

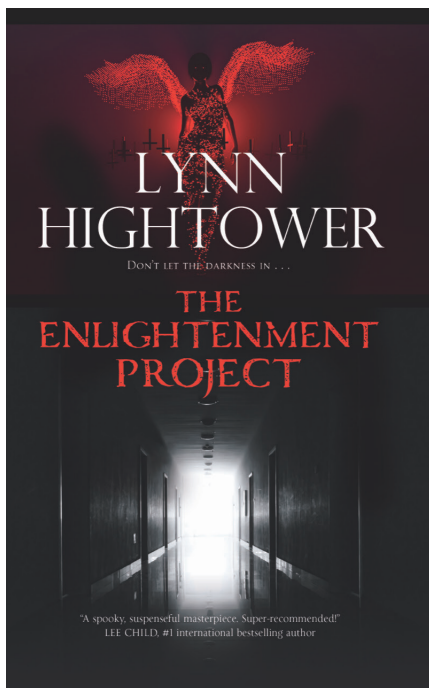
“Lynn Hightower is a brave, bold writer – and this spooky, suspenseful masterpiece could be her best yet.

Super-recommended!”

- Lee Child

The Enlightenment Project

By Lynn Hightower



Demonic possession is now a recognized psychiatric condition in the DSM; the number of priest exorcists in the US has quadrupled in the last decade. Lynn Hightower’s paranormal, supernatural thriller, *THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT*, (March 1, 2022, Canongate/Severn House, \$28.99, Hardcover, ISBN: 9780727850881) offers a superbly told, page-turning story, as well as an intelligent and fascinating view into the complex worlds of both the medical and the supernatural.

Noah Archer is a renowned neurosurgeon, with an impressive success record. He has a happy home, with his beloved wife Moira, their two adopted sons, and a dog who’s a very good girl. Noah is removing a tumor from the skull of a fourteen-year-old girl when he feels it again. The presence of something Other.

His suspicions are confirmed when he finds a familiar priest waiting for him in his office. Father Perry Cavanaugh is an old friend, and the only one who knows Noah’s darkest secret: that when he was a boy, he was targeted and possessed by a demonic entity, under the malevolent eye of a mysterious man Noah called the Red Haired Man. This childhood trauma informed the rest of Noah’s life and eventually led him to who he is now: a renowned neurosurgeon, currently in the middle of the most important research study of his life: The Enlightenment Project.

Through refined brain stimulation treatments that target the myriad neural locations of spirituality, visions, and near-death experiences, Noah is hardwiring the brain to create enlightenment on demand, promising breakthrough treatments for chronic depression, addiction, and mental illness. It is his life’s work, but Perry fears it may be what opened the door to the possession of one of the research subjects, Henry Mandeville.

Despite Perry’s warnings, Noah is not yet ready to give up on The Enlightenment Project. Instead, he and Perry attempt to exorcise Henry, with disastrous results. Shortly after, Noah starts to notice disturbing side effects in the other patients. If Noah doesn’t find out what the demons want and how to stop them, the consequences will be dire. And the worst has not yet come to pass.

The Red Haired Man is back. And now he is after Noah’s family.

Truth, as Mark Twain said, is stranger than fiction. Lynn Hightower marries the two to create an irresistible tale packed with the latest (true) scientific discoveries. As so many of us deal with anxiety and trauma, and as we continue to experiment with unusual and unique ways to cope, *THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT* will strike a chilling chord -- a glimpse into just how powerful the forces of the mind and beyond can be.



ABOUT LYNN HIGHTOWER:

The author of numerous thrillers, including the Sonora Blair and Lena Padgett detective series, Lynn Hightower's internationally-bestselling novels have been included in the *New York Times* List of Notable Books, the *London Times* bestseller lists, the WH Smith Fresh Talent Awards, and the Shamus award. Lynn teaches Master Novel classes in the UCLA Extension Writing Program, and works as a Manuscript Consultant/Writing Coach for novelists.

ASK LYNN HIGHTOWER:

What inspired you to write this book?

