



Devil Take Me

*Rhys Ford , Ginn Hale , Jordan L. Hawk , T.A. Moore , C.S. Poe , Jordan Castillo Price , Tricia Kristufek
(Editor)*

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Temptation lurks around every corner in worlds sometimes dark, sometimes lurid. Giving in is both dangerous and satisfying, though never in the ways one expects. While these enticements offer a vast range of benefits and boons, the cost is a soul and the devil expects his due. Sometimes suave and charming or calculating and cruel, these devils have schemes and desires of their own. They can be creatures to run away from... or toward.

Join the most unique and celebrated authors of LGBT urban fantasy and paranormal fiction for a fast-paced and unpredictable ride, from a city on the other side of reality, to a world suspended in dusk, to a twisted version of the 1960s and 70s.

Meet devils in top hats and waistcoats, a defrocked motorcycle-riding priest, and a genderfluid antihero—among many more. Full of humor, romance, horror, action, intrigue, and magic, these stories have one common element....

They're one hell of a good time.

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From Reader Review Devil Take Me for online ebook

Dumbledore11214 says

Temptation lurks around every corner in worlds sometimes dark, sometimes lurid. Giving in is both dangerous and satisfying, though never in the ways one expects. While these enticements offer a vast range of benefits and boons, the cost is a soul and the devil expects his due. Sometimes suave and charming or calculating and cruel, these devils have schemes and desires of their own. They can be creatures to run away from... or toward.

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They're one hell of a good time.

Review:

Dear readers,

As blurb tells you all of these stories share a VERY general premise and this premise is "devil takes my soul". This premise plays out differently in each story of course and they take place in different settings and in a couple of stories one can even argue that the premise does not really apply, but for the most part yes, devil takes the character's soul for whatever reason it was offered to him and we also have a romantic storyline developing.

Please note that I DNFed one of the stories, it is called "11.59" by CS Poe and for that reason I am not giving it any other rating. The reason I did that after reading only few pages is that any writer has to work really hard to convince me that first person or third person present time was the best way to present the story. Here it did not work to me at all.

I am going to start with the story which was the main reason I bought this anthology. I did not care if I would hate everything else, I had to read it.

The story is called "Counterfeit Viscount" by Ginn Hale and it is set in the world of her "Wicked Gentlemen" . "Wicked Gentlemen" was the second original m/m book I have ever read and most of this writer's other books worked for me very well and this novella was not an exception.

You don't really need to read "Wicked Gentlemen" to understand this story, although I highly recommend it. I guess the main feature of this world that you should know is that Prodigal men and women are supposedly the descendants of the Devils who during the Middle Ages came down from Hell to accept redemption from the Church. Only poor folks did not realize that the redemption would mean that they would have to live their lives underground and never be allowed to live where all the "normal" people live. Centuries passed and the Prodigal are still treated like crap. After reading this story I want to say that things are slowly started to get better, but it was couple of tiny improvements that I am not sure that "slowly getting better" is a correct description or a stretch.

Allow me to quote the blurb:

"When Prodigal devils begin disappearing, Archie Fallmont, Viscount of Granville, finds himself in the unenviable position of being required to investigate. He has, after all sold his soul to the handsome devil - and flashy dresser - Nimble Hobbs. Now Archie must join Nimble, sleuthing out the knotty secrets of noble families and an infamously exclusive club.

But as bullets fly and top hats fall, Archie begins to fear he and Nimble are up against much worse than just dreadful poetry recitals. Not only is a murderer on the loose, but Archie is growing disturbingly found of having a devil around"

Not all as it seems in the blurb, even though it describes the set up for the story perfectly. Yes, Archie thinks that he sold his soul to the Devil, but as I stated previously all Prodigals are considered to be the Descendants of the Devils who look different and have some supernatural abilities. However what really happened in this story is not quite what you expect when you think about traditional bargain with the Devil. I said it many times that I prefer novellas that deal with the established couples and in more way than one Archie and Nimble are established couple even if they do not quite realize that till the story comes closer to the end.

When Archie comes to visit Nimble in the Hells Below the boy comes to Nimble and tells him a story about strange disappearance of the Prodigal fighter in the fighting club outside of Hells Below and that club is one of those rare establishment where Prodigals are allowed to enter if the "normal" person sponsors them. Nimble and Archie end up investigating the mystery. The story is suspenseful and ending even had an element of surprise to me, and I completely bought Nimble and Archie having a future together.

Grade: A.

"Dark favors" by Jordan Castillo Price.

Blurb:

"Most folks in the crumbling metropolis of Calvary are ignorant sheep, but not Jonny Lockheart. He's Chosen. Half a lifetime ago, when he was young and stupid, he sold his soul to the Devil... and he's been regretting that choice ever since.

