



Dark Time

Dakota Banks

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Dark Time

Dakota Banks

Dark Time Dakota Banks

Three hundred years ago, she sold her soul to a demon. Now she wants it back.

For centuries, the woman calling herself Maliha Crayne has lived a second life - as an assassin for the malevolent creature who owns her soul. A haunted killer with the blood of countless victims on her hands, she has finally discovered a way to nullify the demonic pact that chains her: If she saves a life for every one she has taken, she will be free.

But if she fails, her punishments will be unspeakable, unendurable . . . and neverending.

Dark Time Details

Date : Published July 28th 2009 by Harper Voyager (first published July 16th 2009)

ISBN : 9780061687303

Author : Dakota Banks

Format : Paperback 306 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, Demons, Fiction, Romance, Adult

 [Download Dark Time ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Dark Time ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Dark Time Dakota Banks

From Reader Review Dark Time for online ebook

Kelley says

Courtesy of Amazon

Wow! I loved Dark Time and am very impatient for book two is this fascinating and refreshingly original series.

Over three hundred years ago, Susannah Layhem was wrongly accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake. Just as she is facing her last moments of life before giving in to the flames, she is whisked to safety and offered a trade. If she agrees to sell her soul to the demon Rabishu, he will save her life. But is it worth it?

Now, Susannah is Maliha Crayne, assassin for Rabishu to advance his malevolent plans. However, after a few hundred years, Maliha has grown weary of the life of a killer and longs to be free. She has one chance... Returned to mortal life, if she can save as many lives as she has taken over the years, before dying, her soul will be free. If not? She is subject to an eternity of the most horrendous of tortured that can be inflicted by Rabishu.

Dark Time is a complex novel bound to grab you by the throat and not let go until the final page is turned. We find passion, danger, intrigue, seemingly impossible quests, even a slight touch of romance between the covers of Dark Time. While Maliha's story may seem superficial at times, there is depth to her plight that mesmerizes. We also have a complicated subplot that is introduced here and guaranteed to unfold over future books in the series. Rabishu is vicious, cruel, and out for himself, determined to stop Maliha from finishing her personal mission. The world presented here is brilliantly portrayed and Dakota Banks does a masterful job with her descriptive imagery. It's hard to believe this is her first novel.

Maliha is a fascinating woman who seems to have everything her heart can desire, yet she is lacking one thing, ownership of her soul. After centuries of living free of the restraints of her conscience, she finally realizes she is miserable. Guilt consumes her for the wicked deeds in her past and her only goal now is to make amends for all the destruction she wrought and finally be free. She can come across as selfish at times, but then we are reminded that she really does have a big heart, as evidenced by her relationships to the men and women dedicated to helping her with her quest. Those bonds go deep and I enjoyed seeing these people through Maliha's eyes.

I could not put Dark Time down and eagerly anticipate book two, Sacrifice, due out in June 2010.

© Kelley A. Hartsell, November 2009. All rights reserved.

Natasha says

I really enjoyed this book. This is book 1 in the Mortal Path series by Dakota Banks. The beginning was pretty emotional, it drew me in. I really like how Banks writes. I was drawn in from the first few chapters. In the first 50 pages or so there was only brief conversations with others. She mostly talked of her life and back round. But it ended up working well for the book. I like how it goes from past to present ever few chapters to help you focus on what is happened in the present, and give you a better understanding of her life and the current characters in the story. About 100 pages before half way into the book was where I was hooked, from there on I couldn't put it down. It really has a great story and has

interesting, well thought out characters. Banks shows us in her book that she is very well diverse in culture, history and religion. I love how she describes her fight scenes, I feel like I'm watching a movie because I can picture ever little detail.

As for the characters, I was impressed. She made a great back round for each personally and in both recent and past chapters she brings them into the story perfectly. Maliha Crayne is a cultural, sexy killing machine, but she is sick of the purpose her life has now and fights to change it. It's almost an impossible task but she'll die trying. She's over 300 years old(currently) and has struck another deal of her life, but it's harder than she thought. She fights many times and the action is great. I really like her character and cannot wait to read more of her in the future. I will be buying the second installment as soon as it hits the shelves. I recommend this book!

