



Awakening

Catrina Burgess

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In *Awakening*, the first installment in the Dark Rituals series, a former healer turns to the Death Arts to seek revenge.

Seventeen-year-old Colina was born a healer. But after a horrific event forces her to leave her clan, she becomes desperate to learn the dark magic of the death dealers, mages who draw their power from the spirits of the dead. Colina was taught to fear and hate death dealers, but becoming one of them is the only way for her to get the revenge she seeks—and the only way for her to survive.

Colina asks a young death dealer named Luke to help her, but he's reluctant to train her in the Death Arts. Little does she know convincing him to teach her will be the easiest part of her journey. To become a death dealer, Colina will need to undergo three dark rituals, each more terrifying than the last. At the same time, she'll have to deal with her growing feelings for her mentor. Too bad the first ritual involves him strangling her to death.

As Colina undergoes the trials, she discovers an untapped darkness within herself. If she survives the horrific rituals and gains dark power, what will she become?

Catrina Burgess' Dark Rituals series originally appeared on Wattpad with over three million reads. *Awakening* is the first book of four and was named Wattpad's Best Suspense Story of 2014.

Praise for *Awakening*, Book 1 in the Dark Rituals series:

"Ladies and gents, prepare to meet the next title on your MUST READ list..." —*Satisfaction for Insatiable Readers*

"A paranormal story unlike any other. If you are looking for an original plot look no further. ... I couldn't put it down! Every single time I thought I was getting to a lull where I might be able to stop reading, the hooks dug in deeper." —*Goodreads reviewer*

"The plot twists and turns on this wild horror ride. ... A must read by an exceptional upcoming author." —*Goodreads reviewer*

Awakening Details

Date : Published October 7th 2015 by Full Fathom Five Digital (first published October 28th 2013)

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Author : Katrina Burgess

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From Reader Review Awakening for online ebook

Online Eccentric Librarian says

More reviews (and no fluff) on the blog <http://surrealtalvi.wordpress.com/>

Around 11% into Awakening, I knew this was not going to be the book for me. The pace is easy to follow, story fairly straightforward, but the writing very problematic. For anyone who reads many books, substandard plotting and lack of writing chops can become insurmountable obstacles to enjoying a story. But for those who don't see the cliches, I'm sure Dark Rituals will be a fun romantic read.

Story: Teen Colina is a former healer with an axe to grind and revenge on her mind. She seeks out handsome Luke to teach her the Death Arts - and will have to undergo horrifying rituals in order to wield the scary power of death.

For me, the roadblockers that prevented me enjoying this story are:

- Egregious Instaluv. E.g., within an hour of meeting the cute guy, he saves her, she saves him, she lusts after his half naked body, and ends up sniffing his manly scent while being annoyed at the other women lusting after her Luke. Honestly, we are given NO reason why he would be interested in her/her him other than his looks and her looks. Certainly, no personalities or characters were developed to get an insight into this miracle insta luv. It was this passage that really set it off for me, happening after meeting him 10 hours or so previous:

"He looked a bit dangerous and, well, let's be honest - hot. I wasn't the only one who thought so. Girls on the street were turning to check him out as we walked by. I edged closer, pleased to find that today he smelled like cedar and leather. When I caught myself leaning in for another whiff, I forced myself to slow down and walk behind him."

There was just too much silly romance and not enough plot.

- Characters were all over the place. E.g., Luke is first angry, then suspicious, then fawning, then laughing, then standoffish, then solicitous, then serious - all within about a 10 minute period of first talking to our character. It made all the characters very unbelievable since they reacted solely to immediate remarks or situations rather than having an intrinsic personality.

Here's a good example from shortly after their first meeting: "He had looked at me before with both anger and amusement, but I wasn't sure what emotion was now blazing from those dark eyes. They were filled with such intensity, and as he watched me his lips slowly curved up into a smile. It was the first time I had seen him really smile. I honestly don't know what I would have done, but I didn't get a chance to find out because as quickly as that smile had appeared, it disappeared."

Luke, like the other characters, was either schizophrenic or poorly written. I'm suspecting the latter.

