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Clarion Review

Science Fiction

Destiny of Darkness
Tempest Morgan
978-1-4343-7658-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

Alexa McKay's first day in New York is an androphilic teenage runaway's dream. An attractive man meets her at the airport buys her lunch and gives her a sports car and a rent-free apartment. Her real father (a god) has left a gift for her: a magic closet full of self-replenishing cash. While attempting to carry out her divinely ordained duty of killing vampires Alexa meets her first lover. The protagonist's adventures with her rapidly multiplying cast of friends and lovers read something like the plot of a raunchy *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spinoff.

Morgan's flowery and campy descriptions of Alexa's outfits passions powers battles and sexual conquests are imaginatively engaging but her prose is often distracting trite or hampered by syntactic hobbles: "With a growl Dorian rolled me over onto my back giving me a feral look his lips hovering over mine his long brown hair tickling my face and neck. Our lips touched lightly as the shimmering energy poured from my mouth into his driving him so wild he crushed his mouth against mine and his fangs scraped against my tongue sending tingles down my spine."

The author knows the genre of supernatural romance and the foibles of her audience of older teens and twenty-somethings. But her book is rather derivative perhaps because she thinks this is the only way to keep her readers' attention. It is refreshing however to encounter a female protagonist who despite being a beautiful nymphomaniac with outrageous superpowers still comes across as a human being full of frivolity and guilty of making immature rash decisions.

The plot development is rather dizzying. A horde of new characters join the dramatis personae at a startling speed and events pile up so quickly that it is almost possible to lose the thread of the narrative. Some moments feel like sidesteps unnecessary to Morgan's goals hindering the forward movement of the plot. Alexa's mother Katherine is an interesting lacuna. The little information that readers learn about her is contradictory. She fears hates yet somehow loves her daughter although as a rule she's presented unsympathetically. The spare details of her

lifestyle feel unconvincing perhaps because they are exaggerated for the sake of comparison to those of her daughter's life.

Various aspects of the plot cause readers to suspect that a future book in the trilogy may reveal that the woman who carried and bore our protagonist is not her real mother. This subtle wicked stepmother angle further problematizes the relationship between Katherine and her pale-skinned child. An offhand comment from Kyros Alexa's first guardian in New York hints that her oppressive upbringing may have been for reasons of protection.

Kyros himself is an unfinished character—perhaps the artifact of a rewritten plot; he seems set up to be Alexa's love interest with no explanation for his manipulative behavior (why did she need to come to New York now?). It is also startling that her enemies don't know about the drugs her mother used to suppress her pyrotechnic powers considering that they know all her other secrets. Taken for what it is however *Destiny of Darkness* is an amusing and occasionally engaging book.