Now the Devil is back with new and improved offer. Kill a major TV personality and walk free with his soul. It should be simple, if not for the star's bodyguard. Adam is Chosen, too, and he has no compunctions about using his powers. When the two of them rub against each other, their raw chemistry ignites - but there's no way he'd let Johnny go through with the murder. The only way out is to cut off power at its source. Is their connection enough to rid Calvary of the Devil's influence for good?"

Review:

"I was young enough to think I knew everything, but old enough that my stupidity could get me into some serious trouble" . This is how young Johnny starts telling us the story of his life and we first meet him in 1961. The story is named very appropriately, because to me it was the darkest story in the anthology and not because of any specific scene, but due to overall mood. Let's just say that the story explores the "Devil takes the Soul" premise in depth and it eventually takes the plot in both unexpected and familiar direction. Unfortunately I cannot tell you much if anything about the plot that would not be spoilers. I will tell you that I did feel sorry for Johnny and I think the ending was the best possible ending for him.

I also thought that he and Adam were extremely hot together, however I did wonder as to whether they will have a future together. I am reviewing the book with romantic elements so I want to let you know that they are alive and together at the end, however I also have to say that even though I thought the story was extremely well written and executed I do not see myself ever rereading it. Once again I cannot tell you why because of spoilers.

Grade: B+

"Collared" by TA Moore.

Warning: I also found this story to be extremely dark, but for a different reason than "Dark favors". Beware of descriptions of gruesome murders and the descriptions of dead bodies. I was also a bit lost about some important details in the world building (whether Hell really came inside Jack's town that is and how Jack came back to the world of living).

Where romance is concerned I have read and reviewed several books by this writer and I enjoyed them all, I do know that her characters are often extremely flawed and the chemistry is very subtle to the point that some readers do not see any chemistry. I did see chemistry here, but I can definitely see how opinions may differ.

Grade : C+

"Infernal affairs " by Jordan L. Hawk.

This story was probably the lightest story in the book. Certain human asks for an unexpected thing in response to certain cross - roads demon offering to buy their soul from the human (I am using the pronoun used in the book for the character). This story is about the consequences after both human and demon made certain choices and how several years later they are forced to join forces to stop another demon from doing bad things. I feel conflicted about this story. I was definitely entertained when I read it, but considering the premise I think it felt "too" light for the premise if that makes sense.

"Wonderland City" by Rhys Ford.

"Alice in Wonderland" was never a favorite book in my childhood, but I dutifully read it and even watched the cartoon several times, it is just the book never travelled with me to my adulthood as so many others did. The main character in this story Xander Spade fell through the Looking Glass before the story began and had been living in Wonderland City for some time now, not entirely by choice and he is forced to participate in some weirdness going on there. I would have actually enjoyed some deconstruction of "Alice" but I did not feel as if the story went deep at all.

And I was left absolutely cold about Xander and his love interest, did not feel any chemistry between them at all.

Grade: C-

Kaje Harper says

** Still on sale on AZ for \$1.99 today 11/04/18** A set of very good novella-length stories by talented authors that range in mood from the light and sweet to the very dark. Not all of these have what I'd call a happy ending, but they all were interesting takes on the theme of selling your soul to the devil, and all were well worth the read. (Caution for dark themes and violence.)

Infernal Affairs - Jordan L. Hawk - 4 *

This was light, fun, and had a sweet romance. A bumbling devil meets his match in a flamboyant nonbinary would-be hero willing to sell their soul for the chance to fight evil - a bargain that is pretty confusing to a novice soul-buyer. I had the good fortune to hear Jordan Hawk read from this story at GRL and they made Chess and Ralgath a fascinating and amusing couple.

Collared - TA Moore - 5*

This one was dark and gory and a bit confusing, but somehow the spectre of Hell creeping up on the human world was deeply engaging. Jack is an ex-priest who sold his soul for the wrong kind of love with a demon, but he holds onto the tattered remnants of his humanity, acting as a doomed-to-fail bulwark against the slimy darkness. Math is incredibly creepy, but through Jack's eyes we see why the priest fell. I'm definitely going to have to pay more attention to this author.

Counterfeit Viscount - Ginn Hale - 4.5 *

We get a return to the wonderful world of *Wicked Gentlemen* although Sykes and Harper only appear in a casual mention. This is a more straightforward tale of a human and a Prodigal whose complicated relationship began as near-children on a battlefield, and who now as adults find themselves caught up in solving a mystery. The characters were appealing, and the world-building is first rate.

11:59 - C.S. Poe - 4 *

Asuka is an ex-cop who sold his soul years ago, to prevent his own death and so he could help others. In a world where science and mythology meet, nightmares have become more than a dream, and some of them take over the body of their host, turning anyone into a violent, mindless horror. Asuka has become a doomed hero, a man who can go out every night and fight monsters and save people, and still not make a dent in the onslaught of death on society. He's hollow and desperate, when he meets a man who makes him want more, and gets the chance to make a difference. This one is less romance, as Merrick is more a hope and a light for Asuka than a major character in the plot, but Asuka is a great character. The world-building is novel, and atmospheric.

