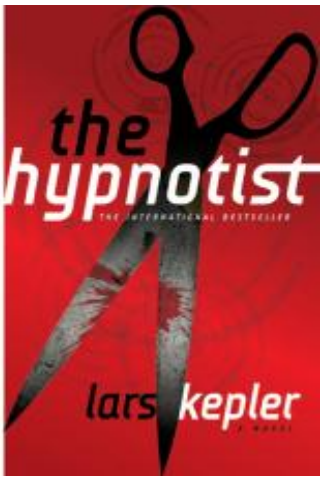
The Hypnotist

by Lars Kepler



About the Book

Fifteen-year-old Josef Ek lies in a hospital bed, his body covered in countless knife wounds. He has survived a gruesome triple murder that took the lives of his parents and his little sister. In deep shock, he is the sole living witness to the crime. Desperate for information and sure that the killer is out for more blood, Detective Inspector Joona Linna opts for a risky route of interrogation: hypnotism. It?s the only way to discover what the young victim saw.

Joona lures Dr. Erik Maria Bark to the case, despite the doctor?s controversial reputation. It?s the sort of work Erik has sworn he would never do again. At the pinnacle of his career as a psychotherapist, Eric made breakthrough progress with severely traumatized patients --- until one patient?s revelations went too far. Breaking his vow to abandon hypnosis, he now begins to probe Josef?s memories, unleashing a terrifying chain of events that makes his own family the target of lethal vengeance.

Unfolding against the backdrop of Sweden?s haunting landscapes, **The Hypnotist** marks the American debut of a mesmerizing thriller that has topped bestseller lists throughout Europe. Taking the genre to new heights, each chapter delivers a heart-stopping turn in a world where the mind may be the deadliest weapon.

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your reading of Lars Kepler?s **The Hypnotist**. We hope they will enrich your experience as you explore this provocative novel.

Discussion Guide

1. At first, what did your instincts tell you about the murder of Josef?s family? What were your initial theories?

2. In chapter 17, Erik says that patients always tell the truth under hypnosis, but that their perception of what is true might be skewed. Did you believe that Josef?s memories were accurate? Has your family ever disagreed about the

accuracy of your memories, especially as they relate to blame and fate?

3. Lydia is just one of several powerful sadists featured in **The Hypnotist**. What is the source of her power over others? What separates fear from courage in this novel?

4. What accounts for the tremendous differences between Evelyn and Josef? What does their story tell us about nature and nurture, and about rage and the rational mind?

5. What was Erik hungry for when he began his flirtation with Maja? Would you have stayed married to him if you had been Simone?

6. Who is better at predicting human behavior: law enforcer Joona or therapist Erik?

7. How might the Bark family have been described from Benjamin?s point of view? What forges the bond between him and his girlfriend, Aida? Are they refugees from a similar type of insecurity?

8. Discuss the structure of the novel. How was your reading affected by the short, cinematic chapters, told almost entirely in the present tense? How did the voice shift when Erik began narrating his own memories in the chapter called ?Ten Years Ago,? between chapters 74 and 75?

9. How did Kennet influence Simone?s expectations of the world, and of her husband? How does Kennet?s approach to fatherhood compare to Erik?s?

10. Is Eva evil or simply self-obsessed? How did your opinion of her change throughout the novel?

11. The closing scene shows Erik?s family transformed. Without the terrifying kidnapping, would they have ever learned to trust one another again? Why did the roots of their unhappiness run so deep?

12. How does the Scandinavian landscape of **The Hypnotist** (and of other bestselling crime novels from that part of the world) set the ideal tone for intense, suspenseful tales?

13. What does the novel say about the nature of cruelty? Where is the line drawn between mental illness (in some cases resulting from abuse) and a purely criminal mind? Ultimately, what did the killers in **The Hypnotist** want from their victims?

14. The identity of ?Lars Kepler? was revealed before the U.S. publication of **The Hypnotist**. How did it affect your reading to know that these scenes were created by a husband-and-wife team?

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

"The brutal slaying of gambling addict Anders Ek, his wife, and his younger daughter propels this outstanding thriller debut... A well-integrated subplot involving a gang of terrifying boys and girls adds to the suspense. Readers will look forward to seeing more of Linna in what one hopes will be a long series."

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