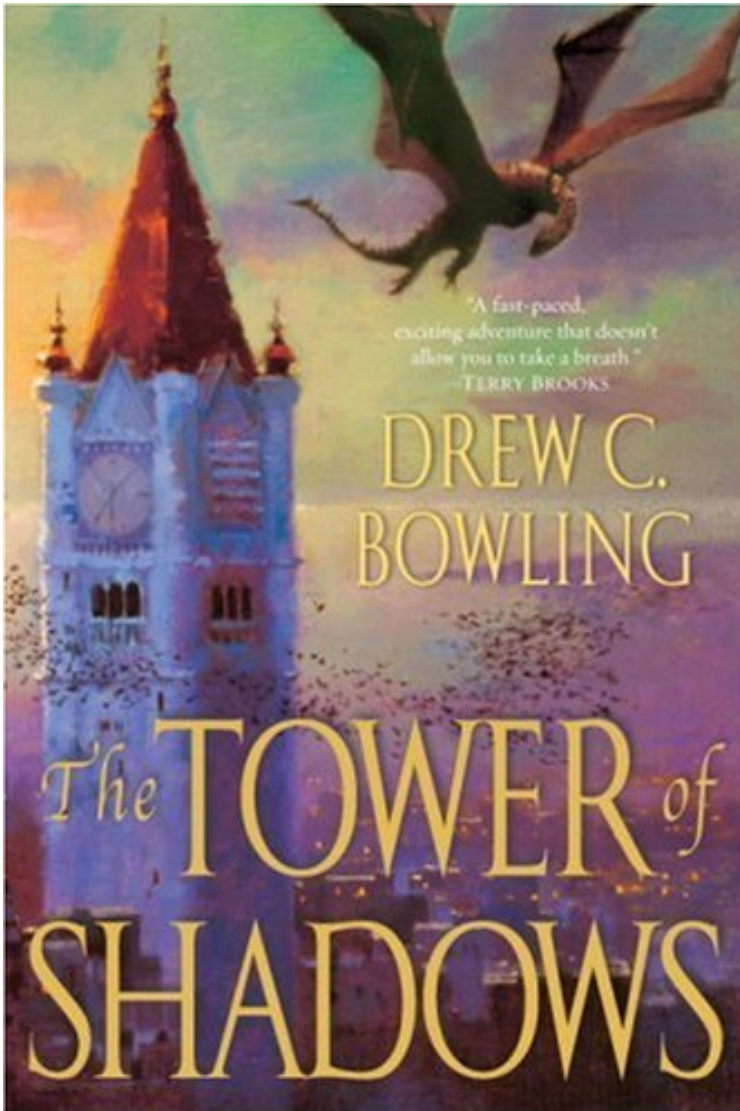


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The Tower of Shadows: Book One of The Tides of Fate



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the boundless imagination and talented pen of a young storyteller springs the fabulous first novel in a major new epic fantasy series. Steeped in the traditions of its classic forebears, yet boldly original in its vision and sense of wonder, The Tower of Shadows swells with heroism, sings with enchantment, and carries the reader at full gallop into a marvelously wrought world of breathtaking adventure.Untold ages ago, vainglorious spirits battled with the three gods in a bid for dominion over allonly to be defeated and banished below the earth to fester in their unquenchable evil. One of these vengeful demons eventually broke free and rained bloody death upon an innocent village in the land of Ellynrie. Few

survived. The Starcross brothers, mere children orphaned by their parents slaughter, suffered very difficult fates. Corin Starcross was delivered to safety by the wizard Dale, while his brother, Cade, was abandoned to the flames that devoured their childhood home. Likewise, the mercenary Wren Tident saved his infant daughter, Kayla, from the monstrous fate that claimed her mother. When the demon retreated to its black abyss, the haunted souls left in its murderous wake did their best to carry on save for one, who vowed retribution. When Cade Starcross reappears, he immerses himself in a secret study of the blackest arts, and a grim dance of destiny begins. His humanity withered by grief and his mind twisted by his apprenticeship to darkness, Cade seeks to use sorcery to wreak vengeance on his demon nemesis. But in order to succeed, a dagger of unearthly power wrought by the gods themselves must be found. And the blood of Cades brother, Corin Starcross, must be spilled. Yet all of Cades fury and magic will prove no match for the evil set free upon the earth. By any means and at all costs, the doomed vendetta must be stopped. A fledgling wizard, a tormented warrior, and a young girl burning with her fathers untamed spirit must rally together as the only hope of a world poised perilously at the abyss. From the Hardcover edition.