Lillie Roberts says

As our story opens, Susannah Layhem of Massachusetts (1692) is a healer and works with herbs, but then she's accused of being a witch and sentenced to burn. She has done nothing but bring good health to her community and for it, she is going to gain death and so will the infant she's carrying. The night before her burning, she gives birth in the dirt and squalor of her cell to her stillborn infant daughter; her body too abused and an damaged to continue supporting the life growing within her. She's dragged crying from her cell and placed upon the wooden mound; set aflame. Just as she takes her last breath and utters her final curse, she's snatched from her fiery death, and transported to another place and time. A voice offers her a choice, go back to the flames or becoming his slave. She chooses life and the cursed existence to the demon, Rabishu. She becomes Ageless, continuous life for the rest of eternity.

For centuries, the death that she brings does not burden her consciousness, but when she's told to kill an infant girl, much like her own long dead daughter, Constanta, she has to draw the line. She cannot bring herself to harm the infant who hasn't even had a chance to live. It's the beginnings of her conscious self re-asserting. Over the years, she has come to the conclusion that she can no longer be the demon's killing machine.

After many years of searching for the answer to her release from the Rabishu's service, he reveals that there is an escape clause to her contract. But to escape, she has to set the scales straight, for every life she has taken, one must be saved. She will become mortal again, but with a longer lifespan. She can be wounded, but she'll heal faster. For every life she saves, she'll age faster. And if she is killed, she becomes Rabishu plaything for an eternity of hell. She'll have to re-invent herself over and over again to hide her extended life.

In this incarnation, she becomes Maliha Crayne (alter ego: Marsha Winter, thriller author) and she still trying to balance the scales.

Dark Time: Mortal Path Book One by Dakota Banks was a fast paced thriller/urban fantasy that jumps from the days of early Massachusetts to the present then back again throughout our heroine's existence, showing the trials and tribulations she must endure if she wants to regain her soul from the enslaving demon. When Rabishu released her from his service, he etched the scales of justice into her skin, and with each life earned, the justice scales losses a tiny figure as it marches across her skin with fiery footsteps to create balance. She soon discovers Rabishu doesn't play fair, his assassins will kill her if they're able. But, Rabishu has also trained her well, she is quick and powerful, a force to be reckoned with. She can bring death to even the Ageless. So begins her new life to fight against the wrongs of the world; to the weak, the young, and the powerless, she is their champion. To the cruel, evil, and bloodthirsty, she is their worst nightmare. There are

several powerful players in this novel; long time friends, Yanmeng and Amaro, provide a supportive extended family for her as well as back up. New love interest, Jake, may be what he appears to be, DEA agent, or maybe he's something else altogether. If you enjoy a thrilling urban fantasy as much as I do and if you like a kick-ass heroine, pick up this book, an excellent read well worth your time. I loved the qualities that Mahila embraces as she tries to regain her soul. It's a quick read moving through time as Mahila works to right the wrongs. The story leaves me begging for more with one question remaining, who or what is Jake Stackman?

Cym Lowell says

Imagine this: You are pregnant with your first child, homing with your husband and your fascination with herbal medicines. In the middle of the night, religious zealots drag you from your bed and throw you in a cold, rancid jail cell where you are beaten. Your husband stands by. The baby girl, who you would have named Constanta, is born in the squalor of the floor with your own hands. The zealots burn you at the stake as your husband passively watches along with the rest of the community, hurling epithets against the witch that you are supposed to be (accused by a disappointed suitor for your husband).

And then . . . you are extracted from the fire by someone who offers you eternal life. In exchange, you must do his bidding as an assassin with superhuman powers. The dead Susannah becomes the Ageless Maliha. After some 300 years, she thirsts for the love of her child and more to life than being a killing machine. She rebels and begins finding the keys for undoing the demon and his cohorts. The demon offers a way out as a mortal human, which requires that Maliha balance her evil deeds with good. In her day job, Maliha is a popular fiction writer. Sound familiar?

Dark Time: Mortal Path is a great adventure, taking the reader all over the world, back and forth across the millennia. Dakota Banks has crafted the beginning of a series of stories. When the pages stop turning, too soon for sure, I wanted to keep on turning to see how Maliha continues her quest for survival as a human, achievement of good, and whether her new romance has traction beyond passionate encounter. A fine read by an excellent writer with a fertile mind, and a great future.

Katie(babs) says

The year is 1692 and Susannah Layhem is expecting her first child with her husband Nathan. The Layhems live in Trenton Village of Essex County. Susannah is worried as any new mother can be. But she is happy as a wife and healer. Late one night some men from the village come and arrest Susannah for witchcraft. She is condemned as a witch based on the testimony of Alice, a young woman of the village who desires Nathan. Because Susannah is placed in a dank, dark jail cell and not taken care of, she goes into labor and her baby is stillborn. She is then burned alive.

