



## Dukkha: The Suffering

*Loren W. Christensen*

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## **Dukkha: The Suffering** Loren W. Christensen

In the course of a single week, everything Sam Reeves believed in, everything he knew, everyone he trusted, all would be put on the line. For a family he never knew he had. Detective Sam Reeves, a 34-year-old martial arts instructor, has a solid fifteen-year record as a good police officer with the Portland Police Department. For the first time, Sam is forced to take a life in the line of duty and despite the findings of "good shoot" he struggles to recuperate psychologically from the killing. Facing up to his fears Sam returns to work and then within days is forced to fire his weapon again-- killing two more people. With his spirit almost broken, Sam meets a stranger ... a man who claims to be his father. "Impossible," Sam reasons--his father died in a North Vietnamese prison camp ... a long time ago. This odd man, named Samuel, is as convincing as he is quirky and is revealed to be a phenomenal martial artist, the likes of which Detective Sam Reeves has never encountered. This 'Samuel' comes out of nowhere, equipped with a family in Vietnam and a daughter named Mai who is about to graduate from Portland State University. With a series of interlocked events of violence: a revenge-seeking uncle, the destruction of his martial arts school, his new father's connection to some lethal Vietnamese outlaws, Sam's life spirals into a dreadful new direction. This high-octane martial arts thriller will have you gripped from the start. You'll never complain about a hard week again.

## **Dukkha: The Suffering Details**

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Author : Loren W. Christensen

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# From Reader Review Dukkha: The Suffering for online ebook

## Katy says

**Book Info:** Genre: Thriller

Reading Level: Adult

Recommended for: Fans of thrillers, police procedurals, those interested in martial arts

Trigger Warnings: violence, fighting, killing (murder, execution, accidental), maiming

**My Thoughts:** Another book (one among many) it has taken me way too long to find the time to read.

This is an ARC, so I will assume it was fixed before it was released, but it doesn't even look like a spellcheck was done on this bad boy, based on things like "laugher" for "laughter". I also saw some fairly common ones, like "misses" (plural for miss) to indicated a married woman ("missus" or "Mrs."). I also saw some where Google could have been this guy's friend, like "Calvin Kline" ("Calvin Klein") and "Jeff Goldbloom" ("Jeff Goldblum"). Even "dukkha" is initially spelled "dukha". Still, as I said, I was reading an ARC, so let's assume these things are fixed, just to be fair. I mostly mention them because they made me laugh.

Of course, I laughed a lot while I was reading this book. It wasn't that it was a funny book, but there was a lot of humor in it. Like this conversation that Sam has with his boss, Mark.

I stand. "You know that saying 'God never gives you anymore (sic) than you can handle?'"(sic)

Mark moves over to the door and opens it. "Yes."

"It's a bunch of shit."

See what I mean? Humor. Of course, it's about a police officer, so there is a lot of dark, cop humor, and then there is Samuel with all his quotes and jokes, like, "If at first you don't succeed, you probably shouldn't be a skydiver." It's also very obvious that the author has spent a lot of time studying martial arts, and he is obviously diluting his knowledge and ability between Sam and Samuel. I don't know if he plans to make a series of this, but I know I would love to learn more about Samuel, find out what happens next, and if he and Mai ever end up together. And, of course, what happens to Mai's cat, Chien.

So, yes, despite any issues with the ARC, which should definitely *not* stop you from trying this book, I would heartily recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good thriller, police procedural, and/or martial-arts thriller. It's a highly entertaining book, and one I enjoyed a lot. Hopefully you will as well

**Disclosure:** I received an e-ARC via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

**Synopsis:** In the course of a single week, everything Sam Reeves believed in, everything he knew, everyone he trusted, all would be put on the line. For a family he never knew he had.

Detective Sam Reeves, a 34-year-old martial arts instructor, has a solid fifteen-year record as a good police officer with the Portland Police Department. For the first time, Sam is forced to take a life in the line of duty and despite the findings of "good shoot" he struggles to recuperate psychologically from the killing. Facing up to his fears Sam returns to work and then within days is forced to fire his weapon again—killing two more people.