Extrait Assassins

As the two horsemen peered across the moor, they sensed their curiosity darkening toward suspicion. Barren and rocky, the blasted landscape stretched eastward for mile after mile until, with unexpected suddenness, it reared against the horizon in a line of serrated cliffs. Night was falling quickly. As shadows settled like carrion birds on their surroundings, pallid pricks of palest blue twinkled wanly in the sky. They gave off little light and less comfort. Even the stars are dead in this forsaken country, said one rider in a weathered voice. The iris of his good eye dilated with wary consideration; the crystal in the other glinted dully in the twilight. His companion, dark of skin and cloak, turned a scarred face toward him. We should never have come here. Ive wandered some of the strangest lands in Ellynrie. But this place . . . Ive never seen anything like it. Theres malice on the wind. I can taste it in the air and sense it in the very bones of the earth. He stroked the hilt of his sword reassuringly and patted his whickering mount. Dragons and demons, Sarin, the one-eyed man muttered. Its cursed, I say. For once the hearthside spinners of threads and tales were right. He paused. Perhaps we should turn back. Its too late for that now, Sarin said. He frowned, stretching his crosshatched scars. Turncross is an hour behind us. Even if we were to ride at full gallop without resting the horses, the sorcerer would stop us long before we reached the town. His eyes are fixed on us now, One-Eye. How can you be sure? One-Eye asked, shifting the twin rapiers bound crosswise to his back. Ive spoken with him. I know what he is capable of. Damned if I ever take another job involving witchery. I should have stayed in that warm tavern, ordered another round of sweet cork ale, and then turned back on the road toward home. Sarins scarred brow rose in a mocking arch. And what home might that be? The rider who had spoken first looked around slowly, his single iris constricting. He gazed across the immolated moor, up the cliffs, and into the sickly sky. Anywhere but here, he said. For the first time in years he shivered in fear. *** Far above the cliffs in the gloom ahead, two sets of eyes peered from a dark tower window, watching the approach of the horsemen. Voices, deep and harsh, spoke to one another in the stagnant air. They are coming. I know. Shall I guide them? a pause, then Let them make their own way. How can you be sure they will find the entrance? These two will know what to look for. . . a long silence . . . They may not like what they find. We didnt when we first arrived. But vengeance is a sharp spur, and we knew that if we paid the price, we would gain what was needed for our ends. These two who come now are driven by greed. It is the same. then, after several seconds They will come. *** As the two riders made their way reluctantly across the moor, their thoughts began to wander and grow sluggishly indistinct as if each northerly clip-clop of the horses hooves brought them closer to their destination and farther from themselves. Earlier that morning, their eyes swollen and tired, their heads pounding out a painful farewell to the taverns ale, they had left the Black Candle Inn on stolen mounts and started on the final leg of their journey. It had been easy going at first the country was flat and free of obstacles but now it felt as if they were struggling through thick webs of haze and mist. Somethings wrong, said One-Eye. I feel as disoriented as a sunstruck fly, only theres no sun to strike me. What direction are we going in? With one gloved hand tightly grasping his reins, Sarin withdrew a compass from a saddle pouch and held it steadily before him, his eyes bent intently on the thin sapphire needle. He looked more closely, eyes widening in surprise; the needle was swinging crazily from north to south with violent, aimless jerks. What in Gods name . . . One-Eye leaned over, examined the compass, and chuckled grimly. I was right we should never have taken this job. You might as well toss that aside. Theres only one direction left to us now. *** The eyes in the tower stared, unblinking. The voices continued. Are they what you expected? They should be adequate. You did well in finding them. Now that you have seen them, will you tell me why you brought them here? Are you really that ignorant? . . . silence . . . Perhaps you are.

