ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

LGBT

I'd Fight the Devil
John Faller
Xlibris
978-1-4771-4953-9
Four Stars (out of Five)

Although many people are familiar with the butterfly-laden feeling of first love, it's the ebb and flow of an ongoing relationship where so many truly fascinating stories reside.

For first-time novelist John Faller, that story begins with Doug and Tim, who meet on a gay cruise and fall in love despite wildly different backgrounds and personalities. While attempting to create a strong foundation for commitment, the men find themselves challenged by numerous conflicts, including run-ins with Tim's ex-boyfriend, who hovers like a storm cloud above the relationship.

Faller also explores the nuances of familial conflict about homosexuality when a medical situation with his father forces Doug to come out to his family, embroiling him in an ugly confrontation with a homophobic relative. Just as these major difficulties smooth out, a potentially fatal accident threatens to part the men for good, and one is left to fight another round of potential destruction.

Throughout the novel, Faller's talent for description and dialogue allow the story to flow at a strong, suspenseful pace. The two main characters may be distinct in their backgrounds, but Faller makes their love believable by having them share fundamental qualities like integrity, kindness, and sincerity. Each is complex in a way that makes the couple's intersections even more intriguing and creates richer tension for each trouble-suffused situation. There is a drawback to the brisk pace, however, and that's the lost opportunity to address the full emotional landscape of secondary characters. Often, important people in the story, such as Tim's ex-boyfriend, appear more as threats to the relationship than as fully realized characters that might add depth to the story.

Faller, a retired teacher, notes in his bio statement that the book is about 5 percent autobiographical and the rest is wishful thinking. But considering that he has been with his partner for forty-four years, that 5 precent is likely the crucial element that gives the story so much believability and makes his characters credible. In his personal life, Faller not only knows

what it means to fall deeply in love, but also what it takes to keep that love alive through decades. Because of this, characters like Doug and Tim live more fully on the page and convey nuanced emotions that resonate throughout the story.

In every truly committed relationship, there are always times when the devil—jealousy, misunderstanding, illness, anger—creeps in as an unwelcome houseguest, and it takes both partners fighting as hard as they can to oust him. In this artfully told, detail-rich exploration, Faller is expert at giving readers a glimpse inside key moments of a relationship, from devil filled to heaven-sent.

Elizabeth Millard