Wonderland City - Rhys Ford

A fresh take on the world of Alice in Wonderland, with Xander Spade, the Ace of Hearts, as a weary bounty hunter with a blue dog at his heels, except when it disappears. The arrival of another small girl in Wonderland City may spell doom for all the inhabitants, unless she can be sent back home. Wonderland has been played with by a variety of writers, and the climactic battle goes on a long time, but Rhys Ford manages to get a fresh, twisted take and some really interesting characters into it.

Jordan Castillo Price - Dark Favors - 4*

When Johnny was young, he sold his soul for power and influence but as the years passed he realized he didn't want what he'd gained. He lives a simple life, refusing to cash in the Favors he's gained, until the devil comes to him with one last bargain he might not be able to refuse. Interesting world building, great writing, and characters I got caught up in following. A few uncomfortable moments, and an ending that doesn't quite feel like HFN, but an interesting journey and fitting for a collection that is tagged horror as well as romance.

Giedre says

Six authors, six stories. The theme? Selling your soul to the devil. To be honest, this one only caught my attention because of Ginn Hale. That said, I read five of the six stories. I'm rating them individually:

Infernal Affairs by **Jordan L. Hawk**, 3 stars

Fun, if a bit too campy for my liking.

Collared by **T.A. Moore**, 3.5 stars

Very dark, with an urban fantasy feel. Interesting world, though I found some elements of it confusing.

Counterfeit Viscount by **Ginn Hale**, 4 stars

Set in her *Wicked Gentlemen* world, but features new characters. Delightful.

11:58 by **C.S. Poe**, 2 stars

Not a bad story idea, but the writing made it feel less like a novella and more like an outline of one.

Wonderland City by **Rhys Ford** SKIPPED

Judging by the blurb, this one is a spin on *Alice in Wonderland*. For some reason, when I read the first sentence my brain just went *nope*.

Dark Favors by **Jordan Castillo Price**, 3 stars

Darker, cynical. Strong beginning, but I thought the ending was not as strong... and kind of a bummer, if I'm honest.

C.S. Poe says

BOOK:

DSP Publications: bit.ly/DTMDSPP

Amazon: bit.ly/DTMAMZ

Barnes & Noble: bit.ly/DTMBaN

Google Play: bit.ly/DTMGoPl

iBooks: bit.ly/DTMITUN

Kobo: bit.ly/DTMKo1

Wendy says

I am gonna be honest here, and admit that I am not a real big anthology fan... I don't care much for short stories ...but... I do care about wonderful authors. So when a bunch of them come together and write...I have no choice but to read :P

Infernal Affairs by Jordan L. Hawk

Who doesn't love demons ?? I for one am a huge fan, and when I read the words **crossroads demon**...one of my favorite characters popped in my mind ;)

I couldn't get him out of my head after that, but thankfully I love Crowley dearly, so it only made this story better for me ! Too bad Ralgath gets kicked of the job after one very HOT encounter at his "place of work" This was a fun and hot little story ;) I really enjoyed this one a lot....probably because it did remind me a lot of Supernatural....or at least how I would like Supernatural to be :P

Collared by T.A. Moore

This was a very well written story..it reminded me a bit of some thriller movies I have seen in the past. It grabbed my attention from the very first page. What made it even better than those movies though was the very HOT man on man loving we got.

Counterfeit Viscount by Ginn Hale

I enjoyed this one, though for me it read more like a full novel... It was very detailed..which is good...but I had to go back and re-read certain parts because it was a bit "wordy". English is not my native tongue and sometimes, especially with PNR, this happens. I didn't really expect this to happen with a short story, which just shows how well written it really is ;)

11:59 by C.S. Poe –

For some reason it took me a while to get into this one... This is another sell your soul to the devil story... There is a lot of this going on in this anthology :P

This was an oke read for me...but it didn't blow me away and missed some of the sexiness ;)

Wonderland City by Rhys Ford

I love Rhys Ford's writing style and this author was actually one of the reasons I wanted to read this anthology... The story was very entertaining... Sure there was another soul being sold...but somehow this story was completely different than all the others. It had a completely different vibe. Those rabbits freaked me out...actually rabbit always freak me out :P

Dark Favors by Jordan Castillo Price

This is another one of my favorite authors and I was very curious to read this little story. I am sad to say that it didn't quite hit the mark for me. I was a bit confused as to what was going on and I had some trouble

getting into the story.

