Clarion Review

General

Serviles of Darkness
Donna Campbell
AuthorHouse
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One Star (out of Five)

In the hands of the right author, a vampire novel can create a new world. New mythologies emerge and the reader is transported to a reality limited only by the writer's imagination. This book is an attempt to create such a world. The author includes not only vampires, who are not necessarily bad, but also vampire–human half breeds, who are always evil.

The story is told from the perspective of Bronze, who, along with her twin sister Rim, is attacked and turned into a vampire. The girls decide separately to run away from home. Bronze heads for New York where she meets a young human named Troy and the two fall in love. They establish a new life, going to college and becoming investigative journalists before moving to Italy to search for Rim. They find work for a local paper and begin to investigate crimes in the area—first some missing cattle, and then some drugs that have been stolen from a medical lab. At a local bar they meet a half-breed named Vincent. With the help of several other vampires, Bronze and Troy discover that Vincent is responsible for both crimes, which ultimately implicate him in a string of brutal murders.

The author has written an incredibly clumsy story. The cast of minor characters, including Ravine, Sean, Rim, and Alyssa, all have backstories that confuse, rather than add to, the central plot. Rim and Ravine in particular are set up as central figures but they never do anything significant. Additionally, the majority of sentences make no sense; the writing is near gibberish. For example, when Bronze tells of her longing for Troy, she says, "The compulsory stricken urge to perilously be driven with miserable intent is the plan."

Dialogue is presented without any reference to the speaker and often the speaker seems to change within a single paragraph. Even when it is possible to determine who is talking, the dialogue is painfully stiff. Troy offers support to Bronze, saying, "It's ok Bronze. I'm here to comfort you. So please, cease to be uneasy." There are constant grammatical errors and the

author often uses words that were clearly mistakes. Ravine, who is the leader of all vampires, is said to have “reached the pentacle of her undead world.”

Descriptions of individual characters are inconsistent. Ravine is described as having “thousands of years of apprenticeship through the categorical spectrum of powers of vampires.” One would assume this means Ravine is thousands of years old, but just two pages later, Ravine’s childhood is described, including the dance club she attended where music played on a record player and the teenage girls snuck beer and cigarettes.

The author’s astounding misuse of the English language makes this a difficult read, and the plot is riddled with holes, contradictions, and confusing distractions. Serviles of Darkness is not recommended for any reader.

Catherine Thureson