

## **Dancing Suns 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Release**

**The reviews are in - 5 out of 5 stars for Dancing Suns**

The epic journey of Serall, who may be the last human

*Dancing Suns: Book One Of The Zaddack Tales is the epic journey of Serall, who may be the last human in the universe, and her psychically linked Zaddack, an alien cross between wolf and leopard. Together, Serall and her Zaddack must seek the answer of a mystic prophecy, in order to find the Chosen Ones and lead them to the land of the blue sky. Exotic and vibrant, this alien tale of the far future is a superb taste of danger, adventure, and odyssey. Also very highly recommended is Karen Daniels' science fiction opus, Mentor's Lair.*

- Internet Book Watch

*Daniels writes with surprising imagery. The journey of our two female main characters take us through unimaginable loss, the meeting of mythical figures and the ultimate test of true faith in one's self and one's friends. The story is so captivating because Daniels takes us to a place that we could imagine easily, but she makes it come alive.*

- The Monitor

*Karen Daniels' background that includes past work as an exotic animal trainer serves her well with this epic story. The information on the zaddack was full, exhaustive, and painted a living, breathing picture in my imagination. Dancing Suns is a classic read.*

- The Midwest Book Review

Also by Karen Daniels

Mentor's Lair, Book Two of the Zaddack Tales  
Mindspark, Book Three of the Zaddack Tales

In-vitro Fertilization: The Ultimate Reality Game  
The Baby About to be Born, a story of spirit for adoptive and A.R.T families

# Dancing Suns

book one of the Zaddack Tales

Karen Daniels is the author of numerous works of nonfiction and fiction, including the three book *Zaddack Tales* series. An internationally published poet and creativity coach, Karen lives in California with her three children.

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# Dancing Suns

a novel

**Karen Daniels**

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Dancing Suns Release

Print Version: Original Cover Artwork  
"Oreseeker" by Peter Cooper

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*This 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Release of Dancing Suns  
is dedicated to Peter Cooper (1950-2010)*

Thank You  
to everyone in my life, dead and alive, who truly counts



## **Prologue**

### **The Chamber**

“Duty before desire.” Kempen stood and walked around the stone table in the elders’ council chamber. “Restayn, your daughter was chosen long before she was born. Indeed, long before we fled here to Riatha. Her fate is hers alone and your personal feelings will not alter that.” He looked down at the girl child, whose tiny shoulders might one day carry the burden of keeping the human race alive. “She is four. It’s time to begin.”

Restayn clutched his daughter, a living reminder of the woman who had died giving birth to their child. He shut his eyes for a moment, willing himself to remain calm.

“You are condemning Serall,” Restayn’s voice was sharp with pain, “to a childhood with no play, a life void of anything normal.” He looked away from the cherished green-eyed face of his daughter. “What if something goes wrong? You’re talking about exposing her to a wild zaddack!” His eyes pleaded. “What about the other children?”

“They’re gone from here. Long ago they were adopted out for their—for our, safety.” Kempen reached out, nearly touching the innocent child on the forehead. “If the worst should happen the future of our race will be in her hands.” He cleared his throat and stepped back. “This zaddack will be able to help her do what she must. I’m sure Serall will have better luck than I with the little beast.” He and Restayn both looked at the long red streaks on his arms where the zaddack’s claws had dug deep. “Restayn, the time has come; we will wait no longer. Prepare Serall now for Bonding.”

Restayn bathed his daughter in water scented with tabaweed leaves so that she would smell more like a wild creature than a human child. He braided her short red-blond hair and dressed her in a simple tunic, woven in reds and browns.

“Daddy, what is Bonning?” Serall smiled at the man who was both mother and father to her. She felt fancy in the special

new tunic when he lifted her down and carried her from the bathing area. Usually only Auntie Jamel did these things and that was never fun. Father was much nicer. She stuck her fingers in her mouth.

“This is a special ceremony, Serall. It’s called Bonding. Remember we talked about what you need to do today?”

She pulled her moist fingers out of her mouth and nodded.

“Be patient.” He patted her on the leg and his eyes clouded before he could hide it.

“Is it gonna hurt?”

“No,” he bent over and straightened her tunic. “It will not hurt.” He straightened and his hand swallowed hers as he held it.

He led her back to the council chamber which had been prepared by the seven elders. Kempen and the others stood in a semicircle. Serall stuck close to her father’s leg as he took her to stand next to a small table which held several items.