All in all, I really did enjoy reading this anthology, but I was left with one major question.... **WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP SELLING THEIR SOUL TO THE DEVIL !!!!**

Well....maybe I would too if he was that hot :P

This review is posted on DirtyBooksObsession

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~Volha~ says

I enjoyed reading this anthology very much. I knew it would be a good one since I have read the works of most of these authors and liked them a lot. The focal point of all the novellas was what happened when you made the deal with the devil. From then the sky was the limit and each story was well-written and fantastic. The characters in all of them were well-developed, some of them could be described as anti heroes but most of them possessed integrity and honor in one way or the other. Each story was unique and quite fascinating considering that they had to have a common denominator. In some instances the devil was portrayed as a positive character in others not so much, and I loved that juxtaposition. All in all it was well worth waiting for but it also proved that ignorance is indeed bliss in some circumstances.

"You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more." - Should have taken the blue pill, Neo! But then there wouldn't be a story to tell.

Chris, the Dalek King says

For the most part I really enjoyed this anthology. While all six stories had a linking thread of what exactly happens when someone is willing to sell their soul to get what they want—and what they will do to win it back—each author takes their story in new and creative paths. Several of the stories were not exactly things I would want to read again, but on the whole it was a very good collection of short stories. And actually, some of them were not all that “short,” so if you are looking to get your money’s worth this anthology should be a

good bet. The publisher says it is 450 pages...but to be honest, I wouldn't be shocked if that is short changing the book by a hundred pages or so. It took me quite a while to get thru this whole collection (hence why I am so far past the publishing date on this review) and I'm usually able to read at decent clip. Halloween might be done, but this is a good book to pick up any time you need something a bit more dark.

Infernal Affairs by Jordan L. Hawk — 4.25 Hearts

Ralgath and Chesapeake Richards first meeting was not exactly what you would call a typical meeting of crossroad-demon and potential soul-seller. And not just because Chess ends up asking for something that no demon really has any business being involved in. When Chess *persuades* the demon to go against the rules, things do not go well for Ralgath. Three years, and a demonic-demotion, later, their paths cross again. Ralgath swears he will not fall for Chess's charms again, but can't help but want to sell his non-existent soul for one more kiss.

I've always found that first-stories in anthologies tend to be the stronger of the bunch, and while I haven't yet read all of the stories contained in this book I will say that Jordan L. Hawk starts us off on a very sure foot. While the mystery isn't the strongest, the characters made the whole thing well worth the read. I was really pleased with Chess, a sort-of supernatural hunter (who also happens to be non-binary), and Ralgath the crossroads demon whom Chess sweeps off his feet. A lot of very good humor here, as well. It was a very good start to this anthology.

Collared by T.A. Moore — 4 Hearts

The world is slowly going to hell. Literally. And if anyone should know, it would be Jack, ex priest and current underling to the demon Math. After having sold his souls decades ago, Jack struggles to live thru each day. Made even harder by the fact that he is technically dead. When Math shows up demanding he find a stolen object, in return for his soul, Jack can't really believe it. But for a chance to escape the slowly-rotting hell-on-earth for even a few years, maybe, Jack will risk rather a lot.

While I didn't like this one quite as much as the first story in this anthology, that had less to do with the writing and more to do with how gory it tended to get. It was actually very well written, and while it certainly leans a lot more on the horror than any kind of romance, the story and characters were very captivating. I would just never recommend reading it while eating. Or any time near a meal. This gets pretty graphic and since it is so well written, it can be a bit nauseating at times. But if what you are looking for is something more in the vein of supernatural horror, I would say this is a pretty good bet for you.

Counterfeit Viscount by Ginn Hale — 4.25 Hearts

As a boy on a battlefield, Archie sold his soul for the promise of one day being able to avenge his beloved cousin, and bring utter ruin to his scheming and villainous uncle. Now, mere months away from finally getting what he paid so dearly for, Archie is once again in a bargain for his soul. Except this time it is to win it back. But even if he does get his soul back, it might cost him something far greater...the company of the very being who bought it in the first place.

This is I think the longest story in this anthology, and I would probably consider it a decent size novella. As such, it has longer to build up its characters and plot, giving it a very well-rounded-and grounded-feel. I really enjoyed the world building here. While not exactly "historical" since the world is not our own, it has that wonderful Victorian feel that I love so much. And both Archie and Nimble Hobbs, the demon (or Prodigal as the story calls them) who bought Archie's soul, are very good together. Their banter really brings this story to life. I would love to eventually see more stories set in this world, since it has a lot of potential.

11:59 by C.S. Poe — 4 Hearts

For nearly half a decade the world has been afflicted by nightmares no longer content to reside solely in the dreaming world. Slowly, but surely, they have been leaking into reality, transforming people into walking monsters. Determined to save himself—so that he might save others—Asuka Kawashima traded his soul to the Devil so that he might be safe from the dreams that transform people. It is not till after the deal is struck, though, that realizes he has not only given up his soul but also his ability to dream and hope and *feel*.

I think this one could have been my favorite if it had been just a tad longer. I found the premise of the whole story to be very interesting, and Asuka was a very cool character that just need a smidge more backstory to really make him shine to his full potential. Merrick Grace also didn't have a lot of page time, so he tends to blend into the background a bit more than I wanted. Still...it was very interesting, and found the mythology to be very cleverly used.