As Susannah is dying a demon comes to her. He is Rabishu, a demon who serves Nergal, Lord of the Underworld. Rabishu offers her immortality as long as she obeys him in everything he asks of her. Susannah quickly makes the decision to give up her soul to Rabishu for revenge against those who murdered her and her precious baby. Her first act is to kill Alice, which she does gladly. For the next five hundred years Susannah is known as the Black Ghost, an immortal assassin. Susannah has incredible powers at her disposal and is eternally young. But after centuries of taking lives, Susannah's conscience is getting to her. She is not sure how much longer she can keep killing.

When Rabishu orders her to kill a baby, it is too much and Susannah defies him. Rabishu is ready to bring Susannah to the Underworld as punishment where she will suffer for all eternity. But Susannah bargains with Rabishu. He will let Susannah change her course. She now must save as many lives as she has taken. She is no longer as immortal as she once was. The twist is that every time she saves a life, she will age. Susannah will become mortal once again but on the positive side she will still have some of her remaining powers. If she dies before this balance is achieved, she will be Rabishu's plaything as long as he exists. Susannah has no choice and accepts. She will now be known as Maliha Crayne.

Maliha becomes a superhero of sorts. She has a new identity as a well off author of pulp crime novels. This is the perfect cover for her because she can investigate those who are evil and out to do wrong. Maliha picks and chooses who she wants to give payback to. Gone is the naïve and simple Susannah. Now sixty years later after striking her new bargain with Rabishu, Maliha will figure out a way to outwit the demon that has given her no choice but to make others pay so she can escape her own unfortunate destiny.

Dark Time: Mortal Path Book One by is a dark supernatural thriller. The first five chapters or so had me really engaged with the character of Susannah who was wronged in so many ways. She goes from and a defenseless and innocent woman of her time whose only true happiness is a home with a husband and children, to a woman who becomes a soulless wanderer with no place. She is having a tough time trying to outwit a being more powerful than she could ever hope to be. It was interesting to see the change in Susannah's personality from when we first meet her to when she has become as an assassin to a demon and then transformed into a dark savior of sorts.

After Susannah becomes Maliha, part mortal superhero extraordinaire, I found myself growing bored. I preferred the assassin over the savior. Maliha's personality changed into a spoiled woman who comes across as whiny and bitchy. And it is all about the vengeance to Maliha. I was to the point where I wanted to tell her to get over it. You're screwed whichever way you spin it, so enjoy your carefree half-mortal existence on Earth for the time being. Yes, it was horrible how she died and the way she was betrayed when she was mortal, but Maliha's transformation into an anti-heroine with no real redeeming qualities does not make for fun reading. Her views and experiences were not as thrilling as I thought they would be. Even as she decides to save lives, in order to save her soul, she has this chip on her shoulder as if she deserves to be the ultimate winner, just because she says so.

Whereas I had a connection with Susannah, I couldn't find any emotional connection to her new identity of Maliha. The middle section of Dark Time skips along, and not in a good way, even as Maliha pin points her next victim to ruin. Dakota was trying to show Maliha as a person who is essentially lost with no real hope. And because of this, Maliha becomes too cold and calculating. I really couldn't get a fix on what Maliha's motivation was. The first part quarter of the novel felt so different from the rest of the book. I am not sure if Dakota began writing Dark Time with a certain direction in mind and then decided to venture into another direction altogether. Because of this, I just couldn't wrap my mind around the story and what Maliha goes through.

Other than being shown what great things Maliha can do and a few appearances from various supernatural baddies, there were no real memorable fights or action. There was a great deal of explanation and talking about how Maliha was going to accomplish the things she planned to do, but again it just didn't hold my interest.

Dark Time simply wasn't the read for me. It was an adequately written book, with a great beginning but overall something was missing to keep me from recommending it to others. If I had to explain Dark Time in one word, that would be "meh".

Max says

This story had a very interesting premise--a supernatural heroine with a dash of action and mystery--but the actual story itself is, well, a mess. There's medical malpractice, drug smuggling, corporate money laundering, and of course, a sinister plan to destroy the United States. Like I said, a mess.