“Now, remember what we talked about?” He released Serall’s hand and set her shoulders straight.

She nodded shyly and stood quietly.

Restayn lit two small and one fat stalk of orange tallow, then stepped back and shut his eyes.

Serall looked around and saw that all present had their eyes closed. Kempen stepped forward and cleared his throat. She knew he was going to pray to Allthatis, the power that held the universe together.

“Ati, hear and answer.” Kempen’s voice was gruff. “We ask you to allow this child, known as Serall, to Bond with the zaddack known as Kafa. We ask that you lend your love and guidance so that the Bonding will be complete, a link which shall last as long as the two live.” After a moment of silence he opened his eyes, stepped back and nodded at Restayn. “Let it be done.”

Father picked up the first item; a tiny vest made of zaddack fur. He knelt down and repeated the Bonding words which had been given to them by the trader who sold them the zaddack and clothing. He looked his daughter in the eye.

“Serall, this shall be your zaddack skin, so that you will share not only heart and mind, but body as well.” He slipped her arms through the vest and settled it on her shoulders. “May you be

strength, one to the other, in times of need.” He tied the furry strap which closed it across her stomach.

The scent of the vest rose to Serall’s nose, a wild earthy pleasantness. It reminded her of the smell when she stomped on the crispenvines that grew in the mud near the water source.

She watched her father pick up the second item, the left boot. He got to his knees and placed her hand on his shoulder, then slipped the boot over her foot. His voice was subdued when he spoke.

“You two shall walk as one, being eyes and ears, one to the other.” He reached over and picked up the other furry boot. “She who has two legs shall walk with four. She who has four legs shall walk with two.” He pulled the right boot onto her foot. “Now you will walk each for the other.”

Serall didn’t understand what was really happening but she loved the softness of the boots on her feet. Her toes wriggled into the fur and it made her want to jump and run, but she stayed still as she had promised she would.

Father stepped back. He looked down at Serall and nodded.

She took several steps over to the elders and walked down the line bowing to each of them. Daddy had taught her it was a sign of respect, but her mind was elsewhere. She couldn’t stop thinking about how bouncy the fur under her feet felt. She wanted to test the boots outside. However, she walked obediently back to her father and bowed her head to him.

“You stand before me,” Restayn paused to take a deep breath before continuing, “as only one. You go now into the darkness to die in order to be transformed. You will emerge reborn. And the two will have become one. Sobeyit.”

He took her hand and led her to a small room off the council chamber, then nudged her inside. He did not enter but shut the wooden door behind, leaving her alone in the quiet darkened room.

“Daddy?” She turned. The dim light in the room came from several tallow sticks secured on the walls. She blinked and looked around but her eyes were not adjusted. Something hummed in her ears. It was then that she caught sight of the small kit. No more than several hand widths high, Kafa was a deep

brown ball of fluff, with spiky bristles on the top of her head and a scrawny tail.

Serall stood stalk still as she faced the strange creature. Her heart hammered. She saw the claws on the big paws and remembered the angry welts on Kempen's skin. She stiffened her arms against her sides.

Kafa moved then—right toward her. The kit neared and Serall wanted to squeeze her eyes shut to make it go away but she had told Father she wouldn't do that no matter how much she wanted to. The kit tumbled, stumbling on paws too large for her body. She fell forward and mewed mournfully.

“Oh!” Serall cried out with involuntary sympathy.

The zaddack pushed herself upward and sniffed Serall's feet, poking at the boot fur with her nose. Kafa moved her tiny head up and snuffled Serall's bare legs, then extended her raspy tongue and licked the exposed skin.

Serall giggled at the wet tickling. Without thought she reached out toward the bristled head and touched Kafa for the first time. There was softness, better than the fur under her feet because Kafa was warm.

The zaddack gently licked at the little girl's fingers.

Serall laughed and got down on the floor, stretching out to play with the small kit.

Kafa sat back, tilted her head and blinked her golden-yellow eyes.

Serall, drawn to the beautiful eyes, reached out her finger wanting to touch one but Kafa jerked back at the last moment.

Serall felt something funny in her head...something that had to do with the kit. Serall flushed, feeling hot, and rubbed her eyes with her fists. An orange ball appeared inside her head, an image like when she was imagining something she wanted. Her eyes opened wide in surprise. She hadn't been wishing for a ball. She didn't understand how it got there.

Kafa tilted her head, the golden eyes never leaving young Serall's face.