After twelve damning years of preparation, I would sooner give up my knowledge of the dark arts than entrust this job to someone before personally ensuring their loyalty. The stakes are far too high to risk any missteps in securing my brother and the dagger.***The horses, wild with fear, bolted long before they reached the cliffs. Ignoring their aching muscles, the two men struggled forward on foot, reaching the escarpments rubble-strewn fringe, looking ragged as scarecrows. A thin, sand-laden wind scratched at the base of the cliffs like a stone rasping along the edge of a knife. What now? One-Eye asked. Dont tell me this is a dead end. The sorcerer told me to find him atop the bluffs, said Sarin, scratching the scars on his face. Burning blood, Im beginning to feel uneasy about this spell weaver. If he plays us false, Im going to hunt him down with my wands of iron and slit his sorcerers throat. Bite your curses. This is no time to lose control. Youre a hired man, and it would do you well to remember that. Assassins cant afford to let emotion interfere with business. The dance of our life is a dangerous one; we stay in step, or we falter and fall. It looks as though theres a hollow in the rock ahead. That might be our path. One-Eye spit. It had better be. The hollow turned out to be a cave. Nearly hidden by boulders and thick clusters of a creeping blood-red vine, the awning gaped at the base of the cliffs like a hellish monster sprung to life from a childs darkest dream. The two men were not children, but they were deathly afraid. A stench drifted from the cave mouth like a diseased breath. Sarin shuddered. This is it. You first, said One-Eye, and hid his crystal orb in a slow, cruel wink. Sarin reached under his cloak, unhitched a lamp from his belt, and used a flint to light its wick. An orange flame sizzled to life, filling the lamp with a flickering glow. He started into the cave, one hand holding the uncertain light, the other resting on the pommel of his sword.***The two sets of eyes narrowed, following the struggling men as they disappeared into the cliffs. The voices resumed. I was the one who arranged this meeting. They will be surprised to learn that I am not the master here. I trust they will be pleasantly surprised to discover their error. You have an . . . unsettling appearance. Remember, secrecy is our best weapon. The Aurian wizards, few as they are, cannot be allowed to learn of our actions. Not until the summoning of the demon is complete. Still, should more force be needed, I trust you have gathered more men in Nautalia and Merrifield. That should be the least of your worries. I have found the promise of riches to be most persuasive. Good. After today you must not meet again with either of these men until one has gained possession of the Exilon dagger and the other has found my brother. You will know him by his limp and the name I have told you. Now go down and greet them. They are almost here.***The two men gritted their teeth and pressed upward through the cave. Cracks riddled the walls, dark clefts leading to darker secrets; mold covered the floor in a pulpy carpet that squished beneath their boots like overripe melons. Piles of cracked bones were heaped along the climb. Flies buzzed about them in a constant hum. How any life at all could survive in such a wretched place was a mystery that neither of the men could fathom. They crowded together inside the tiny sphere of lamplight like boys huddling before a rattling bedroom closet. Gradually they became aware that they were being tracked although by beasts or phantoms, they could not tell. The creatures remained just beyond sight but advanced with a gnashing of teeth. Fear bore through the men like throbbing wounds until they finally abandoned all caution and broke into a wild run, the tunnel snaking by in a blur of sweat and pounding feet. When at last they reached the exit, they propped themselves against a pair of rocks to steady their heaving chests. That they had come through with their sanity intact was a blessing. That they were still breathing seemed truly to be a miracle. One-Eye grimaced. If were still in Ellynrie, then Ive lost all faith in hell. The sky was a dark kaleidoscope. Beneath them the cliffs plunged into the sea, which heaved and crashed in a lurid tide, void of any starlight. That must be his tower, Sarin said, pointing across the waste. The Tower of Shadows. A spike of black stone loomed above the ocean, twined with the same eerie vines that had. . .

From Publishers Weekly

This precocious debut from college sophomore Bowling turns on the evergreen battle of good vs. evil as embodied by Corin and Cade Starcross, brothers whose childhood loss of their parents leaves Corin's morality intact but twists Cade, the elder, with a lust for revenge. Wizard Dale calls on Wren Tident, a retired adventurer, to locate and protect Corin when Cade and his minions Sarin, One-Eye and Damon begin hunting down the younger brother. Cade requires the blood of his sibling and a magic dagger to summon a dreadful demon who will destroy their parents' murderers. Wren takes his teenage daughter, Kayla, along on his dangerous quest and eventually unites with Dale's bumbling but benevolent apprentice, Adriel. Bowling stocks the mystical land of Ellynrie with the talismanic trappings of most classic questsmagic medallions, wizards, pirates and, of course, a dragon but he brings an exciting pace and his own exuberant style to a novel suitable for all ages. (Jan.) Copyright Reed Business

