



## The Dark Farewell

*Josh Lanyon*

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## **The Dark Farewell** Josh Lanyon

Don't talk to strangers, young man especially the dead ones.

It's the Roaring Twenties. Skirts are short, crime is rampant and booze is in short supply. Prohibition has hit Little Egypt, where newspaperman David Flynn has come to do a follow-up story on the Herren Massacre. The massacre isn't the only news in town though. Spiritualist medium Julian Devereux claims to speak to the dead and he charges a pretty penny for it.

Flynn knows a phoney when he sees one, and he's convinced Devereux is as fake as a cigar store Indian. But the reluctant attraction he feels for the deceptively soft, not-his-type Julian is as real as it gets.

Suddenly Julian begins to have authentic, bloodstained visions of a serial killer, and the cynical Mr. Flynn finds himself willing to defend Julian with not only his life, but his body. Warning: This novella contains phony spiritualists, cynical newspapermen, labor disputes, illicit love affairs, high-calorie southern cooking, and more than fifty-percent humidity!"

## **The Dark Farewell Details**

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Author : Josh Lanyon

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## From Reader Review The Dark Farewell for online ebook

### Cara Dee says

I really wanted to like this book, being a fan of Lanyon, but it just didn't do it for me. As always, Lanyon introduced great mystery aspects to his M/M novel, and amazing characterization. I enjoyed the progression of Julian and Flynn's relationship, it was a true journey however, I felt like there should have been... more to the story.

For example, Julian's big revelation of his "disease" went over my head. I was still a bit confused about WHAT exactly this disease meant for the character and his "visions." Did it mean the visions weren't real? That it was a side affect of the visions?

And the revelation of the killer was also disappointing. Not the actual answer, for I was happy it didn't turn out to be Casey Lee, but when the climax of the story came, no answers came with it. Just some madman who the characters knew? Really? Nothing like how it could possibly tie in with Julian and Flynn's relationship, escape to act as a way to kill off Julian's angered grandfather. (Nice out of that corner.) Then once the villain has been revealed, and Flynn captures him, the novel ends. Just like that, I was shocked. There should have been more! Does Flynn and Julian get what they want? How does Julian take the unmasking of the murderer? The whole thing just made Julian seem very uninvolved with the story. Especially since we don't see how young Julian handles the after affects. To me what happens after the murderer is captured is just as important to the rest of the story. I need motivation, I need justice, I need more of happy ending then just "We found him!"

Love love love Lanyon, but did not love this.

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### Erastes says

We are always, as authors, being advised by Those That Know that to get a book sold and to capture the reader, you need a killer first line. And this book certainly has one:

*The body of the third girl was found Tuesday morning in the woods a few miles outside Murphysboro.*

It sets the scene and intrigues, without being trying too hard. And yet – although this hints at much, this isn't really even the main plot of this clever, convoluted novella.

This is (embarrassingly) the first book I've read of Lanyon's. My reasons—or excuses—are simple: People generally clamour to review his books for the site before I even know they are out, and with the amount of books I have to read I'm happy to let others cover it. But I found that no-one had picked this one up and I did it myself.

I have to say, I'm impressed, although—having heard my friends' praise that shouldn't have surprised me. Lanyon writes very well in a direct, but descriptive manner. The tone reminded me a little of Chandler, with the touches of description and personal opinion, shuttered away behind a tough guy veneer.

It would be entirely wrong to try and tag a label on this book. It is a standalone, but it is published in The Mysterious anthology (along with Laura Baumbach and Alex Beecroft) and that's a good way to label it, if labelling is necessary: mysterious. That being said, with it not exactly being a romance and it not being exactly a paranormal – it IS a great whodunnit, with a great cast of characters all of whom could be the guilty party.

What I particularly liked, though, was the way that this didn't go at all the way I expected. We meet a couple of guys that the protagonist tags with his gaydar, and without spoiling too much I thought things would go otherwise than they did. While I didn't feel ever very close to Flynn—and I think this was deliberate because he'd shut himself off from just about everyone due to the war, and his job, and losses he'd suffered—I fell almost instantly in love with Julian, the spiritualist. “A sissy, if ever he'd seen one” thinks Flynn, and he's right.

