ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

The Rising
Ron Toppings
CreateSpace
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Five Stars (out of Five)

US Army Special Forces and twenty-first century inquisitor Clay Hawker must stop the Apocalypse.

Ron Toppings, former US Army counterintelligence special agent, writes like an expert drag-race driver doing a burnout. Gaining traction for *The Rising*, he lays hot, smoking ink on the beginning pages which powerfully describe a botched exorcism.

After his wife and child are viciously slain by a demon, Sergeant Clay Hawker becomes part of the modern Holy Order of the Inquisition, a top-secret group that kills vampires and demons and keeps the world safe from other malevolent creatures. Evil forces (human and non-human) are gathering in strength and numbers never seen before. Hawker and his team must prepare themselves for a battle on Earth against the armies and minions of hell.

Toppings sets and maintains an edge-of-the seat pace in the tradition of movie director J. J. Abrams and thriller author James Patterson with prose that is sparse and succinct. In one instance, Toppings writes from the perspective of Baraxus, a demon two priests try to exorcise: "The last time he had escaped to torment these monkeys was during the Middle Ages. Baraxus had a great time then until those accursed priests had sent him back to hell…'You are nothing but insects…Stupid monkeys!' he yelled in a hate filled voice. For the millionth time he wondered how God could ever expect him to bend his knee to these inferior creatures."

The Rising contains the best elements of supernatural horror thrillers and action novels. Readers will be treated to a successful cross between William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*, Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and Don Pendleton's Mack Bolan series. *The Rising* is jam-packed with terrifying scenes of demon possession, sociopathic vampires, and remorseless werewolves, along with realistic portrayals of special ops, weapons use, and hand-to-hand combat.

For example, the following passage describes Hawker's expertise with a handgun: "With

auto-pistol in his right hand, Hawker reached into the wine rack and pulled out a bottle with his left hand…tossed the bottle over the back of the heads of the young men sitting on the couch…While the men's eyes were distracted and staring at the shattered bottle, Hawker raised the Beretta and starting with the man sitting in the recliner, he worked from left to right. There were three 'phuts' in rapid succession, all head shots."

Hawker is a character who will quickly become beloved by readers. The concept of the Vatican enlisting elite military personnel for a modern Holy Inquisition to protect the world from things that go bump in the night is an original and fun idea. The author's experience in Army counterintelligence balances the supernatural aspects of *The Rising* with authentic military knowledge and action. Hopefully, Toppings will bring back Hawker and his team for further adventures.

Lee Gooden