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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ FANTASY

Tainted Child

Shey Olivia Sullivan
AuthorHouse UK (Oct 26, 2012)
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The idea that angels and demons have been warring since before the creation of mankind is nothing new, and neither is the notion that celestial rebels mated with the daughters of men to produce hybrid offspring. In *Tainted Child*, by Shey Olivia Sullivan, however, the battle is not split between good and evil or right and wrong. The actions of Sullivan's characters hinge around a single character, Belladonna Arachne, who has yet to choose a side.

Eighteen-year-old Bella knows that her father, the Angel King, married a human woman and was killed when she was three years old. But she doesn't know the rest of her story—and the lack of information could kill her. Bella has no idea why she's being chased by wraith, flame daemons, and assassins with crossbows. Her elderly human guardian, Boss, has trained her to be a capable warrior, but he fears that telling her the whole truth would shift her loyalties.

Even Shadow, a powerful vampire who supported the Angel King and who now acts as a nursemaid to Bella, is reluctant to admit what the rest of the supernatural world already knows: that Bella's uncle killed his own brother—the Angel King. And he will stop at nothing to destroy his niece, whom he fears may carry on her father's cause to unite all creatures whether they are human, hybrid, or pureblood.

Despite the well-designed ideas presented in this book, Sullivan's delivery is highly unbelievable. Bella's reactions are unpredictable and overly dramatic. She strikes, slaps, and verbally attacks the people who are trying to keep her alive whenever they say something she doesn't agree with. The action sequences are riveting, but their outcome is always the same—either the enemy mysteriously disappears or is somehow miraculously vanquished despite impossible odds.

Moreoever, the romantic lead, Leon Vaniell, a blond and mysterious hunk who saves Bella from falling out of a twenty-foot tower, doesn't treat her very well; he drops her on the floor and calls it funny when she's hurt and embarrassed. Still, his ambiguity serves his nature, which the reader discovers at the end. Like the others, he is committed to keeping Bella alive.

Poor editing also mars the text. Starting with the very first sentence, where the author uses "there" instead of "they're," and continuing through the entire novel right onto the back cover, careless spelling and punctuation render the story nearly unreadable. Although Sullivan has set up the ending as a perfect lead to a sequel, most fans of the genre will likely not find it worth reading until the author's craftsmanship catches up to her imagination.
EMILY ASAD (January 29, 2013)

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