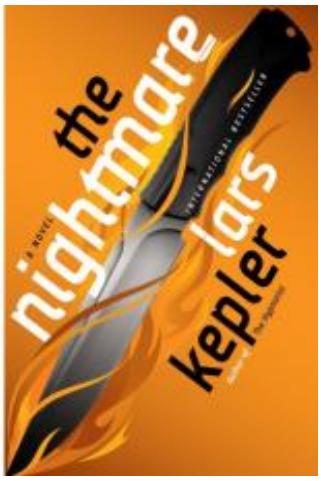
The Nightmare

written by Lars Kepler, translated by Laura A. Wideburg



About the Book

The piercing sequel to THE HYPNOTIST, Lars Kepler?s bestselling international debut, THE NIGHTMARE puts Detective Inspector Joona Linna on a case that takes him face-to-face with one of the world?s deadliest power brokers. When police recover the body of a young woman from an abandoned boat drifting around the Stockholm archipelago, she is identified as Penelope Fernandez, a renowned peace activist. But soon the woman?s identity is called into question, and other facts are troubling: though her lungs are filled with brackish water, there are no traces of water on her clothes or her body. The next day, a high-ranking government official from a weapons division is found dead in his apartment; he has apparently hanged himself.

Escalating into a pulse-pounding rescue mission --- one that reveals a terrifying trail of corruption linking Europe?s wealthiest families to vicious war crimes in Sudan --- THE NIGHTMARE weaves an intricate web of motives and manipulation. And munitions aren?t the only commodity in this novel: equally significant is a collection of priceless violins once owned by Niccolò Paganini, the virtuoso rumored to have signed a pact with the Devil.

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your reading of Lars Kepler?s THE NIGHTMARE. We hope they will enrich your experience as you explore this mesmerizing thriller.

Discussion Guide

1. What makes Penelope a survivor while others perish? How does her mother?s legacy become a source of strength?

2. How did your impressions of Björn shift? Why were he and Penelope drawn to each other? What did they fail to realize about each other?

3. Discuss the network of political leaders in the photograph. What is their common motivation? How are they able to

look past the suffering Penelope has devoted her life to eradicating?

4. What accounts for the differences, yet the devotion, between the siblings Robert and Axel, as well as between Penelope and Viola?

5. As Penelope and Björn desperately searched for help, were you surprised to see them rejected and brutalized? In your community, would it be hard to find a stranger who is willing to render aid?

6. Enduring his memories of Greta, does Axel form a therapeutic relationship with Beverly, or is their arrangement harmful to both of them?

7. What is the effect of the music that echoes throughout the novel? We?re told that Guidi?s late wife, Fiorenza, was an accomplished violinist. How does he reconcile his passion for beautiful, rare musical instruments (including Fiorenza?s Amati) with the bloodthirsty world he created?

8. How do Veronique and Pontus face the risks of doing business with Guidi? Why did they think they could outwit him? How did their experience differ from Palmcrona?s?

9. Is money the only allure of signing a Paganini contract? If Guidi were able to uncover your worst nightmare, what would it look like?

10. How do Saga and Joona complement each other? How are their detective roles different from that of The Needle?s (Chief of Forensic Medicine Nils Åhlén)?

11. In the closing scenes, a chain of world leaders, from Swedish export control workers to Kenyan politicians and international transportation companies, are thought to have acted ?in good faith,? just as Pontus said would happen. What power do Penelope and her fellow activists have against such a system?

12. What do you predict for Peter?s future?

13. Discuss the statistics that are delivered in the novel?s closing paragraph. How did you react to the realities of weapons exportation?

14. How has Joona evolved since he handled the Josef Ek case in *The Hypnotist*? What do both novels say about the nature of evil?

Author Bio

Lars Kepler is the pseudonym of the critically acclaimed husband and wife team Alexandra Coelho Ahndoril and Alexander Ahndoril. Their internationally bestselling Joona Linna series has sold more than 14 million copies in 40 languages. The Ahndorils were both established writers before they adopted the pen name Lars Kepler, and have each published several acclaimed novels. They live in Stockholm, Sweden.

Critical Praise

?One convincing psychotic is about as much as most thriller writers can handle, but Kepler delivers them by the roomful. It makes you wonder where the Swedes have been keeping him/them all this time. I imagine a cabal of nefarious Stockholm publishers loading bulk orders of Larsson onto cargo planes bound for the U.S. while they rub their hands together over a copy of THE HYPNOTIST stamped not for export. It?s that good. It?s the hard stuff.?

? Lev Grossman, *Time*

?Outrageously entertaining.... Kepler makes you feel that if homicidal maniacs really were to start popping up in Stockholm, this is exactly how it would play out.?

? Laura Miller, *Salon*

?Expect caffeinated beverages, inclement weather, and severed limbs. A??

? Rob Brunner, *Entertainment Weekly*

?A tale brilliantly immersed in Nordic dread... Kepler provides a master class in noir.?

? Chuck Leddy, *The Boston Globe*

?The summer?s likeliest new Nordic hit.?

? Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

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