The soft fuzzy ball inside Serall's mind was warm and comforting. The globe grew bigger and bigger, tickling inside her head. Then she felt as if she was stretching toward the little zaddack, not just with her hand but with her insides. The vest

grew and became furry skin all over her body. She looked down and she had four legs instead of two and she felt strong. Her claws were sharp and she found herself looking at a little girl who was lying on the ground in front of her. She had itches on her belly and wished the little girl would scratch. The little girl started to float away.

Serall jerked and sat up, her heart pounding. She was herself again.

The kit bounced onto her lap and jumped up to lick the little girl's nose. Serall laughed and buried her hands and face in the fur. Kafa smelled like the vest, earthy fresh. The kit rolled over and Serall scratched her belly and under the chin right where she knew the itches were.

The baby zaddack splayed her paws in the air and blinked at the two-legged girl.

*Scratch good.* Kafa's thoughts floated into Serall's mind and it seemed the most natural thing in the world.

They were Bonded.

When they emerged from the darkened room Serall was anxious to show Father the new friend who leaned closely against her legs. She couldn't contain her excitement.

"Look, my new best friend," Serall said as she looked expectantly up at her father. "Can I keep her?"

He smiled and nodded though there were tears in his eyes. Cautiously he reached his hand toward Kafa, who growled, the bristles on top her head standing straight up. She snarled, showing her milk teeth and took a swipe at his hand with her claws. He yanked his fingers back.

"Serall, I need some of Kafa's tail fur. Please make her understand that it's okay for me to touch her."

Serall didn't know how she knew what to do but she thought at Kafa. *This is Daddy. He's our friend.* Serall felt the fright leave the zaddack. She nodded at her father.

Restayn reached out once more and this time Kafa allowed him to, though her hair remained standing on end. He opened his hand and the little creature sniffed deeply, accepting him as someone who belonged to Serall. He snipped a tuft of fur from Kafa's tail and set it on the table where a large stone bowl

held fire. Then he removed Serall's vest and boots.

She hoped he was going to give them back.

Father cut a small piece of Serall's hair, then tossed both snippets into the fire. The stench of burning hair filled the room. Serall held her nose and Kafa wrinkled hers and sneezed.

"Now, the two walk as one, Bonded, until the death of one releases the other." Father tossed the fur clothes onto the flames and the stench increased.

Serall stood with her hand on Kafa's bristled head, sad to see the vest and boots burning. But it would be worth it if she got to keep her new friend.

When the flames died down Restayn nodded toward Kempen and the leading elder walked over and picked up the two narrow tallow sticks.

"The girl known as Serall and the zaddack known as Kafa were once separate and alone as represented by these two individual stalks." He tossed the tallow sticks into the fire in the bowl. "Now they are joined, forever entwined, just as these two stalks now become one." The fat sizzled and spit, melting into a single large puddle of oil. "Sobeyit, it is done."

The Bonding ceremony was complete.

Serall watched Father's hands clench as he paced in front of the council of elders. "Duty, duty, duty. That's all I've heard since my daughter was born. You've been forcing me...her...to abide by your inhuman rules." He waved his hand toward Serall who was swinging her nine-year-old legs to and fro as she rested on a stone bench.

"Look at her, still a child with hardly any time for fun. Thus far I have agreed to all your requests." He clicked off his fingers one by one as he spoke. "I allowed her to Bond knowing that would make her forever different. She has studied Riathan culture and primitive medicine; I have taught her their system of

greetings. I have built the hovercraft and soon she will know the controls as well as she knows how to eat.” He spoke slowly and clearly, emphasizing the next words. “And I have helped her to understand that duty is paramount to anything else in one’s life.” His face was red. “But now you ask me to...” He turned on the elders. “I will not do this to her. This time I will not obey.” Restayn walked over and took Serall by the hand so they could leave.

“Restayn,” Kempen spoke before father and daughter had moved through the door. “If Serall is unprepared if and when danger comes, the extinction of the human race will be on *your* head.” Kempen rose and walked to Restayn. “You know that this survival trip,” he glanced down at Serall and altered his words, “this step in the training must be done.” He placed a firm hand on Restayn’s shoulder. “We have come too far to go back. Please.” His voice implored.

Restayn’s arms flexed with barely restrained force. The eyes which looked so softly at Serall pierced the air in front of Kempen. He yanked his shoulder free of the old man’s grip and spoke in a low pitched voice.

