



Darling

Mercedes M. Yardley

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In Mercedes M. Yardley's disquieting novel *Darling*, a young mother fights to protect her children from the unseen evil that inhabits her hometown.

Cherry returns to Darling, Louisiana, after the death of her estranged mother. It is an act of desperation. The single mother of two has little money and fewer prospects, so a free place to live is too good to pass up, though her memories of Darling fill her with dread.

In *Darling*, Cherry reconnects with Mordachi, her estranged husband's younger brother, and Runner, an old friend. She begins to create a new life, ignoring the town's gossip. Despite the way her house whispers to her, and the sounds that she hears scrambling across her roof at night, she is determined to create a happy home for her children. Then children in and around Darling go missing; Cherry wakes to find her two-year-old daughter, Daisy, was also taken in the night. If she has any hope of getting her child back, she will have to face the evil that she ran from in her youth.

Both frightening and familiar, this is the story of a lone woman fighting against great evil to keep her family intact. It builds in a slow, atmospheric manner, with Cherry's own fears serving as the primary source of discomfort in *Darling*, a town that otherwise seems ordinary—until the bodies start to appear, validating Cherry's trepidation. How she and the other townspeople respond to the dead children, and to the families left to mourn them, leads to additional disturbances. Here, everyone seems capable of murder, and there are no safe places to hide.

Darling is an unflinching horror novel—an unsettling story about what constitutes true evil.

CATHERINE THURESON (July / August 2022)

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