With his spirit almost broken, Sam meets a stranger ... a man who claims to be his father. "Impossible," Sam reasons—his father died in a North Vietnamese prison camp ... a long time ago. This odd man, named Samuel, is as convincing as he is quirky and is revealed to be a phenomenal martial artist, the likes of which Detective Sam Reeves has never encountered.

This 'Samuel' comes out of nowhere, equipped with a family in Vietnam and a daughter named Mai who is about to graduate from Portland State University. With a series of interlocked events of violence: a revenge-seeking uncle, the destruction of his martial arts school, his new father's connection to some lethal Vietnamese outlaws, Sam's life spirals into a dreadful new direction. This high-octane martial arts thriller will have you gripped from the start. You'll never complain about a hard week again.

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### **Jessica Bronder says**

Sam Reeves is a detective in Portland. While on the job he is forced to shoot someone and is having trouble psychologically trying to get over the shooting. After everything is over, it is deemed a good shot and he is allowed to return to the force. But Sam is a broken man. So when a stranger introduces himself as Sam's father, who was supposed to have died in a Vietnam POW camp, Sam is reluctant to accept this information.

Sam tries to accept that Samuel, his father, survived and had another family. But things are not going to go smoothly for a family reunion. Samuel has connections to some Vietnam criminals that are hunting him down. Sam life is going to go from bad to worse. The question is if he is going to make it out the other side of this fight in one piece.

It is clear that Loren has a background in police work, martial arts, and as a Vietnam veteran. This is clear in the writing, there is no hokey fights, loose police procedures, and misinterpreted war stories. His writing is magnificent. I was sucked in right away and couldn't wait to see what was going to happen next. I loved the black humor from Sam; it made the book feel real.

I can't believe that it has taken me this long to read and review this book. The good part is that I won't have to wait long to read the next books in this series. This is one book that covers so many genera's that I think everyone will like it. It's a one that you don't want to miss.

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### **Sunflower says**

I just finished reading the paperback and thought it was a great read. I was intrigued that the author, Loren Christensen, holds 11 black belts, and is a retired police officer. He has also written many other non-fiction books and magazine articles. His life experiences come shining through in this book. The story line is about one week in the life of Detective Sam Reeves of the Portland, Oregon police department. In the course of a single week, everything Sam Reeves believed in, everything he knew, everyone he trusted, all would be put on the line for a family he never knew he had. With a series of interlocking events of violence: a revenge-seeking uncle, the destruction of Sam's martial arts school, his new father's connection to some lethal Vietnamese outlaws, Sam's life spirals into a dreadful new direction. This high-octane martial arts thriller will have you gripped from the start. I don't think you will ever complain about a hard week again after reading this book. I'm looking forward to the next Sam Reeves read.

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### **Veach Glines says**

An interesting "testosterone" book by a local (Portland, OR) author. His action scenes are numerous and lengthy (some too much so) albeit they contain the requisite suspense build and culmination. The premise is an interesting version of "disgruntled hero", there are some good-interesting characters (sadly none were fantastic and many supporting characters were far too stereotypical).

I may read the second in this series just because the continued story will take our disgruntled hero to a country where he does not speak the language and I'm interested to see how the author handles this challenge.

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### **Goran Powell says**

Dukkha is the first in the Sam Reeves trilogy. A tough Portland cop with a conscience meets some incredible martial artists from Vietnam who turn out to be family. They must combine all their skills to escape the reach of bad guys both in the US and Vietnam. The book takes place in a single week and the action is unrelenting with exciting martial arts and police situations coming thick and fast.

Dukkha is Loren Christensen's first novel but by no means his first book. He is the author of over 40 martial arts titles, and a former cop. And a Vietnam vet! So as you'd expect, the police-work and martial arts feel very real and credible. However it is the humor and lightness of touch in the family relationships that makes Dukkha such a likeable and rewarding read.