“Double darkness! If you listened to reason and gave up the weather sphere we would be safer. You know the Bioguards will track the field’s energy output and find us.” His finger punctured the air by Kempen’s chest. “Give up the weather sphere and there is a chance the Bioguards won’t find us. Then,” he looked angrily at Kempen, “this so called training would not be necessary.”

“Restayn, you realize we cannot risk decay of the human artifacts by exposing them to weather. You know very well we voted long ago and the weather sphere remains.” Kempen spoke with quiet authority. “Those objects are all we have left of old Earth. We are aware the sphere increases the risk of attack. However,” he cleared his throat, “we have been safe here on Riatha for two generations now. We believe the Bioguard danger has passed.”

“Then you and your council are all fools.” Restayn shook his head. “Wishing us safe does not make it so, just as wishing for home does not make Riatha’s green sky blue.”

“Yes, yes,” Kempen shrugged off Restayn’s remarks, “we know how you feel. You are not one to hide your thoughts.” He moved closer to Restayn. “I will debate this no longer. By your very words you claim we are in danger. So, on the chance you are right, this training must be done or if the worst happens, Serall will not be ready.” Kempen wove his fingers together as he spoke. “It is she who will suffer then.”

Restayn’s face flushed as he struggled within himself. After a long silence he poked Kempen’s chest.

“I will do my duty because I must. But,” he leaned his face in close, “if anything should happen to Serall, it is *you* who will have to answer to me.” His eyes held Kempen’s in their gaze.

“Sobeyit.” Kempen nodded to indicate he understood the implications.

Serall followed her father out of the council chamber and looked up. She squeezed with a young girl’s fingers. “It’s okay, Father.”

“No, honey, it’s not and I’m sorry.”

Several days later Father took Serall and Kafa far from the city on what was supposed to be an all day outing with a picnic. They ate a fine meal by the skinny trees and she held Father’s hand as they watched Kafa chase rainbow wings in the field. After a time he yawned.

“Serall, I’m thinking about a little nap.” There was a catch in his voice. He cleared his throat. “Why don’t you and Kafa go play for a while.”

“Okay, Daddy.” She and Kafa romped off and ended up exploring the other side of a large dune. For a long time they watched a sandcrawler as Serall built miniature forts which penned it in. The valiant creature just kept walking, taking one sandy dead end after the other. When they finally grew bored of the sandcrawler they returned to the picnic place. Serall galloped at Kafa’s side. Father was not where he’d been resting.

“Daddy?” Serall looked around. “Dad!” Her voice rose but there was no answer. “Are you hiding from us?” She giggled at the thought of playing with him.

“Kafa, find Daddy.” Serall smirked, wondering how Father could have forgotten that Kafa could find anything.



*Gone.* Kafa's thought feeling was quizzical.

"I know, he's hiding from us." She looked around realizing there was no real place to hide. Then it dawned on her that the dack they'd ridden out on was gone.

"Kafa, get my dad. Dad!" She shouted.

*Not here. Away.* Kafa sniffed the wind.

Serall felt like a baby when she had to blink back a tear that threatened to wet her cheek. She looked to the sky where the two suns were ready to set. That meant that soon it would be dark. They must have been playing for a long, long time. Maybe he'd gotten tired of waiting and left. Her stomach tightened.

"Father, where are you?" She cupped her hand and yelled through it. "Come back. I'm sorry I played so long. I'll be good. Come back." She shouted to empty air. She strained her ears, trying to fathom the silence. No voice called in return.

Kafa, go get my dad." Serall couldn't keep the edge of panic from her voice.

*Not leave you. Far.*

Serall dropped to her knees and curled her arms around Kafa's neck. What had she done to her father that was so bad? She shut her eyes and buried her face against Kafa so she could think. Surely if they'd just been playing too long he would have called her, so it had to be something far worse. Then she knew. On the ride out she had asked about her mother. And that always made Father sad. Serall choked back tears as she wiped her nose on her sleeve.

Now that she knew what she'd done wrong she felt a stab of hope. She shouted again. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I won't ask about Mother ever again."

There was still no answer. She waited for a long time, listening to the wind. Only when the suns began to set did she accept that he had truly left them and not even an apology was going to bring him back.

A rough warm tongue began soothing her. Kafa licked Serall's tears, rumbling deep in her throat, a gentle soothing sound. The girl quieted, as Kafa's thoughts cut through the pain.