The book starts out with Susana, a pregnant wife in 1697, being wrongfully accused of witchcraft and burnt at the stake. A heart-wrenching tragedy which ends with Susana making a deal with a demon called Rabishu to be his assassin in exchange for eternal life as one of the Ageless. This goes on for a while until Susana, unable to kill innocents anymore, breaks the contract. She has to compensate for all the lives she has taken by saving as many or she ends up in hell forever.

Then we jump back to modern times where Susana is Maliha, a rich, pulp-fiction author moonlighting as a Lara Croft/James Bond/Catwoman-esqe character to do... I'm not really sure what. Given her past, and her dire situation, you'd expect Maliha to spend each second of her time saving a life. But no, she spends her time being rich, attending parties in skimpy dresses and worrying about a blind date she could have fallen in love with. You know, the usual chick-lit fare.

The plot is all over the place and makes significant time leaps. Maliha is not as well rounded as a 300-year old demon assassin could be. Pretty much all the males around her, from the bad guys to the Vietnam vet PI she has a casual relationship with, is madly in lust with her. She has a circle of friends, similarly badly developed and ill-fitted into the overall plot, whose purpose is to provide chick-lit banter and show the reader that Maliha is not a shut-in. The plot is filled with factual errors and flaws terribly. Some plot elements are utterly ridiculous (like a sinister plot to kill millions by staging blackouts).

Jim says

What started out as a fairly nifty idea was then ruined by cliché after cliché. As the book developed, so did the plot holes. I'm being generous giving it 2 stars because younger readers might enjoy it. There is a lot of action. Unfortunately, most of it seems to have been cribbed out of other bad action novels.

I didn't mind the time jumps, which I noticed some others complained about. Because of how they are done (our heroine is supposed to be remembering as she meditates or sleep) they are far too serendipitous, but I could forgive that. Otherwise, the mechanics of the writing weren't bad. The dialog was pretty good.

The plot just got worse & worse, though. By the 2/3 mark, I was gritting my teeth. About 3/4 of the way through the book, I just put it down. Hopefully the next book will be better for those who choose to subject themselves to it. I won't.

Kelly says

Dark Time by Dakota Banks is a technothriller disguised as an urban fantasy. For it to reach its ideal audience, it should instead be titled something like "The Anu Tablet" and have an ominously lit historic building on its cover.

The story begins in colonial times, when Susannah Layhem is accused of witchcraft and sentenced to burn at

the stake. (Never mind that nobody was burned as a witch in the American colonies; they were hanged.) As she is dying, she is whisked away to a strange underworld and approached by a Sumerian demon, Rabishu. He offers to save her and make her immortal — if she agrees to become an assassin in his service. She accepts. Three hundred years later, Susannah has a moral crisis and decides she wants out of the killing business. There's only one loophole in her contract: she will be free of Rabishu, and granted entrance to paradise by the god Anu, if she saves as many lives as she has taken. She loses her immortality but keeps a few special abilities. Susannah changes her name to Maliha and begins her new life.

Maliha is gorgeous. She's great at martial arts. She has tons of money, a cutting-edge car, an arsenal of deadly weapons, and a high-tech set of booby traps protecting her front door (though two people manage to break in during the book). What she doesn't have, unfortunately, is a personality. I never really felt like I knew Maliha. She holds everybody at arm's length, including the reader. She has a romantic subplot, but it too is lacking. She barely knows the guy, their chemistry doesn't come across to the reader, and yet it's "love."

The plot involves Maliha investigating two corrupt companies, one of which may have murdered two computer programmers. Maliha is also looking for some artifacts that will help her destroy Rabishu and his fellow demons. There's plenty of action, but for me it just climbed too far over the top in a cheesy-action-movie sort of way.

Meanwhile, the fantasy elements are barely present, and not completely thought out. For example, Maliha kills lots of people (including some possible innocents) while on her "lifesaving missions," yet these deaths don't seem to count against her.

If you like technothrillers with a dash of fantasy, you may like this; but if you're predominantly a fantasy reader, there's not much to grab you here. The writing is adequate and the plot is filled with action, but I wanted more characterization and better use of the fantasy elements.

