



# Dark Summer

*Iris Johansen*

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## **Dark Summer** Iris Johansen

It begins with a single shot.

Devon Brady is a devoted veterinarian working in a makeshift hospital on a remote search and rescue mission. When a man arrives with his wounded black Lab, Ned, she has no idea that she is about to be plunged into a whirlwind of terror and destruction.

Jude Marrock is out for revenge and has no choice but to involve Devon in a high-stakes cat-and-mouse game with an escalating body count. She doesn't trust him one bit, but when the shots start flying and friends start falling, she finds herself with nowhere else to run. And there are innocent lives, both human and animal, at stake, including Ned and his mysterious pack. Is Jude her salvation or her damnation? Are the secrets he's protecting worth killing for . . . or dying for?

With a lightning-fast pace, unforgettable characters, and gut-wrenching action, *Dark Summer* is compelling new terrain for this master storyteller.

## **Dark Summer Details**

Date : Published April 1st 2010 by St. Martin's Press (first published 2008)

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Author : Iris Johansen

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# From Reader Review Dark Summer for online ebook

## Anna says

This book kept me clued to the pages, did not want the story to end. It took me on some very unexpectant turns. It's a must read!

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## Aurora says

Normally I'm a fan of hers but this book was awful. The main female character was made "tough" by saying DAMMIT about 100 times during the book (not kidding). Saying Dammit does not make you tough, it makes you annoying.

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## Julie (jjmachshev) says

"Dark Summer" is a kind of side story that builds on characters from Iris Johansen's earlier books. It has her trademark quick pacing and is much more action oriented than many of her early books which has irritated many of her fans.

One minute Devon is working a South American island disaster as a rescue dog handler and site vet, the next a strange man with an even stranger dog shows up demanding she remove the bullet in the dog. A few hours later, the man is gone and left a note asking her to care for Ned (the dog) and take him home with her back to the States! Within a week, Devon's been shot at, kidnapped, her office ransacked and two co-workers killed, and her home burned to the ground. As far as she's concerned...it's all HIS fault!

Jude Marrok is a former SEAL with a wretched past and an iffy future. He's been living with a target on his back for four long years; all the while trying to protect four very special dogs from an insane megalomaniac. Now his secrets are being revealed and he doesn't have much time before he has to face the powerful man who tortured and killed the only family Jude could claim. And since he met Devon, he can't stop these 'feelings' and it's driving him nuts! How can he protect his dogs, his friends, AND Devon?

I enjoyed the wild ride! The events in the book take place in less than two weeks so everything is on fast-forward from page one. The attraction between Jude and Devon is sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes frustrating, but always hot. Neither is particularly happy with the attraction at first, and even in the middle of the story both are still conflicted. These characters have a depth that will suck you in and keep you reading. When I finished the book, I felt like I had just finished a race. My heartrate was up and I was breathing faster than normal...now THAT's a story!!

I'll be eager to see if she continues with this story line and some of the secondary characters in another book.

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## Brandie says

I will be honest - I skimmed this book. It started off really intense and I thought I would like it. But then it got weird and boring for me and I just couldn't get into it like I'd hoped. I've tried Johansen's books before. I thought I'd like this because it had dogs in the story. I think I'm giving up on her books. They just aren't for me.

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## **Marla says**

[I was disturbed that Devon was more upset about Danner wanting to kill the magical dogs of summer, than Marrok terminating the killers. Devon got over the deaths of her friends too quickly with never a backward glance. Semi-retired vet partner, Nick and uber gruff housekeeper Janet were n

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## **Christine Zibas says**

Iris Johansen is a well known mystery writer, and having read other books of hers (most recently "Stalemate"), I was surprised at how disengaged I was reading this latest book. While the plot had all the signature elements to make this a good novel, somehow it all just felt flat, and I suppose this must be attributed to the characters who populate this book. They just didn't stand up to the strength of the material. As I read along, I kept thinking the characters would become more interesting or their motivations would be more completely revealed. Unfortunately, it just never held together, like a sauce where the ingredients separate.

The story begins with two people working with their dogs on a search-and-rescue mission. Jude Marrok's dog Ned is shot while searching for survivors, and Devon Brady is the attending vet at the makeshift hospital on site. Jude Marrok starts off as a demanding bully and never really allows his humanity to seep through. When he uses Devon Brady to get his dog off the island and into her care back in the States, their relationship is cemented. However, all Marrok can bring to Brady is trouble.

Brady already has her own share of trouble in the form of a stalker ex-husband, who also happens to be a cop. Marrok is being chased by any number of villains, but two in particular (one from British intelligence and one that is never really explained satisfactorily). Marrok is also Native American, and there is a subplot about his childhood and training under a shaman, whose work with potions is linked to the dogs in Jude's care.

Even with all this potentially interesting information, the characters never really take hold on the reader's emotions. It's like watching scene after scene, yet never really caring what the outcome will be. Moreover, the romantic relationship between the two main characters seems flawed from the outset; is Brady's new partner (Marrok) so much better than her ex-husband? Clearly the author intends readers to think so, but didn't buy it. It just seemed to be an extension of her troubles.

