



The Devil and Dayna Dalton: (Book 9) A Bulwark Anthology

Brit Lunden

Chelshire (Sep 30, 2019)

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The Devil and Dayna Dalton is a fast, entertaining novella that's rich with romance and supernatural tension.

In Brit Lunden's ninth entry in the Bulwark Anthology, *The Devil and Dayna Dalton*, a reporter in an idyllic small town falls in unrequited love and is driven to supernatural action.

Dayna suffers for the sins of her mother, a notorious reckless denizen of Bulwark, Georgia. Dayna gave up trying to be perfect or to avoid the sex and drug-fueled reputation gifted to her; instead, she leaned into expectations. That is, except when it comes to the stoic and solid sheriff, Clay.

Clay is married and uninterested in Dayna, leaving her to distract herself with a string of broken relationships. Meanwhile, her town has long been a hot spot for the weird and unusual, and now Dayna is in the crosshairs. A mysterious stranger offers her a means of escaping, but at a great cost.

Within the novella, the characterization is fantastic and deep. Dayna's next-door neighbor and old babysitter is eccentric; the two have a combative relationship. The story begins with Dayna's latest sexual conquest, painting her in a negative light, but with an optimistic tint. Within a few pages, her entire personality is laid bare, thanks to her actions and conflicting thoughts, which are painful and believable. Other characters are grounded in similar fashion, from broad-shouldered and closed-off Clay to Dayna's wild and erratic mother.

Conversations capture characters' voices and layer in exposition in a subtle way. This is most evident when it comes to Dayna and her mother. Their conversations are strained and tense; they exchange niceties between clenched teeth before erupting in anger. Their silence holds subtextual content; a terse phone call during Dayna's hospital stay highlights the lack of emotional bonding between the two.

The novella is a self-contained episode in a larger narrative. Its pacing is strong, with scenes transitioning in an engaging fashion between drama, romance, and the paranormal. When the mysterious stranger appears, Dayna slips easily into his world. There's no wasted space or time; every element pays off in the end, from a strange conversation with Dayna's neighbor to a deer sighting that connects with a later surprise revelation.

Alternating between short, snappy bursts when the action kicks off and longer, contemplative sections for the quieter moments, the book's sentence structures help to maintain balance. Dialogue and exposition feed off of each other well; both elevate the work. Spacing issues hamper the reading experience somewhat.

As Dayna faces obstacles and achieves her goals, the book is satisfying, working toward a shocking reveal and completion. This surprise generates interest in finding out what happens next.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (October 30, 2019)

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