- Guy saves girl who threw herself into danger stupidly. Do we really need another heroine who does stupid things that should get her killed/maimed but miraculously doesn't? E.g., Colina goes running out into a magical battle armed with - wait for it - a baseball bat. What can she do? Nothing except get the guy hurt

trying to protect her from her own stupidity. But hey, it furthers the plot since he accidentally gets her hurt so he can then fawn over her in remorse (instead of kicking her out of the house after roundly yelling at her, as he should have).

- There were a *lot* of cliches and overworn phrasing. I started wincing involuntarily while reading. "Don't let the bedbugs bite" "I'm alive and kicking." "Snug as a bug in a rug." "Hang in there!" Not exactly creative writing. It could have been a tic of the main character - or it could just be really uninventive writing.

- Really, really bad dialogue. E.g., his answer after just meeting her as to why he will train her in his forbidden death arts: ""Because you were so desperate." He inched toward me, "Because I saw something in your eyes that told me you needed to do this."" Great for romantics who don't need any sort of reality in their reading but not for someone who enjoys a well written book.

All of the above take place within the first 15% of the book. I'm sure there is an enjoyable story in there - a mindless guilty pleasure for many. For me, I've come to demand more from the books I read and just couldn't slog through this particular story. It was in great need of an excellent editor to go beyond the grammar issues and craft out a better story from the romantic goo and trope-ridden writing. Reviewed from an advance reader copy provided by the publisher.

Jillian Redmond says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

To begin, I have a new appreciation for dark magic and ghost stories. Generally, I get all paranoid and afraid when I read books or see movies dealing with ghosts, because it is a part of the supernatural world that is so real. But this book didn't scare me. I also liked this book because it had a lot of unusual aspects that are normally not in books. The main one is the topic of revenge. Generally, we are taught that revenge isn't a good thing. Always be the bigger person, but in this story the main character is hell bent on revenge and I love it. It is wonderful to see how far she is willing to go to enact this revenge; apparently, it is to go as far as becoming a death dealer--magic that people generally abhor. The other aspect that is interesting is the idea of death magic. We are also taught that only the evil hearted deal in death magic, and that it can slowly make your soul rot; but this book paints death magic in a new light, so to speak. The other main character, Luke, is a death dealer and he is a very good guy. Sure, he has bound banshees to protect himself, but the other things death dealers do is help people pass on to the other side. This aspect of death magic is regarded as abhorrent, but is actually really cool. They can help people by pushing the soul of a dying, suffering person, to the other side and freeing them from their pain. What is so bad about that?

All in all, this story was very exciting and very interesting to read, and I am looking forward to reading the next books so I can see more of this world explored, because that was one of the things I didn't like about this book. The magic world that is created is so interesting but we only get a glimpse of it. I want to know more about death magic, and healing magic, and the other types of magic out there. What about how they are able to live in a world with non mage-born people? People clearly know about the death dealers, but are they all mage born?

The other thing that held me up was the writing. There were a lot of repeated cliches and back and forth with the character. Colina has said that she is willing to do anything to become a death dealer but kept going back and forth on whether she can do it or not. She's gone this far, she might as well finish it. So, her character kind of bothered me. I hope she matures more in the next book.

Other than a few minor things this book is definitely worth the read. I loved it.

Mike says

This is such a dark and complex book . I absolutely love the world that is created here even though it is terrifying! I could not stop reading!! I think that Burgess does a wonderful job of creating a world that has many aspects of the urban paranormal fantasy world that we are starting to become accustomed to but is still absolutely unique - and of dropping us into this world without preamble. Colina and Luke are both such intriguing characters - both so complex and complicated. I love seeing them develop as individuals and seeing their relationship unfold (which by the way unlike so many of the young adult books I have read of late the romance here seems so realistic and genuine with equal parts passion and trepidation). It is really interesting to see Colina's transition for shell shocked healer to death dealer (with a little something more). Going through the psychological changes that Colina experiences are what really make the book for me. They give it another layer that we don't always experience in urban paranormal fantasy. In a lot of ways this is as much a psychological thriller as it is a paranormal one. Even the rituals that Colina must go through to become a death dealer deal less with supernatural and more with Colina's opening herself up to her fears and this new world she finds herself in. Opening herself to death itself. I was intrigued by the way death dealers are portrayed throughout this novel. On the one hand they are viewed in their world as villains because of their connection to the dead but I think that they are so much more complex than how many people see them. I wish at times that Colina would embrace that complexity a little more throughout her journey. I know that she is conflicted because of her past and because in a lot of ways this seems like a direct contradiction to how she has been raised as a healer but for much of the book she never really embraces her choice. And when she does it is still only in terms of her revenge which without giving away any spoilers I think results in many of the events that transpire near the end. I think that is wonderful read for people who like Jim Butcher or Simon RR Green. I cannot wait to see who Colina becomes.