The central plot line and source of trouble throughout the book focuses on the special properties of the dogs in Marrok's care (the only creatures he truly seems to care for). All the villains have their own intended use for the dogs, but only Marrok and Brady really seem able to protect them, but this is just not enough to make their romance believable or sustainable for readers. For those who stick with the book, there is an interesting twist at the end, but I suspect that few will think it's been worth the journey to get there.

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## Paula Hebert says

for years, in bookstores and libraries, looking for my next literary fix, I have seen the rows and rows of ms. johansen's output, and just passed them by. well, I finally decided to see what was so special about them, what with being a new york times best seller and all. and I am telling you, this book was just awful. the premise itself wasn't that bad, but the book read more like a script for a mediocre tv movie than a good book. more dialogue than prose, with a heavy bodice-ripper element, this is a book for someone who doesn't like to read. I got half way through it (and it was a mighty struggle, let me tell you) and I just couldn't stand it anymore. who did this woman pay to get them to put her on the ny times best seller list? don't waste your time.

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## Ben Campbell says

ARGH!!! - Annoyance, Exasperation and Drivel...the dialog was drivel, the sex scenes were drivel, the whole story was drivel. Iris Johansen didn't write this crap! A slew of incoherent and ignorant editors and two ghost writers did. You can't use beautiful dogs to cover up lengthy, stupid dialog and bogus characters' interaction and stupid scenes that were devised to just fill up empty pages.

Bad cops, bad people, supercharged hormones, degrading and sexist sex scenes deluded situations and dog supremacy; all add up to characterization overkill, plot silliness and antagonists I'd rather stick my tongue out at than join their cause.

I've wasting this time. I need to laugh! Ha-ha-ha.

Enough of my drivel!!!

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## Y says

Currently on part 8 out of 11 on the audiobook.

So the book starts out interestingly enough: Hero Man and his dog are on a small Caribbean island, illegally, looking for survivors after a terrible earthquake. They meet Lady Vet, dog appears to be More Than Meets the Eye Dog. He's maybe sentient, or immortal, or can heal the terminally ill. Precious Magical Savior Dogs...I feel like I've wandered into a Dean Koontz book on accident.

Then....nothing happens. I'm about two-thirds of the way into the book, and not a damn thing has happened that I could care about. Some people Lady Vet knows but we get maybe two sentences about may or may not have died at the hands of Dastardly Evil Guy who wants to get his hands on the Magical Dogs. Hero Man has killed a few of Dastardly Evil Guy's henchmen, though any fun gruesomeness is largely glossed over, and again, who cares about Lackey No. 1 and 2 dieing? Lady Vet has a psycho stalker douchebag ex-husband who showed some potential so far, even hooks up with Dastardly Evil Guy, but again, he hasn't done jack so far into the game. Dastardly Evil Guy may as well just be twirling a mustache or rubbing his hands and going "Mwahahaha!" for as much as he's done thus far.

Meanwhile, you'd think since the dogs in this are so special, they'd play a more interesting part in it all, but nah, they're mentioned now and then but for the most part are glossed over completely because Lady Vet and Hero Man (who has been tossing out bucketfuls of obnoxious testosterone with every step he takes) are too busy running the plot into the ground by hammering the reader with nonstop Unresolved Sexual Tension and bickerings and NOBODY FREAKING CARES. Now, despite reading too many of his books, I am not really a huge Dean Koontz fan. However, I do like how he makes the vast majority of pooches in his stories to be their own characters. No, they're not anthropomorphic beings who speak human languages (at least, not in any of the books I've read), but they almost always have a personality, and you come to think of them as just as important as any of the human characters.

Johansen...doesn't really have the dog-as-character aspect down as well. They're (or at least Ned) described as having near-human emotions and understanding at times, but I'm really not feeling it. They may as well just be some valuable jewels the baddies want to get their hands on. Instead of building up the dogs as characters, she chose to focus waaay too much on how...I honestly can't remember their names, that's how much of an impression they make on me, oh, right, Devon and Jude need to be all belligerent sexual tension at each other, but they're GONNA FALL IN WUV, and they need to FINALLY HAVE SEX and yeah, any potential exciting action really isn't as important.

Oh yeah! The dialog is almost embarrassing at times. The characters say "dammit" waaay too often, especially since the book isn't afraid of using even more colorful language. Really. Both Jude and Devon use it as if they've *just* discovered it and it is the BESTEST WORD EVER, and they need to use it to accentuate whenever They're Feeling Mad (which is often), I don't know, maybe because the author can't think of a way to show her Characters Are Mad! any other way. It's a bad crutch, and she uses it far too often. Again, it just feels embarrassing.

It's all just...so....boring. There's a potential betrayal coming Jude's way, though I don't really believe it'll happen, and any *thrilling suspense!* is probably going to all be crammed into the very last part of the book, but I really doubt that's going to save it from me giving it the dreaded One Star. We'll see, though I'm really not looking forward to finishing it. Still, I've come this far.

EDIT:

Alright, it's done. That was....boring.

