



The Lost Dagger: A Rune Unseen Thriller

Thamir Essayyad

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The Lost Dagger is a fantastical thriller in which a gifted doctor learns that science can't explain it all.

In Thamir Essayyad's series-opening supernatural thriller *The Lost Dagger*, a troubled physician learns that he has a part to play in an ancient, multidimensional battle.

Kanan, though he's overworked, excels at his job as an emergency room doctor. But witnessing dark human moments takes a toll: he sees parents overdose; he watches as families are broken; people have psychotic breaks. And his home has its own stressors: his fiancée is obsessed with planning an elaborate wedding that he does not want.

When he begins having hallucinations and hears incessant whispering, Kanan thinks he may be facing a personal breakdown. He takes a sabbatical and travels to Spain, but the voices and hallucinations follow him there. Then a stranger tells Kanan that has a gift: he descends from a long line of gifted warriors, and he can summon and communicate with spirits.

Blending Middle Eastern history, religious dogma, and multidimensional beings, this is a fascinating thriller. Its world building is methodical, mirroring Kanan's own introduction to his situation: he has conversations with people who have deeper knowledge than he has, and he sometimes listens to long monologues about the tensions that run beneath his world. Enthralling details are drawn forward as Kanan agrees to develop his skills and possibly fight in the ongoing war between two supernatural factions. In the process, he travels from the United States to Europe, the Middle East, and beyond.

Still, much of the book is devoted to establishing the groundwork that future entries will build upon, including information about Kanan and the long-lasting battle that's already underway. The prose is at its strongest when its focus is supernatural; in Kanan's everyday life his exchanges are more stilted. Further, too much time is devoted to developing secondary characters, including Kanan's patients, people whom he meets early in his travels, and his friends in the United States; their roles in the larger story are often initially undefined. The early portions of the book drag as a result.

However, once the connections between the book's disparate elements are better established, it becomes more thrilling, and lasting attention is secured. Kanan leaves his medical aspirations behind; he comes to accept that he has been called to be a supernatural warrior instead. The book's triumphant ending secures interest in his continuing tale.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (March 27, 2023)

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