



The Fallen

Tarn Richardson

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Satanic rituals, vestments dripping with blood, and a battlefield of corpses. It's World War I, and the Inquisition is still hard at work protecting the Vatican from the heretics in its midst. This is the rich soil that Tarn Richardson's paranormal fantasy *The Fallen* sinks its roots into. This second installment in the Darkest Hand trilogy keeps the pages turning.

The Darkest Hand, a brotherhood of traitorous priests, has gathered to begin resurrecting Satan's army on the Russian front. Their ritual is powerful, but only sets the apocalyptic wheels in motion. On the other side, the Inquisition tracks the dark forces, attempting to find their source. The only clue is in a secret letter that both sides are eager to find—and the outcome will decide more than the outcome of the war in Europe.

The task falls on Poldek Tacit, a determined but unorthodox inquisitor. He's less interested in redeeming himself than protecting Isabella, an old flame who helps him track a trail of hideously mutilated corpses to the center of the conspiracy in the Vatican. The Antichrist's sacrificial victims are everywhere Tacit and Isabelle turn. Not for the faint of heart, *The Fallen* continually ups the ante—and the body count—as Tacit draws closer to the conspiracy's center.

Richardson is a disciplined, focused writer who balances quick pacing with ghoulish descriptions. He uses deft historical and architectural detail to paint a picture of 1915 Italy. Packed with vivid descriptions and heart-pumping action, *The Fallen* is a twisted, thrilling nightmare.

CLAIRE RUDY FOSTER (March/April 2017)

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