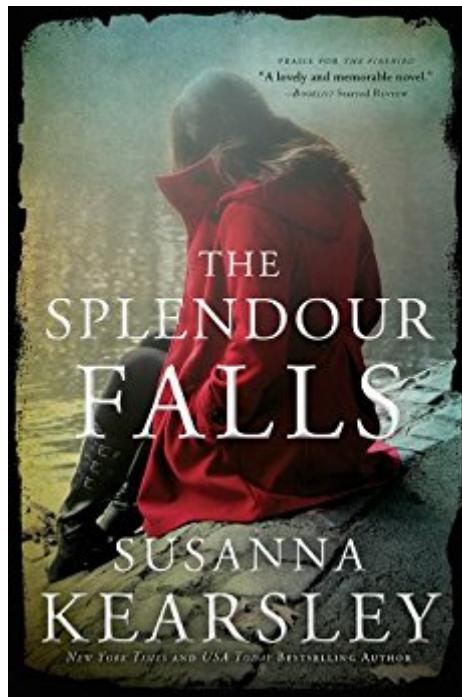


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The Splendour Falls



Synopsis

Praise for New York Times bestseller *The Firebird*: "Kearsley blends history, romance and a bit of the supernatural into a glittering, bewitching tale." *Kirkus* An Ancient Castle, a Tragic Love, and a Web of Secrets Begins to Unravel... Emily Braden has stopped believing in fairy tales and happy endings. When her fascinating but unreliable cousin Harry invites her on a holiday to explore the legendary town of Chinon, and promptly disappears "well, that's Harry for you. As Emily makes the acquaintance of Chinon and its people, she begins to uncover dark secrets beneath the charm. Legend has it that during a thirteenth-century siege of the castle that looms over the city, Queen Isabelle, child bride of King John, hid a "treasure of great price." And in the last days of the German occupation during World War II, another Isabelle living in Chinon, a girl whose love for an enemy soldier went tragically awry. As the dangers of the past become disastrously real, Emily is drawn ever more deeply into a labyrinth of mystery as twisted as the streets and tunnels of the ancient town itself. "A mix of intrigue and adventure...in a style similar to that of Mary Stewart or Barbara Erskine, Kearsley does an excellent job evoking the atmosphere of Chinon with its brooding castle." *The Winnipeg Free Press* "Kearsley's action-packed mystery-romance, set in a medieval French town, shows the same deft plotting that won Kearsley the Catherine Cookson prize for *Mariana*." *Chatelaine*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When emotionally hard-boiled Emily agrees to join her errant cousin Harry on an academic-treasure-hunting holiday in Chinon, France, she does so reluctantly. Yet, from the very first moment she sees the fabled chateau and senses its evocative magic, she slightly lets down her guard, becoming slowly embroiled in the events surrounding a recent murder in the village and the corresponding intrigues of her fellow vacationers at the lovely Hotel de France. As her romantic sensibilities had been dampened by her parents' divorce and now are reinforced by her cousin's no-show, Emily unsuccessfully attempts to stay neutral to the obvious charms of the setting as embodied by the handsome French vineyard owner and the German violinist with the rock star ambiance. Only when she realizes that Harry's delayed appearance has something to do with the murdered man, and she unintentionally jeopardizes the life of one of the young tourists at the hotel by confiding her ruminations, does the story quickly wind down to a satisfactory conclusion. Kearsley weaves her story with the history of Chinon and adds some supernatural occurrences to further alloy the magical tone of the tale with reality. Emily is a believable heroine, crafted in the Mary Stewart genre of not quite damsel in distress, but rather the innocent tourist who unwittingly backs into a situation she cannot totally control. The beautiful setting, the handsome collection of men, the alluring music and olfactory descriptions of Chinon embue the book with a sensory lushness which is as delightful to experience as devouring a gourmet dark chocolate truffle. I did not find the book overly predictable.

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