I loved how Flynn disliked Julian – and the reasons why he disliked him. He's coloured by prejudice against spiritualism, and he hates that Julian is effeminate—because it reflects something in himself that he isn't able to show openly, something that he's learned to be disgusted in himself. I loved their first private encounter, and when more was learned about Julian, it made me sad to see Flynn treat him like that.

I think my main complaint about the book would be a purely personal one, and that's one I've often stated with novellas, that this has more than enough material in it to be a full-sized novel, and it short changes itself by being the size it is. It might be this aspect, the pure distillation of so many facets and ideas that made me a little confused at times, and I would rather have meandered along those Illinois byways for a happy 80,000 words without a complaint. Because of the size (42,000 words)

I felt the characterisation was sometimes a bit rushed, we are whizzed around the introductions for everyone in the boarding house for example, the other gay relationship Flynn forms is picked up and dropped rather too abruptly too. There's so many themes here, the debunking—or not—of spiritualism, antiquated methods of medicine, mine safety, unions, prohibition, and much more. With a novel to play in, Lanyon could have wallowed in the intimate talks with all the other inmates of the hostel, layered the tension, laid more red herrings. But I can't mark the book down because of what I'd like it to have been!

On the negative side: the cover is pretty misleading, as it looks like naked men in the trenches, which is so not what the book is about—and the blurb within the book itself could have done with an editor. There are two(!) typos in it—and I really hate these jokey warnings Samhain do. Warning: This novella contains phony spiritualists, cynical newspapermen, labor disputes, illicit love affairs, high-calorie southern cooking, and more than fifty-percent humidity! But that's probably just me being curmudgeonly, I'm sure loads of readers love this touch. To me it smacks of fanfiction (from where these warnings seem to have come) and lessens the worth of the book. It makes it sound like a comedy, and it's anything but that, and it doesn't do the book the justice it deserves.

But if you haven't read this novella, then I strongly recommend it, it was exactly “my kind of book” with enough difference from many other books to keep me reading and reading. I'll certainly be trying other books of Lanyon's now on the strength of this.

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## **Nikki says**

I've been meaning to read more of Josh Lanyon's work for a while. Wanted to grab something for my iPod tonight -- I was going to a gig where I knew I didn't care for the support band -- and ended up getting this from the Kindle store. It's quite a short book -- nine chapters -- and easy to read, though I felt weird about

reading the sex scenes while leaning up against the barrier in front of the stage!

Not that it's all about the sex. There's the mystery, of course, in the background, and the supernatural elements, and the relationship which grows between Julian and David. I didn't like either of them much at first -- David is too closed off, and Julian too... flamboyant. But I got to like both of them, even in such a short space.

The mystery itself, I should've seen the end coming more clearly than I did. I got distracted by the misdirection! One part of the end is terribly convenient, really, removing a certain problem from the equation... and I do wish, in some ways, there was more of it, and it went on to show how Julian and David get on. Still, everything wraps up nicely.

There's a pretty good sense of place and time, too. It's not a setting that's particularly familiar or resonant to me, being a Brit, although there are aspects that Britain and the US share -- the strikes the characters talked about, and the young war veterans...

Josh Lanyon is pretty good for light reading. I'm tempted to read more of his stuff when I'm on the train, on Saturday, but on the other hand, reading sexy stuff on the train... Hmmm!

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## Jenre says

Set in Illinois during 1922, this historical novella follows reporter David Flynn as he travels from New York to Herrin, chasing a story following up a massacre at a mine which took place the year before. Flynn is hoping to get a new angle on the story so that those living outside Illinois would get a greater understanding of the events surrounding the massacre where 21 men were killed by an angry mob of striking miners. Things don't work out as expected for Flynn though when he meets Julian, a travelling psychic, whose outwardly phoney powers seem to hide a genuine talent for listening to the dead. Something which could be useful in finding out the identity of a killer who has been preying on young women.

