

Destiny's Damned

Shawna Ryan

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"[H]e suddenly realized the hot, sweaty body above him was, most probably, his murderer," the author writes. "His strength waning....he felt only a sting, heard but a thud, as a six-inch knife severed his finger tip."

Destiny's Damned is the first book in a trilogy by Shawna Ryan. Monsignor Patrick Bodowski has gone to San Francisco after stealing a document from the Vatican that will be the undoing of Christianity. Meanwhile, someone *must* recover the document and is killing to protect Christianity. Eric, a reporter who was writing an article on the similarity between pagan worship and Christian ritual, is brutally murdered. His brother Alex investigates the murder, accompanied by Sharon, an attorney, and Kevin, an expert in mythology. As readers wonder whether one of them will be next, the murderer claims one victim after another. Assisted by Lieutenant Detective Sybil Meter, Alex, Sharon, and Kevin close in on the killer, surrounded by danger, mystery, and mayhem.

In his search for the truth, Patrick the priest is shaken by what the document reveals, and even attends a pagan worship ceremony where he learns how similar pagan worship is to Christianity. There the pagan priest declares, "After this last supper Our God and Savior gave up his life so that when we appear before God in judgment at the end of the world, we will be spared the punishment of hell and will ascend into Heaven. Appearing to some as a heavenly bull on which He also rode, Mithra slayed himself as sacrifice. Appearing to others as man, Mithra was crucified."

Destiny's Damned is a tension-filled story. But be warned, it is also a dark and violent tale, with graphic scenes of murder, mutilation, and sexual bondage. Further, it incorporates historical fiction regarding the Roman Empire and Christianity in a believable manner, so it is important to remember that this is *fiction*. While it is generally well-written, the book's language is often heavy and difficult to read, and sometimes noticeably short on connectives such as prepositions, conjunctions, and auxiliary verbs. Still, it keeps readers turning the pages and reveals the mystery only at the very end. Characterization, as in most thrillers, is minimal, but the horror, repulsion, and suspense are expressed as the author intended.

This may not be the next blockbuster bestseller, and readability might be improved, but it is one to read for those who enjoy dark, horrific tension.

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