Written for FantasyLiterature.com

Wendy says

Dakota Banks' *Dark Time* has the flavor of an action thriller urban fantasy novel. There's quite a lot packed into the book as the author sets up the characters and their history and gets the story moving. Susannah is a healer during the 17th century. Accused of witchcraft, she is burned at the stake. An ancient Sumerian demon offers her a deal: immortality with conditions or death by fire. Susannah chooses life at the cost of being bound to the demon and required to do his evil bidding. For three hundred years, Susannah kills for Rabishu. She is a master at her art with her supernatural strength and speed and well honed skills. Then, under the weight of the lives she's taken, Susannah rebels against her master, setting in motion a chain of events that could result in her freedom. She must balance the lives she has taken with lives she saves. The catch? She loses her immortality, aging with each life she saves. If she fails, she will forever be the demon's slave.

Susannah becomes Maliha Crayne as she sets out on her new journey. She is tasked with finding the one responsible for the death of two coders. Her investigation opens a can of worms that threatens to destroy more than just the lives already taken. Aided by her trusted friends, Maliha goes on the hunt.

This was quite an interesting novel. I liked it in many ways. The historical aspects and ties to Sumerian legends particularly intrigued me. And I really liked the way the author developed Susannah/Maliha's

character. She had the typical earmarks of an urban fantasy heroine--tough and independent--but there is something else to her. As young looking, agile and into high tech as she may be, Maliha comes across as a much older soul. It's easy to believe she is 300+ years old. And I really liked that about her. I appreciated the author taking Maliha there. More importantly, I liked that she was a hot chocolate drinker.

The author spends a lot of time setting up Maliha's background and overall goal to regain her freedom. Very little time is spent exploring the part of Maliha's life in which she establishes her new identity as a crime writer before jumping into her current investigation. The transition is very quick from past to present. I didn't mind so much since I found the background information the most interesting, including the flashbacks to Maliha's past, but it did leave me scratching my head initially. I will be curious to see what direction the author takes in future books of the series.

Overall, I enjoyed Dark Time. The ending is a bit of a cliff hanger, and it was hard not to rush out and buy the next book in the series just so I could find out how . . . well, find out what happens next. I do plan to read more in the series, but I really need to get back to my book club selection for the time being.

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

What do an innocent woman sentenced to burn for practicing witchcraft and a pulp crime novelist moonlighting as an former assassin who now saves the lives she used to take have in common? The answer: nothing. And therein lies the problem with this book.

The main character starts out this book as Susannah Layhem, dutiful 17th century wife, herbalist healer, and expectant mother without a care in the world except how to fend off her overly amorous husband during the increasingly uncomfortable end of her pregnancy. When she is falsely accused of being a witch, abandoned by those closest to her, and then suffers a miscarriage due to maltreatment and harsh imprisonment, she willingly accepts a 'deal with the devil' (aka the Sumerian demon Rabishu) to escape a fiery death. She becomes an Ageless assassin, killing indiscriminately at Rabishu's bidding. Fast forward about 300 years and Susannah wants out. She finds in the fine print of her demon contract a possible way out ; if she can save as many lives as she took she will be free. She starts her life over as Maliha (pronounced Ma-lie-hah), a 007 rip-off with all the expensive toys and boys a girl could want.

But Maliha is nothing like Susannah. When we first meet her, she is busy working on her tan a trying to think of new ways to pose in her bikini to attract a hottie a few feet away. She is unfortunately forced to 'pose and run' as a member of her network of saved lives calls in with a murder case for her to investigate. The rest of the book treats us to a confusing mash up of medical malpractice, drug smuggling, and corporate espionage . Sprinkled throughout all this, Maliha goes on a blind date, gossips with the boy crazy friend who set her up, works on her next hit book entitled, A Lust for Murder, and worries way too much that she might be in love with her blind date (while still engaging in casual sex with a local P. I.). In short she does everything except what you would expect: anguish over the insurmountable task in front of her. She is not the dark, brooding character she should be, given her history. She is not wracked with guilt over her past crimes nor is she consumed with desire to even the scales. She almost seems put out when she gets called away from all her fun.

What!?! Did I pick up the wrong book? Was there a mix-up at the printer? This was supposed to be an Urban Fantasy, not a Chic-Lit Mystery. And yet once Susannah becomes Maliha, the paranormal elements seem to die with her. There are a few passing references to the demon bargain, and a few mentions to Summerian

mythology. But that's about it.

This should have been a great book. The premise is one of the best I've heard in a long time. One I could easily imagine supporting a long series, and yet sadly, the author largely ignored the great opportunity she created and instead produced a generic thriller weighed down with chic-lit elements and bad dialog:

“What money? By now all records of your transaction have been wiped out. No one can follow the money trail because there isn't any. What blackmail? The Black Ghost was never here.”