I have to admit it's been quite hard for me to put my finger on where exactly to place this book in terms of genre. It's definitely an historical but the rest is all up for discussion. There's a mystery to solve. In fact there are two mysteries really: The events which led to the massacre and who was responsible; and the identity of the person killing all the young women. However, both these mysteries aren't really the main focus of the story. There's a romantic sub-plot which takes us through a few twists and turns as Flynn meets two men who could possibly be a potential partner for him - both of whom Flynn has mixed feelings about. There's a bit of a ghost story too with links to the occult, as we see Julian 'perform' in the local theatre and talk to the dead townsfolk for the benefit of their living relatives. However, none of these elements can be seen to dominate the book in any way, and yet all of them are necessary for the story to work. In the end, after much thought, I've decided that the main genre of this book is just that it's an historical because the starring role in the story seems to be 1920s USA.

Most of my enjoyment of *The Dark Farewell* sprang from the way I was immersed in the history of the time. It's four years after the end of the First World War and deep into the prohibition era. The ripples from the war, and the influenza outbreak that followed hard on its heels is an important factor in the book - not just for Flynn who still mourns his lover who fell during the fighting, but also for the Herrin townsfolk as they flock to see Julian's spiritualist shows in the hope of contacting their dead relatives. I know next to nothing about 1920's USA and so found it quite fascinating to read the accounts of the 'soft drinks' that Flynn buys or the 'Roadhouses' where dancing and drinking take place in remote locations. Even the social justice issues surrounding the rich mine owners and the unions were interesting to read, especially when we see it from

Flynn's initially detached viewpoint, one that gradually changes as Flynn finds himself sympathising with the local miners. There were countless other little incidental details which drew me into the story such as the food (which had my mouth watering), the popular songs and the way that Flynn sees himself as a gay man.

The other aspect of this story which I found interesting was in the characterisation. Although this is written in the third person the reader is only given Flynn's thoughts. As such we see the world through his somewhat weary eyes. Like many reporters he is sharp sighted and also sceptical of anything he is unable to conclusively prove, leading to conflict between himself and Julian. His time in Herrin provides Flynn with an opportunity to slow down, to take stock and evaluate his life, and I liked the journey that I took with him towards a happier future. We see the other characters through Flynn's eyes too and their characteristics changed - for the better or worse - according to how Flynn's views also change. It was quite subtly done but proves once again that Josh Lanyon can write damned good characters.

My only complaint about this novella is that the ending is quite sudden. The story takes us on a long meandering path and as we get towards the end we are faced with at least three complications. Then, all of a sudden, these are sewed up tight in the last two pages. I was so surprised that I had to go back and read the last few pages again, just to make sure I had read them correctly. There was nothing technically wrong with what happens at the end, and the last page is logical, but part of me wishes that there had been a couple more pages showing the aftermath of what happened at the end - a more gentle wind down which would have perhaps fitted in better with the slower, gentle plotting that characterises the rest of the book.

This minor niggle wasn't enough to spoil my enjoyment of the book too much though, as the positives greatly outweighed the negatives. I spent the majority of the book engrossed in the story, the characters and the time period. I highly recommend *The Dark Farewell* to those readers who like historical books and who want to read a slightly chilling story of love, loss and murder.

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### **Natasha says**

Well, that was an odd ending.

3.5 stars!

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### **Lauraadriana says**

This was an interesting book...very PNRish...it was, as always with Josh Lanyon very well researched and well written it takes place in a small town in Illinois during prohibition. David Flynn is a reporter from the East Coast who comes to this small town to write a feature about a massacre that happened in a coal mine the year before...the issues arose from a strike and lead to many deaths. At the same time there are women being murdered in this town in a gruesome way.

He comes to her friend's boardinghouse there he finds Julian Deveraux or the Magnificent Belloc who is a medium...David is not a believer...although Julian since to have something very much in common with David...and the interest is reciprocal.

Julian in the end may really have a gift...but things get very weird and dangerous, it's not a good time for two men who have feelings for each other...

