

And Then There Were Dragons

Alcy Leyva

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Amanda Grey has had a rough time. Possessed by demons, unintentionally unleashing the apocalypse, and losing her sister Petty twice (it's a long story), Grey fought off the forces of evil and saved the world, but at the cost of her own life. Now she's been condemned to Hell, where there is no escape from torture, torment...and Olive Garden restaurants. And that's just the start of her troubles in Alcy Leyva's *And Then There Were Dragons*, the rollicking second entry of his Shades of Hell horror-comedy series.

Before Grey can adjust to her new predicament, she's greeted with worse news: Petty's soul has been stolen by the Ninth Circle of Hell. It's up to Grey to rescue her, with a motley team in tow: a psychopathic murderer, a currently unemployed angel of death, a liar who could pass as a member of the Blue Man Group, and a demonic ex-roommate who's actually kind of hot if one disregards his horns.

Leyva lets his imagination run riot, tossing in phantasmagorical terror and absurdity at every turn. Cities of the damned are packed with H&M stores (Hornets and Mice, that is). Torturers are good at their jobs, except when they take too much PTO. The "waters" of the River Styx are a mass of decomposing bodies. Trolls are troll-ish in behavior as well as appearance (who else would argue that the Star Wars prequels are the best?). Throughout, the focus stays on stubborn, sarcastic Grey as her odyssey leads towards a showdown with Satan himself. In the process, she stumbles upon a few surprises about her own destiny: it's no coincidence that she has the ability to shoot (or barf) fireballs.

And Then There Were Dragons maintains its predecessor's entertaining mix of snarky humor and devilish horror. Although Grey's quest gets a bit repetitive at times, she is a sympathetic hero. Leyva's cheeky approach holds interest to the cliffhanging conclusion, as the next installment in the saga beckons.

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