

The Awakening: The Blazing Book Two

Buffy M. Brinkley

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In the supernatural novel The Awakening, a New Orleans couple is placed in fresh mortal peril because of vampires.

In Buffy M. Brinkley's thrilling fantasy novel *The Awakening*, a detective settles into domestic bliss before a series of horrific abductions drags her back into a supernatural battle.

Viveca is a detective in humid New Orleans who's capable of commanding a spirit animal and perceiving the supernatural world. She came close to dying while performing a ritual known as the blazing to cure her beloved Richard of a vile curse: vampirism. A month later, the two are recovering and building a life together of surprising normalcy. They settle into a new home, plan a modest wedding, and think about their future in earnest. Viveca's abilities have waned, and Richard has been restored to his full humanity.

But then a distraught father makes the disastrous decision to inject vampire blood into his son to revive him; this act is the catalyst for Viveca's return to service. A message begins to appear at otherwise unrelated crime scenes, warning that the awakening is coming. Viveca has been targeted once more.

Richard and Viveca are vibrant, flawed leads. Viveca struggles to believe in herself; she exists in a constant state of worry because of Richard's new mortality. The father of the vampire is made sympathetic despite his rash actions, though dramatic irony dictates that his revived son is no longer the boy he knew.

This series title provides ample context regarding the events of the previous book. Its pacing is steady, balancing emotional and dramatic moments with violent action sequences well. The romance and thriller elements of the book are sometimes handled on independent terms, but are most tense when they come together, as when Richard faces mortal peril, or when Viveca's lack of faith threatens her powers.

When talking to others, the couple engages in punchy banter; their exchanges with each other are more romantic. Viveca exemplifies this divide best: she addresses Richard in warm terms, though criminals are treated in more clinical, forceful ways. Attention to detail is evident in all exchanges: during a haunting sequence that takes place in abandoned sewers, words echo and footsteps skitter.

But the novel's conclusion is abrupt, and the characters' fates are left uncertain in it. A cataclysmic reveal regarding the vampire threat arises, but hinges upon established, minor lore; the cliffhanger ending is unsatisfying.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (October 29, 2020)

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