At the end of the first book Sam Reeves looks set for a trip to Vietnam that looks set to open up a whole new dimension to this promising trilogy. Congratulations to Loren Christensen on his gripping new series.

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### **Glen says**

Sam Reeves is a Portland, Oregon, policeman. He gets involved in a couple of shootings. During one of them, he accidentally kills a child hostage. The local journalists turn the whole town against him. His liberal girlfriend leaves him. He spends all his time moping around.

Then he meets a mysterious sneaker wearing man who claims to be his father. He meets his beautiful Vietnamese stepsister too.

Some Vietnamese gangster is trying to kill the whole family, and Sam has to help his father take down the bad guys.

There's a lot of martial arts involved. It's kind of strange seeing the protagonist in a martial arts thriller be the worst martial artist among all the heroes.

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### **Alain Burrese says**

I finished “Dukkha the suffering: An Eye For An Eye” by Loren W. Christensen yesterday and have to say that I really, really enjoyed this first “Sam Reeves Martial Arts Thriller.” The book is about a Portland police officer, Sam Reeves, and the events surrounding his being forced to take lives on the job as well as discovering family members he never knew he had. Family members that are caught up in a revenge-targeted series of violence that not only threatens their lives but now Reeves' as well.

I've been reading things by Christensen for over thirty years now, and have even appeared in a couple of his books and got to become friends with him. However, all of those were martial art, self-defense, and law enforcement related. This is the first novel he's written. Fortunately, he wrote about what he knows extremely well, martial arts and police work. His background in these areas shines through and not only makes this gritty novel entertaining, but very realistic with the police work and fight scenes.

Recently, a review of my novel stated that the reviewer thought I spent a bit too much time on the “Conscience” part, but really liked the action. I think that reviewer might say the same with this novel, and I'd disagree. I liked the fact that Christensen provided such angst within Reeves when it came to killing. It showed him as an honest police officer and lifetime martial artist, who really follows the “Way” and isn't all about the “Kill em all and let God sort em out” mentality.

Besides the very descriptive fight scenes, I also really enjoyed the other martial art elements woven through the story. As a life long martial artist and instructor, I could really relate. I'm sure many other martial artists and police officers will also relate and enjoy this tale. The book was very well paced and had enough twists and turns to keep the reader guessing and wanting to find out what happens next. Sure, there were a couple things I “figured” before being shown, but that didn't distract from the story in the least, but rather just lent to being fully absorbed in the action packed thriller.

If you like martial art thrillers, this is a great read. If you just like thrillers, it is a great read, but even better for those of us who study and enjoy martial arts. Highly recommended and I can't wait to read the next adventure Sam Reeves finds himself in.

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### **Shawn says**

Loren Christensen, as I am sure you are well aware, has written dozens of non-fiction books over the years dealing with law enforcement; Far Beyond Defensive Tactics: Advanced Concepts and Tricks for Cops on the Street, self-defense and the martial arts; How to Fight the Pain Resistant Attacker, and explored the realities of violence and the mind with; Warrior Mindset, just to name a few of his many books. And now he has taken the leap into fiction with his first novel. And with that being said, I have to admit that for a first work of fiction, Loren makes his first novel look like it is the high point in the illustrious career of many a celebrated novelist who have been writing for decades. Yes, this book is that good!

Now I am not one to give away spoilers, but I will say this.....

Loren immediately grabs the readers attention and manages to easily keep it throughout the entire novel. So

much so that I was actually quite disappointed when I reached the final page as I realized that the story was over. WHAT, I wanted to read more and now it looks like I am going to have to wait! ARRGHHHHHHH! Loren seamlessly integrates law enforcement, martial arts, and a bit of "normal life" into a very exciting and engaging story of a law enforcement officer whose fifteen year career suddenly and dramatically takes a radical turn after a righteous and lawful use of force incident, his first but sadly not his last, and all of the fallout that comes from it and a second incident not long after.