Wonderland City by Rhys Ford — 3.75 Hearts

Rhys Ford does *Alice in Wonderland*, basically. Which if that doesn't sell you on this story, not sure what else will.

The story takes place years on from the climactic fall of the Queen of Hearts at the hands of Alice, in a Wonderland that is barely holding on. Xander Spade, a human who sold his soul in exchange for not dying, has had a long and painful history with Wonderland ever since a demon booted his ass over to the other side of the looking glass. But as apathetic as he is most days even he knows that another human child wandering into the land of weird and wonderful is a huge fucking problem. Especially since the last time that happened the world quaked and fell into its current ruin. So even if his soul wasn't on the line yet again, he would have to hunt her down. He ain't giving up the chance at his soul just because it is the right thing to do, though.

This was a lot of fun. I thought I was going to be bored with yet another reread of this classic story, but Rhys Ford did a good job of breathing fresh life into it. My only real complaint is that the final battle seemed to take forever to finish. It was well written, but it feels a bit more stretched out than it needed to be. There were several points where it hit a beat/story point and I thought "ok, this is it!" but then it just kept going. If it had wrapped up maybe five pages sooner, I think I would have liked this a bit more. The ending was really good though.

Dark Favors by Jordan Castillo Price — 2 Hearts

The price of a Favor might be a man's soul...but it can also grant that man great power and influence. He just has to be willing to use it. Which Johnny Lockheart isn't. Not anymore. Not after he realized the steep price paid over by his younger and much more foolish self. But when the devil comes a calling, with an offer of a soul in exchange for just one more *small* favor, not even Johnny can resist the temptation one last time.

Yeah...this would be the one story in this bunch that I couldn't really stomach. Mostly for one reason. The sex in this book is more than a little rapey. It tries to offset it, but it never really helped things for me, and I just found the whole thing a bit nauseating. JCP is usually an author that delivers the goods, but on this one I'm gonna have to call it a dud. Others might not have such a big problem with it, but despite the interesting world building, the downsides sunk the ship on this one.

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

Kathleen says

The biggest standout for me was Ginn Hale's Counterfeit Viscount, a truly wonderful AU/dystopian historical story. Loved it. The story I liked least was TA Moore's Collared as I am not a fan of horror stories. And I didn't care for CS Poe's 11:59, even though the core story was quite interesting, most likely because it was written in active-voice-present-tense. I skipped Rhys Ford's Wonderland City as I am not a fan of the original story and the author is really hit or miss for me. Jordan L Hawk's Infernal Affairs was a really nice story as was Jordan Castillo Price's Dark Favor.

WhatAStrangeDuck says

The stories in this anthology range from dnf to 5 stars, so I'm not going to rate it.

Jordan L. Hawk - Infernal Affairs - I usually like the author but this fell a little flat for me. 3 stars

TA Moore - Collared - This one was too gory for me but then again I'm really not a fan of horror stories. YMMV. I found the narration rather confusing (I still don't know who nailed the dead dude to the bed. Does anybody know? And why?) but that may just be me. Still, a little exposition wouldn't have hurt. 3 stars

Ginn Hale - Counterfeit Viscount - Loved it. This story is set in the world of "Wicked Gentlemen". I'm not quite sure if it would have worked equally well for me if I hadn't been introduced to this world before but anyhow, it's quite unique and interesting. The characters are very likeable and the mystery is suspenseful. 5 stars

C.S. Poe - 11:59 - I'm sorry to say that present tense narration hardly ever works for me and this switches to 3rd pers. pres. in the second chapter, which I find super strange. I stopped reading after a few pages into the second chapter because I just wasn't feeling it. If the narration doesn't bother you, there might be a good story there but it's not for me.

Rhys Ford - Wonderland City - Nope. I know I may be in the minority but I never liked "Alice in Wonderland" and a story that seems to be some kind of noir crime story in some sort of twisted "Alice in Wonderland" setting didn't appeal to me at all. DNF. It may very well be a favourite for other people.

Jordan Castillo Price - Dark Favors - The premise is original and the execution excellent. I mean, people, it's JCP - what can I say? 4.5 stars

Roxana Chiril? says

They've sold their soul to the devil - but now the devil wants to sell it back, in exchange for a favor.

This anthology is quite solid. I'm not saying that it's perfect, but I've loved the sheer variation involved, especially considering that every single novella starts from the same premise, the one up above.

Jordan L. Hawk's "Infernal Affairs" is the fluffiest of the bunch. We have a devil working in Infernal

Affairs, who manages to botch his very first deal with a human - luckily, there's a lot more going on and the devil gets to redeem himself, *if* he can enlist said human's help to kick ass. The story is cute, it takes place in the present day and it contains the doggiest infernal hound ever. Also, her hell is the least hellish of the whole. It's a nice romcom, which makes it somewhat at odds with the rest of the anthology (and I realized that even though I love Jordan L. Hawk's stories usually, this time I... thought this one was ok).