khulhet24 says

I got this book in exchange of an honest review

Awakening is about the journey of Colina, a healer who witnessed the death of her family and now is searching for revenge. Being a healer has no match for the murderers so she went to Luke, a young death dealer, and ask him to train her to become a death dealer, a total opposite of her kind. Luke doesn't want to do it, but because of the sudden change of their situation, he was pushed to help her undergo the three rituals. Will Colina survive the three rituals and achieve her revenge?

Awakening was told in Colina's POV. I loved the story line and I was hooked from the beginning. It has an unexpected twist and heart-wrenching scenes. I really didn't expect that ending. It was a brilliant way to lead you to the next book. I like Luke more than Colina. Luke was the rational one in this book. He carefully sought out everything before acting on it. It just breaks my heart when...

What I don't like sometimes in this book is Colina. She was sometimes so closed off that she can't understand things. It was like talking to a child that you have to repeat everything for her to understand, but even though she agreed, it doesn't mean that she really gets it.

Recommended to those who love magic and the dark side of it. There are ghosts, banshees, wizards, gypsy and demon in this book.

Jade says

I received a copy from the author exchange for a review

Revenge, Romance, Magic, Death, Rituals, Action, Supernatural, Adventure.

Colina desperately seeks to become a Death Dealer, she will do anything, pay anything to become one. Her revenge will be achieved no matter the cost but what will she pay?!

We follow Colina through the Rituals and journey to become a Death Dealer; who are fear and hated by everyone. It was interesting reading about Healers and Death Dealers magic and how polar opposite they are; one heals ill and protect the soul, the other release souls from their bodies and use souls to protect themselves. I loved the adventures we go through with Coline, all the creepy and tense rituals to become a Death Dealer and how she psychological change from a healer to a death dealer. The romance was kind of insta however the characters didn't act it very much until later in the book, which was nice, sweet and didn't over take the plot.(view spoiler)

That ending was shocking, what a twist; I didn't think that was going to happen... (view spoiler)

Overall, it was a great supernatural/paranormal novel, even though the main character made some stupid and thoughtless choices and actions; which at time were understandable. I really enjoyed it; I wonder what going to happen in next book! (view spoiler)

Challenge- Jumanji Challenge

Trisha says

what an amazing and fun read. The inside is JUST as good as the outside.

In the first chapter, you instantly are introduced to Darla, Luke and Colina.

From there, the action and adventure are on! You get to know healers and dark wizards - and how those each wield their power.

By and large the creepiest moment was Colina going through each level of the test - the first was the most shocking and her reaction was so well done - I don't blame her.

I loved reading this!

Polo Lonergan says

Great potential but I did not make it past the first couple of chapters. Why? Because all of a sudden I come across the use of the word 'Gypsy' - considered by many Romany people and others to be a slur - and not only that, but it was in the context of an amoral group of money-grabbing magic people.

Yep. The indiscriminate, unprincipled healers who only do it for the cash are called Gypsies.

Not cool. I deleted the book off my Kindle nearly an hour ago and I'm still annoyed that this was never considered to be a bad idea. I can forgive someone misusing the word Gypsy through ignorance but to align it so thoroughly with the harmful stereotypes given to a marginalized group? Yeah, no thanks.

Lissibith says

I was very kindly given a copy of this book from Full Fathom Five through NetGalley in return for an honest review - Many thanks!

