ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Changing Worlds: Book 1 of The Dharalyn Chronicles
Donald E. Dambois
CreateSpace
978-1-4662-7111-1
Four Stars (out of Five)

In the small town of Pine Tree, New York, sixteen-year-old Danielle Walkerman struggles to cope with the loss of her beloved mother, who died in a car accident. Although surrounded by her loving family—her father, Big John; her brother, Aaron; Aunt Sara; and Gran—she finds herself without friends her own age.

One day, while in the mountains behind the Walkerman cabin, she comes upon a strange glow followed by an explosion. At the point of impact, Danielle discovers an alien—a teenage girl alien. After their initial antagonism, Danielle quickly bonds with the interplanetary visitor, Dharalyn Malakovani from the planet Asreod, and welcomes Dharalyn into her home. The Walkermans eventually learn that Dharalyn is a powerful vampire princess, and her powers put everyone on alert: Danielle's overprotective father, several lovestruck boys (including Danielle's brother), high school mean girls, and the Mob. Will the best friends be able to overcome these obstacles, or will their sisterly affection be torn asunder?

Dambois penned *Changing Worlds: Book One of: The Dharalyn Chronicles*, in response to a request from his teenage niece for a new kind of vampire novel. Dambois obliged, creating the realm inhabited by these two assertive teens, Danielle and Dharalyn. As a welcome antithesis to the swoony Bella of the popular *Twilight* series, the girls are emotionally centered and levelheaded. While they of course experience fear and grief, common sense and ingenuity always win out.

Refreshingly, the relationship between Dharalyn and Danielle remains at the story's core, and the girls are unassailed by the angst over boys that is commonly found in teenage fiction. Although it is hinted that the girls will have boyfriends in future stories, Danielle's rapport with Dharalyn could also be seen as a budding lesbian relationship. These undertones do not, however, prevent the girls' relationship from being interpreted as a strong sisterly connection.

Another interesting aspect of the novel is the way in which Dambois treats the concept of

God, known on Asreod as Anon. Dambois explores without making religion a focal point of the story. The author's creativity also extends to the detail with which he describes the hierarchical matriarchy of Asreod.

At times, however, Dambois's ability to create a complex story gets away from him. It can be confusing to remember the intricacies of Dharalyn's world, and sometimes it seems as though the author gives her new and complex powers just so he can shoehorn them into the plot later. Similarly, the addition of Danielle's uncle and the high school bullies comes too late in the story without any prior pipe laying. Even harder to gloss over is the author's omission of paragraph indents. Some paragraphs extend for pages, creating unbroken blocks of text that are, at times, difficult to absorb.

These issues aside, readers looking for fresh blood in the vampire genre will have their paradigm shifted by *Changing Worlds*.

Jill Allen