A warning is also appropriate because there is a sexual predator in this book and the author includes chapters from his perspective. One that includes him assaulting a woman while she sleeps, his running thoughts leading up to and throughout the assault, and his future plans of brutally raping her. I cannot emphasize enough how ugly this part was to read.

The bottom line is this: with Susannah, I cared; with Maliha, I didn't.

Sexual Content: A couple brief sex scenes. A chapter written from the perspective of a sexual predator.

Scotwithone_t says

I loved the premise of this book, and I loved the main character for the first few chapters. But then the author pulls the rug out from under the story and skips ahead 300 years in the character's life, with little to no transition. I understand the timefram jump, but I would have liked to see a few more assassinations of supposed innocent people, and her struggle against guilt to justify her choice to retire from being a life-take and become a life-saver.

Even with the jarring transition, the book still had potential. We have this pseudo-immortal woman who is on a mission to save as many lives as she took to balance out the scales of morality, or karma, or whatever the stupid tattoo is supposed to be a metaphor for. She could have used her powers and speed to stop all kinds of bad-guys from hurting people, terrorists, thugs, etc. But no. She focuses all her effort of saving one person in this convoluted scheme that gives her an excuse to be a detective. That's where this novel just falls on its face. I think the author actually changed her mind as to what kind of book she wanted to write when she was 1/3 of the way into it. To have the main character go to such great lengths and put herself in such dangerous situations (remember, if she dies, she doesn't just die... she spends eternity being tortured by the demon)... all for ONE POTENTIAL SAVED LIFE. Ridiculous and unbelievable.

I'm being harsh, only because I wanted to like this book so much. Like I said, the premise is fantastic and original, but the execution was half-baked and completely inappropriate. There will obviously be a sequel based on the way it ended, and I'll be reluctant to read it. I suppose I will though, since idea of the book is too good to not give a second chance.

Text Addict says

This book could actually be worse, if the basic sentence-level writing wasn't competent.

This is only my perspective, of course; the book may be much more appealing to people other than me. I have never, for example, been a fan of bed-hopping characters of any gender – so that's a reason for me not

to like it right there. Your mileage may vary.

But there's a lot more to disapprove of in this book than that. I slogged through to the end through sheer willpower (only actually throwing it across the room once!).

To begin with, facts are important. Even in a story loaded with impossible fantastic and pseudotech elements, the details about the real world need to be correct. Why? Because you never know which incorrect fact will, for any given reader, strike a swift, sharp blow at your story's credibility and even your credibility as a writer.

Sooo, you say, what facts are you talking about, Text? The big one is a really big one, since it deeply involves the protagonist's entire reason for being in this book.

See, the demon got a hold on our multiply-renamed protagonist because she'd been burned as a witch (even though she wasn't one, and was pregnant to boot) – in late seventeenth-century Massachusetts. In reality, the number of witches burned in New England is zero. They were hanged. Furthermore, the likelihood of a 17th-century English justice system executing a pregnant woman is approximately zilch. The English regularly postponed executions due to pregnancy, for offenses up to and including piracy on the high seas. There was even a term for it – “pleading her belly.”

You can see, I think, how this undermines nearly everything about Protagonist's initial motivation. The fact that she miscarried the baby before her execution is immaterial – she was convinced, against all reason, that they would've executed her even if she'd still been pregnant.

And then there's this other thing – not so much an error as a mind-boggling omission. Seventeenth-century Massachusetts Protagonist never thinks about her (Christian) God. Never prays to Him. Is never shown jettisoning her faith in light of the cruelty being imposed on her by her own religion and justice system. This makes no sense – and really, the whole thing would be more affecting if she did go through the faith wringer in this chapter or the next one. But nothing of the sort occurs.

For that matter, almost no one in the novel ever mentions God or Jesus (even in the too-common meaningless interjection form). Apparently the only real supernatural powers in this world are ancient Sumerian demons and their absentee overlord god, Anu (infodump, pp. 31-32). And I'm not really comfortable with that, personally. But in addition, the response of the characters in the novel who learn of this seems to be, “Oh. That explains everything!” Or something of the sort. Nobody, it seems, has ever been to Sunday school, or had to struggle with such a direct contradiction of their traditional faith. It's incomprehensible. This issue needs to be given a lot more thought, and dealt with directly. It's a novel with a demon in it, after all. That ought to loom a bit larger than it does.

