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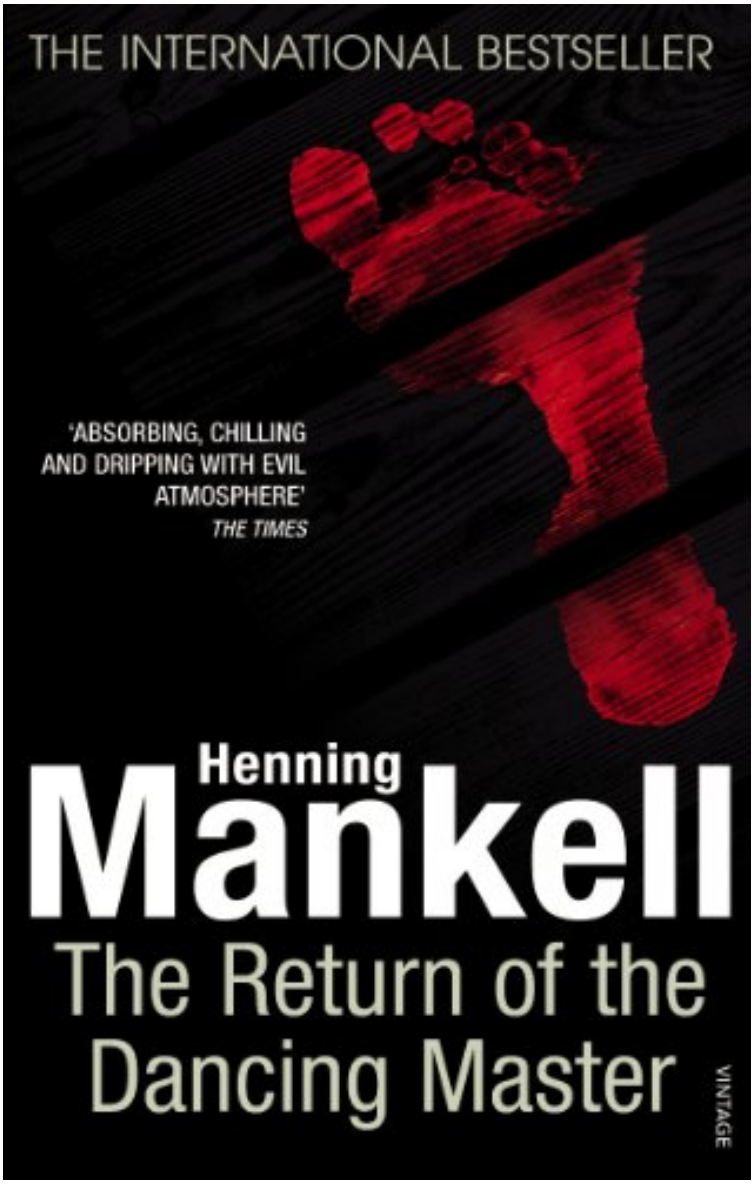
The Return Of The Dancing Master



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[Download free ebook] The Return Of The Dancing Master

Par Henning Mankell : The Return Of The Dancing Master before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Return Of The Dancing Master:

Description : Description du produitThe new thriller from the internationally bestselling author of the Kurt Wallander mystery series. It would be nearly two hours before he died. As if in a borderland of horror between the nagging pain and the hopeless will to live, he was taken back in time, to the occasion when he engaged the fate that had now caught up with him.from The Return of the Dancing Master December 12, 1945. Nazi Germany lies in ruins as a British warplane lands in Buckeburg. A man carrying a small black bag quickly disembarks and travels to Hameln, where he disappears behind the prison gates. Early the next day, nine male and three female war criminals are hanged. Fifty-four years later, retired policeman Herbert Molin is found brutally slaughtered on his remote farm in Hrjedalen, Sweden. At the murder scene, the police discover strange tracks in the blood on the floor...as if someone had been practicing the tango. Stefan Lindman, a young police officer on extended sick leave, hears about the murder of his former colleague and

decides to investigate it himself. Lindman's inquiry becomes increasingly complex and dangerous as he uncovers the links between Herbert Molin's death and a global web of neo-Nazi activity.

