of the vampire figure to exorcise Zoe's complex feelings and often striking prose attest to an intelligent and original eye.