Next, the name thing. For the first fifty-one pages, Protagonist is consistently referred to by her original name – Susannah Layhem. At the opening of Chapter Nine, she's renamed herself Maliha Crayne – a decision that took place some time after Chapter Eight: a decision already accomplished, and thus tensionless and relieved of any particular narrative significance, despite a fairly lengthy (action-free) pause to describe her current circumstances. I think the multiple time frame shifts of the preceding chapters have a lot to do with why this important change falls flat, but more on that in a moment.

Several chapters later in the book, it's revealed, indirectly, that her current public name is Marsha Winters. Various people call her Ms. Winters before one finally mentions the whole thing. Even though, back in Chapter Nine, it was revealed that she was earning a nice living writing popular trashy crime novels, this pen name / “real name” is not mentioned at that point. This is needlessly confusing (though at least she never thinks of herself as Marsha).

In addition, if she never uses this Maliha Crayne name, why did she bother to adopt it at all? And stating that she felt she needed to change her name isn't the same as showing why it was so important to her. This whole name change concept needs rethinking, or a better portrayal. I know the symbolism of changing one's name is powerful, but it isn't shown powerfully, and the addition of the Winters name dilutes whatever effect it might have had. But at the very least, put something about the Winters name in the same scene as the reveal about her novel-writing, instead of playing all coy with it, please.

The fact-checking and names problems are perhaps not the major issues that the number of words I've just spent on them might suggest; they are, however, symptomatic of the larger problem with the novel, which is a fundamental lack of coherence.

The book just doesn't seem to know what kind of book it is. Most of the time, after page 51, it seems like it's being a techno-thriller; at other points, it has definite overtones of a semi-humorous caper story. Early on, there are strong elements of supernatural horror / redemption story, but these pretty much vanish, aside from technical details, after page 51. Starting on page 55, Maliha is being stalked by a really nasty and unnamed guy, so maybe it's actually a crime novel. There's some romance mixed in, too, which doesn't jell particularly well with all the other elements.

Oh, and there's a quest – if Maliha can acquire the Tablet of the Overlord and the seven shards of the Lens to read it with, she'll probably be able to destroy her personal demon (Rabishu) and his six siblings. In fact, she does acquire the Tablet – in a flashback. And she finds one of the shards – in the course of a minor side plot. What's up with that? Why the focus on the would-be techno overlord / terrorist, instead of the big quest? Of course, there is her ongoing quest also – under the escape clause in her contract, she needs to save as many lives as she can (why taking more lives in the life-saving process doesn't affect the outcome is not discussed) in order to escape eternal torment.

In fact, there's just too much going on here. A lot if it is really interesting stuff, actually, but it just doesn't add up to a coherent narrative.

Part of the problem is the flashbacks – I've mentioned those already. The novel zig-zags through time at intervals that make very little sense to me. Not only are there flashbacks to crucial moments in Maliha's progress from assassin to ex-assassin (plus the one about getting the Tablet), but each of her good buddies gets his own flashback showing exactly how they met – even though the narrative already briefly explained that, sometimes many pages before the flashback. In fact the only one who doesn't get one is her best girlfriend; what's up with that? Anyway, this zig-zagging only exacerbates the problem of figuring out what kind of story this is supposed to be.

Now, there are some good, powerful scenes in this novel, especially in the first fifty pages. There are also events that make no sense at all (how, exactly, did she sneak onto the plane sitting on the remote runway in broad daylight?). There are random things that annoy the heck out of this particular reader (she drives a McLaren F1? Seriously? Including on trips to break into two different corporate HQs?). But with some judicious pruning and alteration of plot lines – and I have to recommend playing up the quest at the expense of the techno-thriller plot, because it's a lot more central to the character's purpose in life – the pretty good book that's in here could have been liberated, if someone had actually edited it.

I'm not sure it would be all that much to my taste even then, but it wouldn't be such an almighty trial for me to get through. The average Clive Cussler novel isn't much more believable, in a lot of ways, but the man does know how to plot and I can read his books without repeatedly going, "What? No, that makes no sense. We're going where now?"

I mean, I know this book is not meant to be Great Literature. But in its present state it isn't even a "good read."

I could offer some more remarks on structural elements, not to mention the flat characters, but this review is long enough already.

