Condemned and shunned for black magic, Rachel Morgan has three days to get to the annual witches’ conference and clear her name, or be trapped in the demonic ever-after . . . forever after.

But a witch, an elf, a living vampire, and a pixy in one car going across the country? Talk about a recipe for certain disaster, even without being the targets for assassination.

For after centuries of torment, a fearsome demon walks in the sunlight—freed at last to slay the innocent and devour their souls. But his ultimate goal is Rachel Morgan, and in the fight for survival that follows, even embracing her own demonic nature may not be enough to save her.

My Personal Review:
About two years ago, Ms. Harrison teased her blog followers about an upcoming book involving Rachel, Trent, and Jenks on a road trip headed out west. Fast forward to now as Book 9 has finally been released. If you follow Ms. Harrison, you know that she touts this particular book as her favorite of the series. As a fan since 2005, I can say its without a doubt my new favorite as well. It took six books, but Book 3 has finally been trumped.

We have Rachel and Jenks trekking out west for what she tries to convince herself will be a pardon with the Coven of Moral and Ethical Standards for using black magic. Oh yeah, and she has her brothers wedding to attend, too. Trent Kalamack also needs to get to the west coast, though its for personal reasons. Hes keeping mum on the details; however, he will accompany Rachel to her pardon (more like her trial as far as he is concerned) in an attempt to vouch for her. Rachel is banned from flying commercially and Trent is limited to travelling by land. Neither can get out
west without the other. If Trent doesn't make his deadline, hell miss out on the most important opportunity to help his race. If Rachel loses, she says hello to Big Al and the Ever-After FORever-after.

Joined later by Ivy, Pierce, a surprise Coven member, and a few assassins trying to stop either Trent or Rachel in their tracks, we end up with an American Inderlander Road Trip...from Hell. Aside from the banter amongst themselves, they later run into a new demon, a Pale Demon, who can walk in the sun and must eat living souls to sustain himself. Hes so dangerous that even the demons sealed him away, but upon his unexpected release he causes plenty of ruckus on both sides of the lines in more ways than one, proving to be a bit too much to handle for our favorite witch/demoness.

Character development, magic, action, comedy, drama, romance--these elements have been what keeps the storyline going and makes it so special for fans of this series. Harrison hits all of that in her writing. She addresses several particular issues when it comes to Rachels relationships, as well as the relationships between the people around her.

While not trying to spoil much here (feel free to skip this paragraph if youre worried), youre certainly strapped in for a roller coaster ride in terms of Rachels love life. If you thought it was crazy before, youre in for it now. While Ive been a card-carrying Trent and Rachel supporter since Book 1, theres attention given to her relationships with him, Pierce, Ivy, and Al too. I doubt thats very surprising for those who have read the previous books though. Its all quite complicated and I have a hard time imagining how Kim plans to iron out everything. Like any fan, of course I have certain hopes.

Relationship dynamics evolve as much as the characters, and I think it is for the better. Everyone in one way or another is growing in this book, even the demons. New and important characters are introduced as well. You find yourself surprised as you sympathize and even start to like particular characters that you may not have cared for in the beginning. Harrison does well with fleshing out their personalities, revealing them to be more complex than they seem. Throughout this book the lines of black and white arent so clear anymore, though certain characters do *finally* pay consequences for their actions. People--and I mean species in general--are who they are, but the issue of nature vs. nurture is still there.

Acceptance is a major theme this time around, along with trust and vulnerability. We see Rachel making smarter choices and tapping more into her demonic nature. She and Trent have to learn to work together and trust one another. If youre a Trent fan, hes here in spades and youll never tire of him. You can see a mile away any opportunity when Rachel will ogle him, which is all in good fun of course. New questions arise for the demons and the Ever-After. Jenks evolves too, and hes still some of the best comic relief throughout the book. Youll love him per usual, if not a little more. We get more Ivy focus with the good old-fashioned teamwork that we loved
from the beginning of the series, and more light is shone on her relationship with Rachel. All fans should really enjoy this book as well because we learn a few new things about him as he helps Rachel harness her demonic powers. Even Newts character improves immensely. You can read it yourself to learn why. I am not the biggest fan of Pierce, but he is slightly more bearable this time around, too, and thats saying something. I found his presence in Black Magic Sanction absolutely smothering, almost ruining my enjoyment of that book.

Overall, I thought the book was pretty solid, but some instances were a little too convenient.

*****MINOR SPOILERS**********************
Like in terms of Trents quest. Realistically, why what he was after wasnt being monitored 24/7 until his deadline passed was beyond me. That needed more explanation.

I also wonder why Harrison doesnt exploit elven super-speed a little more considering they can travel really fast from one spot to another.

*****END MINOR SPOILERS*******************

I read it in 2 evenings. However, I was breezing along until the last third, where all of a sudden it came to a screeching halt. It couldnt have been helped, but gears switched a little too suddenly and I had a hard time wanting to follow it. It wasnt that I was uninterested in the subject matter. I just wasnt interested right then. Black Magic Sanction in comparison was all over the place, but that was easier for me because that was the established pace. My annoyance with Pierce was the only thing slowing me down there. However, after I finished Pale Demon, I went back to re-read the last third and I found it *very* engaging after all, so if this happens to you while reading it, see if that works. For other fans who read the book, it may be the opposite and the last third will be the easiest to read. Regardless, I have to say that I found the last 30-40 pages nothing short of epic. Harrison is full of surprises alright!

I have to admit, I was a little sad when I finished reading it. Loose ends are starting to tie up and this is the first time where I felt the series slightly begin to wind down. There are new obstacles and challenges and arguably a new direction for the story to take, but you definitely reflect a bit about how far things have come since Dead Witch Walking. I look forward to Book 10, but Im not quite sure it can top Pale Demon so Im anticipating it slightly less. Even still, The Hollows is my favorite series and theres something or another that I enjoy in each book, so I expect nothing less in that aspect. In the meantime, the fan in me is actually pretty sated right now. It was worth the wait, Kim!

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Pale Demon (The Hollows, Book 9) by Kim Harrison - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!