What made this story so compelling to me was the way Loren portrayed law enforcement and the martial arts in such a realistic manner and not in the vein of so many authors that seem to take the fantastical Hollywood-esque approach that usually is not only not realistic, but so fantastical that even George Lucas of Star Wars: The Original Trilogy fame would be bewildered as to the nonsensical ramblings and totally unrealistic action sequences.

I was very excited to hear that this is the first novel in a planned trilogy and am anxiously awaiting the next installment in the series. If Loren keeps up the good work with the next two novels like he did this one, he is sure to make it on numerous bestseller lists. Heck, maybe even someone from Hollywood will take notice and will soon see it adapted for the silver screen. (Fingers Crossed)

Shawn Kovacich  
Martial Artist/Krav Maga Instructor  
Author and Creator of the Achieving Kicking Excellence book and DVD series.

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### **Susan Peterson says**

Not many people can write both fiction and nonfiction well. Loren Christensen can. I've been reading his nonfiction for some time now, and have always found it straight-forward and informative. His new novel, Dukkha, has a similar no-nonsense feel to it. His fight scenes are hard and realistic, and so is his look at the inner world of his protagonist, a cop suffering after having to shoot someone in the line of duty. I don't normally read thrillers, but I picked this one up because of my interest in martial arts. I have to admit I lost a couple hours of sleep to it. I had that much trouble putting it down. It's a nicely done debut novel.

Susan Lynn Peterson  
author of Western Herbs for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes  
and Legends of the Martial Arts Masters

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### **FicusFan says**

I received this book from the publisher to review.

I enjoyed it. It was an interesting mystery/thriller with martial arts added. It is set in modern day Portland, Oregon, with the main character Sam Reeves a police officer. Besides his official job, he also owns a martial arts studio, where he teaches a core group of committed students. He uses his teaching to help his group find their individual styles and a positive philosophy of life.

Sam is not a perfect hero, he has personal and professional problems that he struggles with, and that make for an interesting story and character development. He has a shadowy family tie back to Vietnam that he discovers as the story unfolds.

The book is peopled with interesting supporting characters and opponents. The story weaves Sam's personal and professional problems to create a compelling read. A killing on the job threatens Sam's standing and self-regard. The story explores Sam's feelings, his use of martial arts, and his family as he tries to survive a hostile press, self-doubt, and a determined killer who is not done targeting what Sam loves.

The writing is very smooth and the book reads quickly. Sam is a mix of both progressive and traditional outlooks that produce a decent man trying to find his way in the world, while creating the least harm. His family is quirky and I would be interested in reading more about him.

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### **Andrew says**

One of the best thrillers I have read for a long time. Loren Christensen's own experiences ensure that this is not a sensationalist book nor is it cheesy kung fu. Instead it moves along at a fast pace, introduces believable characters and the story remains credible. I enjoyed the descriptions of Sam's martial arts (especially when we realise he is but a novice compared to Samuel) and how he manages this against his life as a police officer. But above all else I appreciated the strong emotional, humorous and moral elements: I felt Sam's pain after the shootings; his relationships were believable; I loved Samuel's quotes; and the difficulty in coming to terms with his newly discovered family were well related.

I can't wait to read the next in the series.

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### **Bert Edens says**

It's always interesting when you take an author who is well-known in his specific industry for his non-fiction output, as well as his knowledge of his particular bailiwick, and have him put out a novel. Just because the author knows his business, so to speak, doesn't mean he can write fiction.

That said, I really enjoyed this book by Loren Christensen. He has created a character, Sam Reeves, that you care about, you sympathize with, want to do well, all the levels you want. Reeves is strong and yet not superhuman. He's very human and fallible, and yet manages to somehow do what needs to be done. Of course, as you would expect from someone with Christensen's real-world credentials, the police and martial arts details are spot-on and very believable, with just a hint of mysticism to keep it interesting.