Prsentation de l'diteurWINNER OF THE CWA GOLD DAGGER FOR SIDETRACKEDHerbert Molin, a retired police officer, is living alone in a remote cottage in the vast forests of northern Sweden. He has two obsessions: one is the tango and the other is a conviction that he is being hunted, constantly pursued by 'demons'. He has no close friends, no close neighbours, and by the time his body is eventually found, Molin is almost unrecognisable. Lindman, a police officer on extended sick leave, hears of the death of his former colleague and, to take his mind off his own problems, decides to involve himself in the case. What he discovers, to his horror and disbelief, is a network of evil almost unimaginable in this remote district, and one which seems impossible to link to Molin's death.ExtraitPART IHrjedalen / OctoberNovember 1999CHAPTER 1 He woke in the night, besieged by shadows. It had started when he was 22. Fifty-four years of sleepless nights, constantly besieged by shadows. He'd only managed to sleep after taking heavy doses of sleeping pills. He knew the shadows had been there when he woke, even if he'd been unaware of them. This night, now drawing to its close, was no exception. Nor did he have to wait for the shadows - or the visitors, as he sometimes called them - to put in an appearance. They generally turned up a few hours after darkness fell. Were there without warning, by his side, with silent white faces. He'd got used to their presence after all the years, but he knew he couldn't trust them. One of these days they'd be bound to break loose. He didn't know what would happen then. Would they attack him, or would they betray him? There had been times when he'd shouted at them, hit out in all directions to drive them off. He'd kept them at bay for a while. Then they'd be back and stay until dawn. He'd sleep in the end, but usually for only a few hours because he needed to get up and go to work. He'd been tired all of his adult life. He had no idea how he'd got by. Looking back, he could recognise only an endless string of days that he'd somehow or other muddled through. He had hardly any memories unconnected with his tiredness. In photographs taken of him he always looked haggard. The shadows had also taken their revenge on him during his two marriages: his wives had been frustrated by his constant state of unease, and the fact that when he wasn't working, he was always half asleep. They'd lost patience with finding him up for most of the night, and he'd never been able to explain why he couldn't sleep like a normal person. In the end they'd left him, and he'd been alone again. He looked at his watch. 4.15 a.m. He went to the kitchen and poured himself coffee from the thermos he'd made before going to bed. The thermometer outside the window showed minus two. If he didn't remember to change the screws holding it in place, before long it would fall. He moved the curtain, and the dog started barking out there in the darkness. Shaka was the only security he had. He'd found the name he'd given his Norwegian elkhound in a book - he couldn't remember the title. It had something to do with a powerful Zulu chieftain, and he'd thought it a suitable name for a guard dog. Short and easy to shout. He took his coffee into the living room. The thick curtains were securely drawn. He knew that already, but felt compelled to keep checking. He checked the windows. Then he sat at the table again and contemplated the jigsaw pieces spread out before him. It was a good puzzle. It had lots of pieces and demanded imagination and perseverance to solve it. Whenever he finished a puzzle, he would burn it and immediately start on a new one. He made sure he always had a store of puzzles. It was a bit like a smoker and his cigarettes. For years he'd been a member of a world-wide club devoted to the culture of jigsaw puzzles. It was based in Rome, and every month he'd get a newsletter with information about puzzle-makers who had ceased trading and others who had entered the field. As early as the mid-'70s it had struck him how hard it was to find really good puzzles - that is, hand-sawn ones. He didn't think much of the mechanically produced ones. There was no logic in the way the pieces were cut, and they didn't fit in with the patterns. That might make them hard to solve, but the difficulties were mechanically contrived. Just now he was working on a puzzle based on Rembrandt's The Conspiracy of the Bathavians under Claudius Civilis. It had 3,000 pieces and had been made by a specialist in Rouen. He'd once driven down to visit the man. They'd talked about how the best puzzles were the ones with the most subtle nuances of light. And how Rembrandt's colour schemes made the greatest demands. He sat holding a piece that obviously belonged in the background of the painting. It took him nearly ten minutes to find where. He checked his watch again: 4.30. Hours to go before dawn, before the shadows would withdraw and he could get some sleep. It seemed to him that on the whole everything had become much simpler since he'd turned 65 and retired. He didn't need to be anxious about feeling tired all day. Didn't need to be frightened of nodding off at work. But the shadows ought to have left him in peace ages ago. He had served his time. They had no need now to keep their eye on him. His life had been ruined.