This maybe one of the most frustrating endings I've read of Lanyon's...but I loved the story and the history...such interesting information about prohibition and an interesting insight to what it was for gay men then...at one point David thinks him and Julian were born 'a few centuries late' which was something to think about...good story, good book as always with Lanyon...frustrating ending though, I wanted to know David and Julian more.

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### **Sofia says**

I was enjoying this then it became half baked and it was cooking well so slight disappointment there but I enjoyed this whilst it was cooking so.....

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### **Lilia Ford says**

Great read--left a star off for the abrupt ending, which drove me nuts.

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### **agirlwithoutwings says**

What?! I think this book didn't finish!

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### **Steelwhisper says**

Josh Lanyon, as always, delivers. That's what I have grown to expect of his books and that's what he does with this.

The clash of an effeminate and a manly homosexual man during the roaring twenties, a background quite meticulously researched and a gentle ghost story--all perfectly meshed into this wonderful tale.

My only criticism, which has become a regular one for some of the best authors I read, is its short length. I wanted to stay with Julian and David for the length of a novel.

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### **? Irena ? says**

#### **2.5**

I would have probably liked this more if it had been a bit longer.

Such as it is, you don't get to know much about these characters and you don't really get to like them as you should with the exception of Julian. I like even the idea of Julian. The thing is, that blurb sounds more mysterious and action-packed than the actual story. The '*authentic, bloodstained visions of a serial killer*' sounds more interesting than what you get in the story. But, that's just my opinion. A lot of people didn't find anything wrong with it.

David Flynn is writing a follow-up story on the Herrin Massacre a year later. At least that was his plan until

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a completely different story inserts itself.

Overall, it is an ok story with promising characters and I am rating this based on that promise. Julian is especially interesting. I just wish you got to see him more in the end of the story.

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### **Crispy says**

I'm really conflicted about rating this three or four stars. It has all the hallmarks of an excellent Josh Lanyon read: interesting characters, intensity, romance, mystery, tender moments, add to that a genuinely interesting historical setting and it's pretty much perfection. But, and this really is the blowie in the ointment, it stopped so abruptly I felt like I had fallen off a cliff. Having finally recovered I'm going to take a star off because, really, there is no excuse for braking so hard your readers get whiplash. Great story, pity about the en....

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### **Kati says**

Loved the book, especially the supernatural part. And the fact that Julian was not the author's typical hero, Julian was namely - as he was called in the book (it was the 20s, don't forget!) - a "pansy" which didn't sit well with Flynn, the other main character, at least at first.

One thing that I didn't like, though, was the abrupt ending. I expected an epilogue, at least.

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### **DeeNeez says**

As usual, Josh Lanyon writes a perfect mood setting historical. During prohibition in the south, reporter from New York, David Flynn meets a traveling spiritualist Julian. I really felt the connection with both characters, the mood of the south, and the chills from the serial killings. Caught by surprise with the culprit at the end. The only thing keeping this from being a five star read was the abrupt ending. I kept flipping the page saying "that's it?". I really wanted to know what happened to Flynn and Julian. I guess it's left to the readers imagination on how they fared.

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### **CrabbyPatty says**

3.5 stars. I loved the details that made this murder mystery, set in Little Egypt, Illinois circa 1923, come alive. Prohibition is the law of the land, *Yes We Have no Bananas* is the hit of the day, and a breakfast of ham and eggs, hotcakes and coffee costs 35 cents.

Reporter David Flynn, still dealing with the aftermath of his service in WWI, comes to town to write a retrospective of the Herrin massacre, which occurred the year prior. At his boarding house, he meets Julian Devereaux, a traveling spiritualist / medium and it doesn't take a crystal ball to see that Julian is very attracted to David, and vice versa.

Throw in a series of murders in the area, a traveling salesman, a death in the boarding house, labor unrest, hot nights and cool jazz, add Josh Lanyon's impeccable writing, and *The Dark Farewell* is a good read .....

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until the final chapter, which is far too rushed, and the abrupt ending which is positively criminal.

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