Donna says

I guest reviewed this book over at Enchanted by Books:

In *Dark Time*, Dakota Banks gets down to the nitty-gritty. She holds nothing back in the details whether it's a city Maliha is working in, out on an assassin's mission or reliving Mahilia's burning at the stake as an accused witch. This is not a novel that paints a pretty picture but one that is full of the very real complicated feelings of a woman trying to redeem herself for her past sins and working towards ensuring a better future for all of mankind – hopefully without the presence of the demons such as Rabishu and his brethren. While she is trying to redeem herself, she questions whether she will ever have some semblance of normalcy such as having a family. She wonders if this is something she should even allow herself to dream about, especially with DEA agent Jake Stackman.

I liked the way the novel went back and forth between time periods in Maliha's life. This helped give me a good understanding to how Maliha went from a cold-hearted assassin to the moment when her heart started to warm up again. The flashbacks helped solidify Maliha's relationships with the secondary characters, made you feel closer to her and her friends while intensifying the feelings of disgust and dislike for the Rabishu and the other vile characters in the story. They also show how Maliha became the self-confident, strong woman she is in present day, who is self-assured in her own skills to take care of herself and those around her.

Dark Time was an intense dark read for me, which I enjoyed very much since it's my favorite kind of reading. It reads like a paranormal Mission Impossible assignment, at least that's how I kept seeing things in my mind's eye because of the detailed descriptions of the weaponry and gadgets used by Maliha and other characters throughout the story.

The romance in this book takes a backseat to action, though it's not without a few passionate moments. I liked that the villains are truly evil because this means no easy way out for the good guys and it thickens the plot. But be warned, this book ends with a cliffhanger. So if you're looking for a fast-paced read that is very dark in nature, that makes no apologies, has a kick-ass heroine and a solid storyline, then this book is for you. I'll be on the lookout for *Sacrifice*, the second book in the *Mortal Path* series. Due to the cliffhanger, I HAVE TO KNOW what happens next!

Yin Chien ?? says

This is my first attempt at reading an urban-fantasy novel, and I'll have to say it's awesome! *Dark Time* is an action-packed novel which is full of danger and intrigue, in which Maliha strives to achieve a goal that seems impossible to reach. Please be aware that there are some adult contents in this novel.

Maliha is a super-girl. She heals inordinately fast, has looks that kill, is filthy rich, highly-skilled at martial arts and runs at a high speed. Plus, her best friends are a pro-hacker and a remote-viewer. Maliha looks as if she is perfect, and I was never worried about her, not even once. Even though she seems like she has everything anyone can ask for, she is actually lacking of one thing : her soul.

There are a lot of action scenes in this book, which I loved reading. Don't think Maliha is always unwounded, though. She is always hurt, but she heals faster than ordinary people.

Maliha has two best friends : Amaro and Yanmeng. They are loyal to Maliha and will do all they can to help her. Their friendship is true and long-lasting. I think it's a good thing that the author "gives" her two best friends. It must be good for her to have someone to trust after 300 years of solitude.

As Maliha tries to uncover the mysterious death of two computer experts, she uncovers a political scheme which leads to a battle with her with her nemesis/stalker, face-to-face.

Maliha's love interest, DEA agent Jake has a secret concerning his past. He did something that seemed impossible for normal people at the end of the story. Will we find out more about him in the next novel?

Dark Time is a well-written urban fantasy novel which combines a thrilling plot and an interesting concept, nicely blended in both historical and modern backgrounds. The ending is quite surprising, so I hope more will be revealed later. I thoroughly enjoyed Dark Time and I simply can't wait to read the next book in the series!

Jacqueline says

Dark Time is everything that the debut of a new urban fantasy series should be. Banks deftly employs Sumerian mythology and world history to propel the story of Maliha, a former assassin seeking redemption.

As an Ageless servant of the demon Rabishu, Maliha has lived a long life - from the period of colonization in America up to present day. In order to give a complete picture of her story, Banks uses the first few chapters to jump from one period to the next. Once she hits the present, occasional flashbacks are used to draw more complete portraits of certain characters, events, and actions.

Banks' experience as a mystery writer is very evident here. The plot is nicely woven and manages to be involves without being convoluted. There are also a wealth of characters, which is believable given the extended age of the heroine, but they never become confused in the story.

As a heroine, Maliha is one of the best. She's intelligent and talented, has a great sense of humor, and knows how to take care of herself. Maliha is easy to sympathize with and is made all the more believable with her purely vengeful reasons for her initial deal with the demon...

...To continue reading this review, head over to my blog, [The Eclectic Book Lover](#).