I also like Samuel and Mai, and can't wait to see where Christensen takes them all in future novels. At least I hope there will be future novels, as I will certainly be reading them.

My only quibble, even though the title itself should reflect the bad week that Reeves was having, is that it almost seemed like there was too much going on at times. It also reflects the downside of the first person narrative, as some loose ends get tied up without the protagonist's first-hand knowledge, so those have to be explained by other characters.

That said, this is highly recommended for fans of martial arts, law enforcement or thrillers in general. You won't be disappointed.

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### **Benjamin Cheah says**

Sam Reeves is in for the worst week of his life.

That right there sums up this novel. Sam Reeves, Portland detective and martial arts instructor, is recovering from a shooting. When he returns to duty, life quickly makes a turn for the worse. While he reconnects with a family he never knew he had, he soon makes powerful enemies who will stop at nothing to destroy everything he holds dear.

Dukkha captures the reader from the get-go and never lets up. The characters are highly believable humans, with understandable motivations and distinct characterisation. The novel also provides an insider's look at police work, and the cost of constant exposure to violence and the dark side of humanity. This grim outlook is occasionally broken up by moments of humour and occasional glimpses of humanity, especially from people the reader least expects to demonstrate any.

The action scenes, in particular, are highly realistic. Christensen clearly knows his stuff, and spares no effort in describing the reality of combat. There's little slick and polish here. It's brutal, knock-down drag-on desperation with characters doing their level best to survive.

For all that, this book isn't for everyone. This novel is basically Bad Stuff Happens to Sam Reeves, and the plot arc can be summed up as Even Worse Stuff Happens. Sam Reeves is less protagonist as viewpoint character, losing control over most of his life. I didn't find it a problem, but I imagine some readers would prefer a protagonist who actively shaped the direction of a story instead of being the designated target.

Also, the fight scenes, while realistic, occasionally swerve into the realm of Chinese martial arts cinema. Especially near the end, when Reeves confronts high-level martial arts experts. There are flying kicks, (almost) unreal levels of stamina and damage resistance, obscure techniques that may (or may not) work in the real world, and now and then I keep asking myself why Reeves just won't tend things with bone-breaking or lethal force strikes. But then, Reeves is, if anything, the least skilled combatant among the experts in the novel.

One last aspect. While this is marketed as a thriller, fantasy and mystical elements do show up. Meditation, healing powers and other such abilities appear as the week drags on. People looking for gritty, ultra-realistic thrillers would be thrown off, especially given the tone of the rest of the story.

Overall, though, this is a fine fiction debut, and I look forward to reading Christensen's future fiction.

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### **Sunflower says**

One of the best thrillers I've read in a long time. This is Loren Christensen's first novel. Of course, he has written a galzillion Martial Arts books, earned 11 black belts, and was a police officer over 25 years. So he really has a handle on the adventures of Sam Reeves, a 34-year-old martial arts instructor and detective. The

story opens as Sam was forced to take a life in the line of duty and subsequently suffers psychologically from this killing. He returns to work and within days he kills two more people. His spirit is broken. He meets his biological father "out of no where" whom he thought died in Vietnam in a prison of war camp. Samuel, the father, is a martial artist extraordinaire and is in town for a daughter's graduation from local university. With a series of interlocked events: a revenge-seeking uncle, the destruction of his martial arts school, his new fathers' connection to some lethal Vietnamese outlaws, Sam's life spirals into a dreadful new direction. This high-octane thriller will have you gripped from the start. You'll never complain about a hard week again.

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### **Brenda says**

In this first installment of the Dukkha series, Detective Sam Reeves's world is shattered in just one week. All the events that have taken place in this one week are connected. He is a detective and he is also a martial arts instructor. He is also learning his about past family life and dealing with Vietnamese outlaws at the same time while struggling to survive and keep his martial arts school afloat. This book is full of action and is will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Brenda L. Gerber – Instructor and student in both Tai Chi Chuan and Qigong

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