T.A. Moore's "Collared" is one *hell* of a different beast. It's a thriller/horror where hell rots its way through the world - the main character is a former priest who sold his soul, then tried to kill himself, only to be brought back undead. It's disturbing in the way the world festers and turns into a nightmare - and I loved it.

Ginn Hale's "Counterfeit Viscount" is an alternate history sort of story - all the demons in hell came up to earth to redeem themselves, and now their descendants live as subhuman citizens who occasionally dabbles in the dark arts. Archie is impersonating his dead friend and cousin with the help of such a devil, wanting nothing other than to bring down his uncle, the shit of a man who sent him and his dead cousin to fight in a war when they were children. It contains plotting, schemes and houses with trap doors.

C.S. Poe's "11:59" is a story which I forgot was part of this anthology because I forgot it contained a pairing. Not that it bothered me much, I didn't buy the book for the smut. Anyway, Asuka traded his soul and dreams to the devil a long time ago, and only realized too late that "dreams" included things such as hope. The world's run over by nightmares which become real, killing people both from the outside and the inside - and it's gotten so out of hand, that even the devil is worried. Luckily, Asuka can't fall prey to inner nightmares (no dreams, remember?) which makes him perfect to destroy the root of this madness.

Rhys Ford's "Wonderland City" takes place in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, which is a pretty terrifying place, where queens are mad, white rabbits are killers and human children can wreak havoc just by existing. It's quite creative, even if a bit disturbing.

"Dark Favors" by Jodan Castillo Price has a world in which the devil chooses his own, and they trade in favors of all sorts. And now the devil wants one of his own to kill one of the Chosen. The world building's pretty good, but I'm not so sure about the action or the romance. Something seems off, but I'm a bit too tired to analyze what.

Rhys Ford says

Anchoring this book for the time being. Will delete review when this goes live.

Any subsequent books added to this entry must have the authors listed as they appear on the cover per Goodreads policy. Or so I was told.

Also, I am honoured to be with this group of outstanding authors.

Karen says

So in the interest of full disclosure...

Let me just say...I don't like anthologies, I don't like horror stories, paranormal with demons and stuff this is so not my thing. I took a pass on the book because no, just no. I was positive this would never work for me

and then came the audio and I looked again...I say Rhys Ford, Jordan L. Hawk, C.S. Poe, Ginn Hale, T.A. Moore and Jordan Castillo Price and the icing on the cake narrated by Greg Tremblay and still I pondered, I waffled, I procrastinated...I told myself I didn't have the time and I kept looking at those names and my brain kept saying...but, but, but...

and finally I caved and said 'yes please.' and what did I learn after nearly 18 hours...well, I learned that what happens when you make a deal with the devil isn't nearly as interesting as what happens when the devil makes a deal with you, I learned that faith can be bent and reshaped but that doesn't mean it's broken, I learned that sometimes believing in someone else helps you to believe in yourself, that things not being what you think they are doesn't mean they're not what you need...but most of all I was reminded that one should never say never...as in I never read/listen to stories about things that go bump in the night, that a good story is a good story regardless of the subject and that well in the words of 'George Michaels'...Ya gotta' have faith...

I actually finished listening to this audio book a couple of days ago and was left with the question of how to review this. It's an anthology which means it's a collection of stories by different authors, unlike the last anthology that I read which was a collection of stories about the same characters by the same author much easier to deal with but after much consideration what I've decided on is that I'm going to address this in a general sense.

Let's start with the authors. I admit this was what caught my attention from the very beginning I've read at least one book (mostly more) by each of these authors and they have been some of my favorites and in this anthology we get to sample each of these authors as they offer up a tale of demons and things that go bump in the night in worlds that are unlike anything that we know as..

Jordan L. Hawk...gives us 'Infernal Affairs' a story of a demon who finds himself at the crossroads.

T.A. Moore...gives us 'Collared' about a man of god who loses his life and his faith but not his sheer determination to do what needs to be done.

Ginn Hale...gives us 'The Counterfeit Viscount' this ones not about deals or bargins with a demon or the devil. It's about the power of faith.

C.S. Poe...gives us '11:59' and we see what happens when a person strikes a deal with the devil only to discover that they've given up more than just their dreams only to become the one person that can solve the devils problem.

Rhys Ford....takes us back to 'Wonderland City' and trust me this is not the Wonderland of our childhoods and if you think Alice had an adventure in Wonderland the citizens there would tell you it was more akin to a nightmare.

Jordan Castillo Price...and finally in 'Dark Favors' we are given a story about trading in favors in which we discover that payback really can be a bitch and every contract has a loophole....you just have to find it.