1) Marrok is an immature, testosterone-overloaded jerkass. Honestly, why are all these people trying to help him? I spent most of the book either wanting him to shut up or for someone to punch him in the face. Responsible because he takes care of magical dogs? Yeah, so? That doesn't make him not an immature, testosterone-overloaded jerkass. Why is Devon becoming more and more attracted to him and being more and more on his side?

2) I'd had my hopes set on psycho ex-husband. Things could've become gritty and disturbing. All he ends up doing is squeezing a boob and getting killed. No, seriously. Not that I was hoping for something overly traumatic due to him, but still, couldn't he have been used to increase the suspense like, *at all?* For that matter, if all he's going to end up doing is nothing, you'd think that Devon would record his numerous threatening phone calls to use against him, since he *always* finds out her new number and he *always* threatens her over the phone. He did it so often she basically became used to them.

3) Bridget (sp?) was one of the few characters I found interesting and worth liking. Janet was another. Bridget getting shot was also one of the dumbest things in the book. Marrok, manly man extraordinaire, has Danner, i.e. Dastardly Evil Guy, at his mercy. Danner's gun's been knocked away, Marrok has his own gun on Danner, he can kill him easily. Instead, Hero Man gives Dastardly Evil Guy one minute to find his gun while he yaps his head off. Dastardly Evil Guy gets his gun, shoots at Devon, Bridget takes the bullet instead. Stupid, stupid, stupid. Seriously? I mean, Marrok doesn't seem to have any problems killing other people in this story. He's been at odds with Danner for forever and has been looking to put an end to his Evil Doings for a while now, and...."I'll give you a minute to find your gun"? Bwuh? *Why?*

"If you're gonna shoot, shoot. don't talk."

What? Suddenly wanted to make Hero Man seem more noble by not having him kill Dastardly Evil Guy in cold blood? Who *cares*! Marrok is already an asshole; everyone knows that. There is no point whatsoever for this sudden compunction other than for it to do something about Bridget's vision of Devon getting shot. I don't really like Devon, but I don't hate her either, but she still could've gotten shot instead and survived like Bridget did anyway. That whole scene was just eye-rolling in general, though.

4) Again, the dialog in this book is just embarrassing, dammit. Who talks like that, dammit? Who punctuates every other sentence with "dammit", dammit? Who uses the word "scumbag" to describe truly vile villains who kill others in cold blood outside of a rated-G children's movie, dammit? GodDAMN. And did I mention that Marrok just needs to shut up, dammit?

5) Last minute family trees and miraculous revelations!

Are you joking me.

Look.

I know that this is about magical dogs and all, but still.

I guess Johansen just couldn't resist one last push to make the book goofier still.

You know, if this had been the story for some cheesy, cheap, made-for-tv movie, it might not have been so bad. Probably fairly entertaining. Some action, hokey acting, cute dogs; good to kill two hours in your day.

As a book? Particularly one from a novelist who is supposedly well known as a suspense writer? One where the audiobook clocks in at about nine-to-ten hours in length? It's a waste of time.

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## **Julia says**

A good book for dog lovers. A paranormal thriller with a side of romance. 4 dogs with healing powers and the man sworn to protect them. Fun to read.

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### **Kenna says**

A hate to say it, but I almost didnt finish this book. It took me from 9/4 to 9/19 to read this book. Thats unheard of for me! I usually love books like this but there was just something that turned me off after the first few chapters.

Im pretty sure that it was when Marrock became sexually aggressive with in hours of meeting Devon and kept telling her that he couldnt control his lust, that it would happen and when it did it would totaly blow her mind and be like comming home. Please. Sex like that doesnt happen in real life. Sex should be the realistic things in fantasy books!

I digress. The book was chunky and lacked flow for me. I had a hard time following because there were so many people introduced in this book probably setting it up for a sequel. I dont know, I wasnt interested in reading the excerpt from the next book to find out.

Good luck doggies, I leave you from here on.

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### **Libby says**

Found this book in the apartment we rented for summer vacation! Perfect beach read.....lots of suspense and some mysterious dog action (certainly created a different twist. The main characters provide a backdrop of romance in settings that frequently become dangerous.

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### **Valerie Curtis says**

Slow and uninteresting is what I'll say. The dialog is slow and stilted and just boring.

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### **Sheri Longshore says**

Iris Johansen has written some really good books-this wasn't one of them. It has dogs in it, and the attention to them was its redemption.

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### **Donna says**

I listened to the audio version of this book and was extremely disappointed in the book itself as well as the narration of it. I was tempted not to finish it, but curious whether it would improve further along or have a decent ending. Unfortunately, neither was the case. I found the book's plot way too implausible and boring to be engaging, the characters mostly unlikeable, and the dialog redundant. Sometimes a poor story is redeemed by good writing, but such is not the case here. The author unnecessarily uses the same descriptive phrases over and over -- if I heard about a character's "lips twisting" or "brows raising" one more time, for example, I think I would have gone mad. As a dog lover, I expected to enjoy the importance of the dogs to the story, but



even that aspect was not particularly well developed. I have not read other books by this author, but hope that this rather silly and almost annoying novel is not representative of her work.

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