I read *THE SPIRITUAL DOORWAY IN THE BRAIN: A Neurologist's Search for the God Experience*, By Kevin Nelson, M.D. He writes about near death experiences, and the biological basis of religious experience. I liked his focus on the biology of mystical experiences, and how he did not discount the reality of spiritual experience. How open he was.

Also, like most of us, I found *THE EXORCIST* riveting. But what I wanted to know was what happened when the boy that the novel is based upon grew up. How it affected his life ever after. I mean – how do you tell your significant other that you used to be possessed by demons? How does that affect a marriage? Or do you keep it a secret. Tell and they're going to look at you funny if they don't run for the hills. Keep it a secret and you hide so much of yourself from the person you love.

I happened upon M. Scott Peck's book *GLIMPSES OF THE DEVIL: A Psychiatrist's Personal Accounts of Possession, Exorcism, and Redemption*. That really got my attention.

And suddenly, Noah Archer was born. A neurosurgeon...who had been possessed as a child. And because of that, and how helpless he felt then, he creates *THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT*, a research study using a technique that instantly creates a meditative state in the brains of his patients and gives them the immediate ability to reap the benefits – helping them manage depression, addictions, the darker sides of their life. Because I personally think the way people are taught to meditate is convoluted and occasionally useless. Noah and I agree on that. Seriously, how can you tell people “don't think” with a straight face? How does it help to set people up to wrestle with their brains – there are so many ways to *meditate*, and people can't even define *enlightenment* in a way that makes sense, but it's all right there at your fingertips if you can find it. I'm like Noah, I don't think people actually have to spend twenty-five years working to achieve results—I see it as a lifetime of *ongoing* results. I think most of the advice makes it harder, not easier, herding people in directions

that may or may not work. There are a lot of neurologists and neurosurgeons who encourage patients to meditate. It's just...nobody really has a one size fits all way to do it. Except Noah, of course. He just didn't figure in the dark side.

So. I did a lot of research, which kind of astounded me, ran this past my agent, Matt Bialer, and he was utterly fascinated. At that point I was off and running.

What research astonished you?

That possession is a recognized psychiatric condition in the DSM. That psychiatrists are now working with Exorcists to help people who think they are possessed. That there is a very strict protocol of evaluation...so that physical and mental illness is ruled out.

M. Scott Peck said that initially he “did not believe in the devil” but that “...as a psychiatrist, he had been converted from a belief that the devil did not exist to a belief – a certainty—that the devil does exist.” He defines *devil* this way: “I mean a spirit that is powerful . . . thoroughly malevolent . . . capable of taking up a kind of residence within the mind, brain, soul, or body of susceptible and willing human beings...” He worried that his “profession might well seek my excommunication” but was hoping “demonology” be made an incipient subspecialty of psychiatry and psychology.”

I was intrigued by the insights of Allan J. Hamilton, M.D., a neurosurgeon who wrote *THE SCALPEL AND THE SOUL*. His chapter on his own exorcism, by a Navajo Medicine man, a respected, beloved healer, brought to him by a student, also Navajo, to release the spirit of a patient he could not let go of. In his words: “Healing requires that physician and patient enter into partnership, facing dangers together. Medicine was not meant to be a mechanical transaction. It's a spiritual quest, putting your own soul on the line, along with the patients...You cannot heal if you cannot feel. Healing isn't from the brain but the soul.”

Richard Gallagher, MD, author of *DEMONIC FOES*, recounts twenty-five years of work consulting on cases of demonic possession and diabolic attack. Gallagher is a professor of psychiatry at New York Medical and a psychoanalyst on the faculty of Columbia University. His book came out after I had written *THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT*, but I found it fascinating. In 2016 he published an essay on possession in The Washington Post. The essay had over a million online hits.

In an article by CNN Gallagher had this to say, “There was one woman who was like 90 pounds soaking wet. She threw a Lutheran deacon who was about 200 pounds across the room. That's not psychiatry. That's beyond psychiatry.” (*WHEN EXORCISTS NEED HELP, THEY CALL HIM*, by John Blake, CNN, August 17, 2017.)

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