These stories all have some things in common first off they were surprisingly good...I mean seriously I'm looking forward to revisiting these stories all of them. But seriously for as dark as they are and yes these are all a walk on the dark side. Every one of them dealt with love, trust and faith.

Originally I was going to rate each story on an individual basis but truthfully when I got listening to them I realized that by rating them individually I'd be saying that I like some better than others and while there were different reasons that I liked each of these stories and I will be the first to admit while I was able to resist all of these authors collectively because I honestly didn't think this was going to be my cuppa' once it became an

audio book and I discovered that it was narrated by one of my absolute favorite narrators...the awesome Mr. Greg Tremblay I decided that I was going to take a chance on this one and I'm so glad that I did. I can't say this would have been a 5 star read for me but as an audio book it was one of those books where I frequently found myself stopping what I was doing so I could just listen to what was coming next.

While I found these stories to be dark and slightly scary what they weren't were stories that 'scared me' and kept me awake at night...yes, I'm one of those people who are rather easily scared but I do still enjoy stories that delve into the dark side of human nature whether it's real or purely fiction...the darker side of things fascinates me...on paper...in the real world I like my sunshine and rainbows thank you very much.

An audio book of 'Devil Take Me' was graciously provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Ann says

Tag team review with Cuppers!

4.5 Hearts!

Infernal Affairs - Jordan L Hawk - 4 Hearts

This one was a pretty fun read and the “lightest” of the collection. The author knows how to make characters come to life by showing them rather than just describing them and that was pretty important for this story. Ralgath and Chess are very unique and their distinctive voices made their banter fun to read. Ralgath's demotion to “customer service” and his descriptions of his underworld workplace, as comparable to top side, were pretty amusing. Chess is a treat, they are badass and sentimental at the same time.

I really wanted these two to end up together and find a loophole somehow to make it be a thing. It's a pretty romantic story actually. The two MC's are obviously in love and even though they haven't completely figured it out, it's obvious to the reader. Fluffpaw is truly the standout here though, I have to say, that hellhound was the absolute best and I was just as invested in her as I was Chess and Ralgath.

Collared - T.A. Moore - 5 Hearts

Collared is fascinatingly dark and takes the reader on one hell of a ride. It's the kind of story where you know there isn't going to be any kind of traditional HEA, happiness is relative here, so the scale of satisfaction for the MC's is completely skewed.

The backstory of Jack, the ex-priest, and Math, his personal demon is doled out in small bits throughout the story, so if you pick this one up and put it down more than a couple of times you're going to get lost. It's definitely one to read in one sitting so that you can follow and appreciate the flow of the story and the language.

The world building is top notch and is reminiscent of Derry, Maine where everyone's favorite clown resides. Everything about the town is just “off” and while an outsider might see the obvious strangeness, the evil itself is able to mask it to the residents, so no one questions why the neighbors have disappeared or why entire blocks of businesses are now shuttered. They just are and people go on with their lives. Questioning things takes its toll, mostly on law enforcement and that's where Jack comes in. He helps with the cases that

don't have logical answers and takes the burden off those who still have souls.

I was totally sucked into this story and I love when an author can make me care about a character who is completely flawed or born from evil. This is a true halloween story that will make you uncomfortably committed to its outcome.

Counterfeit Viscount - Ginn Hale - 4.5 Hearts

I would categorize Counterfeit Viscount as a character driven romance above the plot based action/adventure that took center stage in the first two stories of the anthology. Nimble and Archie are so well crafted and even though the story is told through Archie's POV, I felt like I knew Nimble just as well as I read him through Archie's eyes. I was enamored of Nimble as much as Archie was. And even though I didn't have Nimble's POV I could see his affections for Archie clear as day (even if Archie couldn't).

The world building is great and this could be an amazing series if the author ever decided to go that direction. There's so much to work with as the Prodigal devils venture away from Hell's Below and begin to live alongside the natural borns. It was a pretty fascinating setup and I would love to read more about it all.

The ending was perfect and gave me some much needed traditional romance after reading Collared, so the balance was perfect.

11:59 - C.S. Poe - 4 Hearts

I feel like I keep saying this, and I'm not even sorry a little, but this is another story where the world building is aces. All of these authors are so strong in that regards and it makes for some great atmosphere when the devil is the theme you're working with.

11:59 brings in some Greek mythology alongside the devil and also makes the city a character in its own right. Dreams can be deadly here as a nightmare can follow its dreamer to the conscious world and turn into a monster of apocalyptic proportions. Asuka sold his soul years ago to save his life so that he could continue to help others. Selling his soul had more consequences than he realized though, he literally couldn't dream but he also couldn't dream conceptually and I loved how the author worked that into the story and his character.

Asuka became a shell of a hero, going through the motions of slaughtering monsters but with zero hopes for the future. Until he meets Merrick. Merrick was a delightful bit of sunshine in all the doom and gloom. Asuka didn't have to have a soul to recognize that and for the first time in a long time, he wants to dream again.