Sometimes, you get used to a genre and it's conventions. It's comfortable. You pick the book up and you know you can count on certain things. And the sometimes you pick up a book in that genre, expecting those typical conventions, and you get something wholly and wonderfully surprising.

And that's what I got here.

Colina is a healer, but after something terrible happens, she decides healing magic won't cut it. She needs something stronger. She needs it to protect herself. She needs it for revenge. At times, she's not sure which of those is the truth. But when the terror that drove her to such a drastic decision gets other people roped into the trouble, she makes new friends, gets new powers and tests the limits of her own strength and courage.

First of all, I really liked that this story centered on someone who'd been a healer, and featured healing magic heavily. I was always surprised at how few magic-filled worlds had healing magic. I know some people would say it just makes things too easy... but that's what magic does. It never made much sense when healing magic didn't exist unless there was a reason within the system.

This book surprised me in a lot of great ways. I really liked Colina at the beginning, and while I found myself liking her progressively less and less as she underwent trials to gain dark powers, I didn't find her less *interesting,* just less likeable - and I think that was the point, done in small, wonderful ways. The ending completely took me by surprise, the progression of relationships within it were natural and lovely and the magic made me interested to learn more.

Also, I like that unlike a lot of urban fantasy, this is almost a ghost story. The magics, the plot, the characters - there's a heavy focus on ghosts and spirits, on loss and pain and the inability to accept terrible things. The inability to accept people doing terrible things, to you and to people you love. A clash of rational and emotional played out over a story of revenge and salvation. People's reactions were largely realistic even when those reactions tore at my heart.

It's not a perfect story. There's a bit of a pacing issue that, while never even close to a deal-breaker, made some parts drag. Also, if you're the sort of person who needs stories to have roundly happy endings, you're going to want to stay away from this. This isn't a story for neat little bows, it's a story that's bit rough and dark but no less fascinating for that. I also found it highly enjoyable, and I think I'll be continuing with the

series. I'm not always a fan of dark stories, but when it works, it works. :)

Emily Sands says

The plot twists and turns on this wild horror ride. Enter the world of death dealers as Catrina introduces you to Luke, Corlina, and Darla. Follow Corlina and her friends as she deals with becoming a death dealer and leaving her healer past behind. A must read by an exceptional upcoming author.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to Full Fathom Five and NetGalley.)

“Whatever it takes,” I vowed.

This was an okay story, but the pace was a bit slow.

Colina started off as an understandable character; she'd lost her family, she was grieving, and she wanted revenge, but then by the end of the book she'd turned into a bit of a lunatic! She went from trying to avenge her parents deaths to doing some very bad things, and coming up with some very bad plans.

The storyline in this was about Colina wanting to become a death dealer so that she could avenge her families murders, and then turned into a hunt for a death dealer who had been kidnapped.. Colina seemed to get worse as her powers increased though, and she really did do some questionable stuff.

There was a little bit of romance, but unfortunately, it did not end well!

The ending to this had a surprise death, which I really didn't see coming! Colina's plans following this were not good though! I'm worried that she really has gone off the deep end now.

6 out of 10

Hannah says

I have received this copy free, In exchange for a honest review

I loved this, the romance, the powerful magic, the heroism and the revenge all mixed wonderfully, I really

liked Luke, he is the perfect book crush, he is definitely going on my Ficional boyfriends list :). Though I did have few problems with the main character, for the most part her actions where excusable but some of the ways she reacted were flat out stupid and heartless. Over all this book came together nicely, I'd recommend it to anyone who enjoys paranormal/horror books with some romance. But be prepared for a cliffhanger, that ending was crazy. I just have to read the next book!

Few extra comments I would like to add below in spoilers

(view spoiler)

Katie ® says

I was given this book to read for an honest review.

