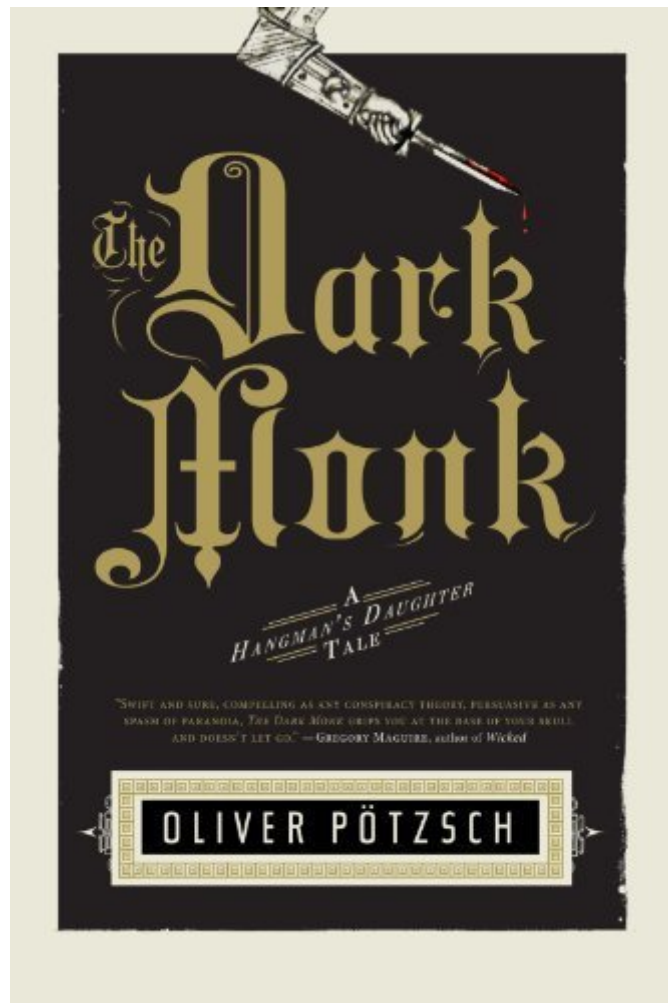


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The Dark Monk (US Edition) (A Hangman's Daughter Tale Book 2)



Synopsis

BOOK 2 OF THE INTERNATIONAL BEST SELLING HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER SERIES 1660:
Winter has settled thick over a sleepy village in the Bavarian Alps, ensuring every farmer and servant is indoors on the night a parish priest discovers he's been poisoned. As numbness creeps up his body, he summons the last of his strength to scratch a cryptic sign in the frost. Following a trail of riddles, hangman Jakob Kuisl, his headstrong daughter, Magdalena, and the town physician's son team up with the priest's aristocratic sister to investigate. What they uncover will lead them back to the Crusades, unlocking a troubled history of internal church politics and sending them on a chase for a treasure of the Knights Templar. But they're not the only ones after the legendary fortune. A team of dangerous and mysterious monks is always close behind, tracking their every move, speaking Latin in the shadows, giving off a strange, intoxicating scent. And to throw the hangman off their trail, they have ensured he is tasked with capturing a band of thieves roving the countryside attacking solitary travellers and spreading panic. Delivering on the promise of the international bestseller *The Hangman's Daughter*, Oliver Pötzsch takes us on a whirlwind tour through the occult hiding places of Bavaria's ancient monasteries. Once again based on prodigious historical research into Pötzsch's family tree, *The Dark Monk* brings to life an unforgettable, compassionate hangman and his tenacious daughter, painting a robust tableau of a seventeenth-century Bavaria and quickening our pulses with a gripping, mesmerizing mystery.

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Customer Reviews

Oliver Pötzsch used the motif of the mystery novel and applies it to "The Dark Monk: A Hangman's Daughter Tale," set in 1660. It's winter with a capital "W" in the Bavarian Alps. The story takes us and his characters from village to village with excursions through the countryside and to a series of monasteries. The plot is set in motion when a poisoned priest uses his dying wits and strength to leave a clue that proves a gateway into a bigger mystery, drawing in the stalwart trio of hangman, executioner, and healer Jakob Kuisl; his somewhat stubborn but attractive daughter Magdalena; and the town physician's son who is a bit of a dandy but smart as a whip, Simon. But while this mystery is the story's center, other events are also crucial, chiefly, a group robbers are preying on travelers, particularly merchants and their cargos, and a deadly illness is killing many of the villagers. Along with the murdered priest's sister, this group follows a trail of various clues and riddles, each leading to more answers and more questions. Tracking this core group is a trio of murderous monks (not sure which one is actually the dark monk of the title), various church leaders, and another trio of soldiers-for-hire. As you might imagine, murder, mayhem, kidnapping, and so forth ensue. The story seems as though the scenes were staged for a play or graphic novel with characters tripping over each other in unexpectedly places. I thought that the plot and resolution hinged on a series of increasingly unlikely coincidences playing out and bringing the characters back together in, for me, an ultimately unsatisfactory resolution.

When I read some of the reviews of the first book in this series (The Hangman's Daughter) I was both intrigued and worried. It sounded like an interesting period to set a mystery-type series, but some of the reviewers seemed to think the book was both anachronistic and ahistorical in certain ways. That may have been true of the first book (I can't say, as I haven't yet read it) but it certainly isn't true of this one. I found The Dark Monk to be fast-paced and interesting without sacrificing the feel of the era in which the story is set. The pace of actual events may take place at 17th century speed, but the interactions and descriptions of the various character's mental workings was very well-written and entertaining. The book has several interesting characters and you get to hear the story from their point of view in different chapters. The main characters are Jakob (the hangman), Magdalena (his daughter) and Simon (what passes for a doctor in the 17th century). Jakob is the

kind of iconoclastic detective I'm a real sucker for. He is going to do things his own way and ultimately will rely chiefly on his own counsel, even though he allows Simon and Magdalena brief glimpses into what is going on in his head. Simon is the kind of character who you alternately like, pity, despise, and then like again. He can be vain and flawed, but he also realizes his shortcomings and exhibits humanity during a period of time when people had to scratch and claw 24/7 just to keep going. Magdalena alternates between fierce pride that she is the hangman's daughter and dangerous despair that her position in her village will prevent her from having what she wants in life-- namely, Simon.

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