*Kafa here. Always.* The warmth of her tongue was a familiar comfort.

Night descended, bringing darkness and strange noises. Serall lay close to Kafa, her hands clutching wads of fur. Her heart hammered against her chest and her belly ached as if the night darkness were seeping inside her. She squeezed her eyes shut, pretending she was home safe, sleeping on her bed mat like she did every night. Finally she slept against the furry shoulder that was soggy from bouts of tears.

Morning dawned with the suns bringing light. Serall and Kafa struggled in the direction of home, mile by mile. It hadn't seemed this far when Serall had been riding the dack, a large-hoofed running beast. With each step Serall walked she grew more and more angry with her father and soon the tears stopped, not to return. They ate nothing until Kafa ran down a small hedgehopper. Serall nibbled at some of the raw meat. It made her stomach queasy.

Serall walked on increasingly painful feet. Each step fueled her sense of hurt and betrayal. She'd decided by now that his leaving them had to be from something even worse than asking about Mother. She combed her memories and found nothing that would merit this kind of punishment. She glanced at Kafa, her only friend. Perhaps the reason she had no other playmates was because something was terribly wrong with her. Could it be something so horrible that she must be sent out in the wild to live or die away from her people?

Maybe she wasn't supposed to find her way home. Maybe whatever was wrong with her made even her father want never to see her again. He was always taking the time to explain all about the Riathans and their ways—maybe he had been telling her because he'd been planning all along to leave her and knew she'd have to go live with them someday. A day which had now come.

With this new thought she sat down hard on the wind cracked dirt. Despite Kafa's gentle urging Serall was unable to get herself to move. They remained there until night came once more. Her body ached with stiffness and cold but those pains felt like nothing compared with the deep black hole in her heart.

Serall and Kafa struggled the last mile into Rattthern. They were greeted with smiles and nods as they moved to the suspended

wooden walkways which were strung above the lower courtyards. Serall's stomach burned with hunger and a now familiar knot. During the last day of walking she had made up her mind. She would have her say. Then if Father wanted not to see her anymore he would have to tell her to her face. She didn't care. She had Kafa. They moved down the planks to the main courtyard below and walked into the food preparation area.

Auntie Jamel was, as usual, ordering the staff about. She frowned when Serall and Kafa entered with all their filth, giving no indication that she knew what the pair had just gone through. No doubt she hadn't missed Serall.

Serall went over and pulled a large slice of crusty brown bread off one of the loaves near the great ovens. The old woman that watched the loaves stared at her with keen eyes but said nothing. Serall stepped over to the cool storage bin and tossed a haunch to Kafa who grabbed it and went outside to eat. For herself Serall took out a chunk of mild dack cheese, the kind they always bought from the traders.

Auntie Jamel strode over and Serall could see she was about to receive a lecture about one thing or another. She clenched her fists till they felt hard and glared at the fat-plagued woman. For once, Auntie Jamel kept her mouth shut, retreating without so much as one word.

Serall ate the cheese and bread without even tasting. Then she marched outside to go in search of Father. She passed Kafa who was shredding the meat and keeping bloodflies away with her flicking tail. The zaddack's mind churned amidst Serall's agitation.

Serall knew to be proper before presenting herself to Father she should bathe first but she didn't care. She found him coming from the elders' chamber.

When Restayn saw her, his face lit up and Serall felt an old part of her running toward him and throwing herself in his arms. But she kept her painful feet planted. Dark circles under his eyes made him look as if someone had hit him. She tried not to care. Her body stiffened when he bent and hugged her with great affection.

Serall allowed his embrace and for a moment she took pleasure at the hurt she saw in his eyes when he drew back. That

was immediately replaced by her wanting him to pick her up and hug her so tight she couldn't breathe. She crushed that wish and spoke.

"I hate you."

A great flash of pain jerked across his face as surly as if Serall had slapped him.

"What's so wrong with me that you left us out there?"

An answer formed on his lips but Kempen stepped up before Father's words could become speech.

Kempen's look appraised Serall and his eyes lit with an instructor's gleam. "Good job, Restayn." He clapped her father on the back and walked away.

Father waited until Kempen was well away before he spoke. "I'm sorry, Serall. There is nothing wrong with you." He glanced at Kempen's retreating form. "It was my duty. I had no choice." He opened his hands as if offering her his words. They weren't enough.

Her survival training had begun.

*End sample*