The resolution is very Greco in it's stylings and I had flashbacks to Clash of the Titans with Asuka as Perseus battling demons to save his world from Hades. The twist is that by slaying the demon Asuka not only saves the mortal world, he saves the underworld as well and restores balance to both. I would have loved more between Asuka and Merrick, but what I did get actually balanced well with the story overall so I have enough to know they are together and in my head got their HEA.

a copy of this story was provided for an honest review

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

4 stars

Devil Take Me is an entertaining anthology filled with stories involving folks who have sold their souls to the devil. This is a star-studded group of authors and the stories cover a variety of genres, including fantasy, historical, and contemporary tales. I was impressed by the way these authors take the same theme, but have produced widely different stories, which helps keep the anthology interesting and creative.

Read Jay's review in its entirety here.

Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says

Tag Team Review with Peach!

4.375 Hearts

Infernal Affairs by Jordan L. Hawk - 4 Hearts

Cheeky Fun!

My first experience with this author and I snortled my way through it, but before I knew it I had invested in Ralgath and Chess, too. The author's voice shined through especially with Fluffpaw. Fluffpaw *kinda* stole the show for me. Cute widdle pooch.

The suspense element held my interest and kept me rooting for them to find a loophole so they could be together. There was quite a bit of action but the overall theme was lighthearted and fun or maybe tongue in cheek is a better descriptor. There were genuine feelings that were developed between these characters along with mounting chemistry as the story evolved. The ending was super sweet and I **may** have even aww'd aloud.

11:59 by C.S. Poe - 4 Hearts

The start of this story drew me in immediately what with Asuka falling to his death at 11:59. Asuka is an enforcer in this dystopia (possibly post-apocalyptic?) world that's plagued by nightmares. I don't really understand how this came about but the more the story evolved the less I cared. It's about the journey and the destination rather than the genesis.

The world building was top-notch and I believe heavily influenced by Dante's Inferno, though I've never read it so I couldn't say with certainty. What I liked about it, besides the sumptuous visuals, was that even though

Asuka has to go it alone Merrick, through his dedicated bookishness, lent his knowledge to Asuka which played a pivotal role in his successfully navigating the underworld.

The romance between them could've been stronger but it had a lot of ingredients that I liked: age and size difference, ginger protag who is *very persistent*, a grump and opposites attract. Side note: I loved that Merrick, though totally impractical, totes around a stack of books. So cute.

Wonderland City by Rhys Ford - 5 Hearts

A feast for the imagination!

If you thought Tim Burton's telling of the classic *Alice in Wonderland* was freaky, try this on for size. It's really just set in Wonderland rather than a retelling. Ford took liberties to create this lush and vivid landscape to make it uniquely hers. And wonderful. I cannot overstate how incredible the world building is; everything from the pawns uniforms to the usage of magic by the Red Queen was vibrant and folded seamlessly into the narrative rather than being info-dumpy.

Another girl (Naomi) has made her way into Wonderland City accidentally and the devil strikes a bargain with Xander: find her and he'll return his soul. I loved how this world was woven together to include the devil and the soul selling aspect that pervades this anthology as well as his limitations within this Wonderland City. However, retrieving Naomi proves to be a tall order that requires the aid of Xander's trusty pooch, Blue, as well as his ex, Jean Michel.

It's focused primarily on the adventure but the romance snuck up on me and punched me right in the feels. I'm a sucker for second chances and it seems Jean Michel has been biding his time waiting for a chance at not only reconciliation but redemption. Nonetheless, the action sequence at the end was a battle royale! Literally. Somewhat gruesome but so worth it. Every time I turned the page something more awesome was happening!

There wasn't anything I didn't like about this story other than when it ended. If there were to be a continuation, I would be over the moon about that.

Dark Favors by Jordan Castillo Price - 4.5 Stars

One of my mom's favorite movies is *The Big Chill*. If you've never seen it, it's worth a watch if for no other reason than to get some insight into the 60s, 70s and 80s as college friends reunite for a friend's funeral via suicide. Had my mom not ~~made me watch this repeatedly~~ introduced me to this film I probably would never have known what a quaalude was. But she did so when this story started off in 1961 then jumped to 1979 and JCP threw in a quaalude reference I was feeling smug. Thanks mom! The usage of flashbacks to 1961 did their job in developing Johnny and fleshing him out.

I loved this story not just because of the quaaludes and associated smugness, but because it really built something between Adam and Johnny. I could wax on and on about them but the bottom line is I liked all the intricacies of these two characters and how their differences draw them together and forge a bond against all odds. This was also the sexiest of the stories I read; their chemistry was off the charts!

The concept of the favors and how those affect the Chosen I found very interesting especially when it cropped up at the end, an end which I found not just heartwarming but honest. Were there to be a follow up I would be all over it.

An ARC was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.