Wow, so where do I begin... Well let me begin this by saying that I have always stayed clear of books like Awakening. The reason why is because demons, the dead, ouija boards, possessions and anything having to do with conversing with the dead, has always scared me. Period. However, I gave this book a try. At some points I actually felt guilty reading it. Probably because of my own personal beliefs on this particular subject. Would I continue the series? I do not know. This is not because I didn't like the book. The book was actually great. I do feel though that I wasn't able to get really involved with it. This might go back to the guilt part, the question kept arising "Should I keep reading this?" It is sad I know. I did complete the book. There was just so much going on that kept pulling me in. The surprises and the characters. What will happen next? What is the next step she has to take in becoming a Death Dealer? I mean these questions were always on my mind. I read the book in 24 hours. I was actually surprised at how much I really enjoyed it. The author clearly states in the beginning of the book that there is some romance involved and so I looked forward to that. I really liked what I read when it came to Colina and Luke's relationship. It was sweet and very romantic. I did not like how Colina asked Luke for his help in making her a death dealer and then she complained about the process the whole time through. That bugged me a lot.

I was actually afraid sometimes, while I was reading, that some of the scenes would cajole a spirit to come to me in my room. I was a bit creeped out. Well, most of the time I was more than a bit creeped out. This was a good creeped out, not so much as something that would make me put the book away and then hide under the covers, afraid of the dark. I jumped a few times when I heard a noise or when my cat decided to jump up on the bed :). The author did well describing these scenes and so it was almost like me watching a movie. I liked that.

Now there are several things that I did not like. For instance, the fact that the author never really described what kind of world or environment the plot takes place. Is it in the future? Is it a whole different world entirely? Are there other groups with different powers around? She talks about police and humans but then she talks about guilds, death dealers and healers. I just wish there was more information on the world that the characters live in.

"A shiver ran up my spine." This was used a lot throughout the book. So much so that it began to bother me. Also, "Ghost of a smile" was used a lot as well.

In the end I really liked the book. Thank you Catrina for allowing me to be apart of this Read for Review!

Abbie says

(I received a copy from Netgalley, In exchange for an honest review.)

I felt quite sorry for the main character in this at the start, but I wasn't a huge fan of her. Unfortunately, as the book progressed, I liked her less and less.

This wasn't a bad read, but it did feel rather long. It dragged a little bit because of it, and felt like it took me days to read.

Overall, An okay read.

Katie ® says

I was given this book to read for an honest review.

Wow, so where do I begin... Well let me begin this by saying that I have always stayed clear of books like Awakening. The reason why is because demons, the dead, ouija boards, possessions and anything having to do with conversing with the dead, has always scared me. Period. However, I gave this book a try. At some points I actually felt guilty reading it. Probably because of my own personal beliefs on this particular subject. Would I continue the series? I do not know. This is not because I didn't like the book. The book was actually great. I do feel though that I wasn't able to get really involved with it. This might go back to the guilt part, the question kept arising "Should I keep reading this?" It is sad I know. I did complete the book. There was just so much going on that kept pulling me in. The surprises and the characters. What will happen next? What is the next step she has to take in becoming a Death Dealer? I mean these questions were always on my mind. I read the book in 24 hours. I was actually surprised at how much I really enjoyed it. The author clearly states in the beginning of the book that there is some romance involved and so I looked forward to that. I really liked what I read when it came to Colina and Luke's relationship. It was sweet and very romantic. I did not like how Colina asked Luke for his help in making her a death dealer and then she complained about the process the whole time through. That bugged me a lot.

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In the end I really liked the book. Thank you Catrina for allowing me to be apart of this Read for Review!

Amanda says

A paranormal story **unlike any other**. If you are looking for an original plot look no further. Awakening is a story filled with the need for revenge and a character who takes an ugly path in order to survive and avenge the deaths of loved ones. Filled with so many unexpected twists and unbearable pain. It is beautifully, yet horrifyingly descriptive. I couldn't put it down! Every single time I thought I was getting to a lull where I might be able to stop reading, the hooks dug in deeper.

Colina goes through some horrific trauma and the author portrays her going through PTSD in a such a raw way. It is a very realistic portrayal of someone going through so much pain at once. Colina undergoes quite the change as tragedy molds her into someone much stronger. I feel like witchcraft is portrayed exactly as it should be in this book, it doesn't come easy.

One thing I can say for sure is that this book is nothing like what I expected. I will be looking forward to more from this author.