He went to the bookcase where he kept his CD player. He'd bought it a few months ago, on one of his rare visits to stersund. He put the disc in the machine back on - he'd been surprised to find it among the pop music in the shop where he'd bought the player. It was a tango, a genuine Argentinian tango. He turned up the sound. The elkhound out there in the dark had good ears and responded to the music with a bark, then was quiet again. He went back to the table and walked round it, studying the puzzle as he listened to the music. There was plenty yet to do. It would keep him going for three more nights at least before he burnt it. He had several more, still in their boxes. Then he would drive to the post office in Sveg and collect another batch sent by the old master in Rouen. He sat on the sofa to enjoy the music. It had been one of his life's ambitions to visit Argentina. To spend a few months in Buenos Aires, dancing the tango every night. But it had never happened; something always cropped up to make him draw back at the last minute. When he'd left Vstergtland eleven years ago and moved north to the forests of Hrjedalen, he'd meant to take a trip every year. He lived frugally, and although his pension wasn't a big one, he could afford it. In fact, all he'd done was once or twice to drive round Europe looking for new jigsaw puzzles. He would never go to Argentina. He would never dance the tango in Buenos Aires. But there's nothing to stop me dancing here, he thought. I have the music and I have my partner. He stood up. It was 5 a.m. Dawn was a long way off. It was time for a dance. He went to the bedroom and took his dark suit from the wardrobe. He examined it carefully before putting it on. A stain on the jacket lapel annoyed him. He wet a handkerchief and wiped it clean. Then he changed. This morning he chose a rust-brown tie to go with his white shirt. Most important of all were the shoes. He had several pairs of Italian dancing shoes, all expensive. For the serious dancer, the shoes had to be perfect. When he was ready, he studied his appearance in the mirror on the wardrobe door. His hair was grey and cropped short. He was thin; he told himself he should eat more. But he looked considerably younger than his 76 years. He knocked at the spare bedroom door. He imagined hearing somebody bidding him enter. He opened the door and switched on the light. His dancing partner was lying in the bed. He was always surprised by how real she looked, even though she was only a doll. He pulled back the duvet and lifted her up. She was wearing a white blouse and a black skirt. He'd given her the name of Esmeralda. There were some bottles of scent on the bedside table. He sat her down, and selected a discreet Dior which he sprayed gently onto her neck. When he closed his eyes it seemed to him that there was no difference between the doll and a living human being. He escorted her to the living room. He'd often thought he should take away all the furniture, fix some dimmed lights in the ceiling and place a burning cigar in an ashtray. Then he'd have his own Argentinian dance hall. But he'd never got around to it. There was just the empty stretch of floor between the table and the bookcase with the CD player. He slid his shoes into the loops attached to the bottom of Esmeralda's feet. Then he started dancing. As he twirled Esmeralda round the floor, he felt he had succeeded in sweeping all the shadows out of the room. He was very light on his feet. He had learnt a lot of dances over the years, but it was the tango that suited him best. And there was nobody he danced with as well as Esmeralda. Once there'd been a woman in Bors, Rosemarie, who had a milliner's shop. He used to dance the tango with her, and none of his previous partners had followed him as well as she did. One day, when he was getting ready to drive to Gteborg where he'd arranged to meet her at a dance club, he had a call to say she'd been killed in a road accident. He danced with lots of other women after that, but it wasn't until he created Esmeralda that he got the same feeling as he'd had with Rosemarie. He had the idea many years ago. He had tuned in to a musical on the television: he'd been awake all night as usual. In the film a man - Gene Kelly, perhaps - had danced with a doll. He'd been fascinated, and decided there and then that he would make one himself. The hardest part was the filling. He'd tried all sorts of things, but it wasn't until he'd filled her with foam rubber that it felt as if he were holding a real person in his arms. He had chosen to give her large breasts and a big backside. Both his wives had been slim. Now he'd provided himself with a woman who had something he could get his hands round. When he danced with her and smelled her perfume, he was sometimes aroused; but that hadn't often happened over the last five or six years. His erotic desires had started to fade. He danced for more than an hour. When finally he carried Esmeralda back to the spare room and put her to bed, he'd been sweating. He undressed, hung the suit in the wardrobe and took a shower. It would soon be light, and he'd be able to go to bed and sleep. He'd survived another night. He put on his dressing gown and made himself some coffee. The thermometer outside the window was still showing minus two degrees. He touched the curtains, and Shaka barked briefly out there in the darkness. He thought about the forest surrounding him on all sides. This was what he'd dreamt of. A remote cottage, modern in every way, but no neighbours. And it was also a house at the very end of a road. It was a roomy house, well built and with a big living room that satisfied his need for a dance floor. The

vendor was a forestry official who had retired and moved to Spain. He sat at the kitchen table with his coffee. Dawn was approaching. Soon he'd be able to get some sleep. The shadows would leave him in peace. A single bark from Shaka. He sat up straight. Another bark. Then all was quiet. It must have been an animal. Probably a hare. Shaka could move around freely in his large pen. The dog kept watch over him. He washed up his cup and put it next to the cooker. He'd use it again seven hours from now. He didn't like changing cups unnecessarily. He could use the same one for weeks on end. Then he went into the bedroom, took off his dressing gown and snuggled into bed. It was still dark, but usually he lay in bed as he waited for dawn to break, listening to the radio. When he noticed the first faint signs of light outside the house he would turn off the radio, switch off the light and lie comfortably, ready for sleep. Shaka started barking again. Then stopped. He frowned, listening intently, and counted up to 30. No sound from Shaka. Whatever animal it had been, it had gone now. He turned on the radio and listened absent-mindedly to the music. Another bark from Shaka. But it was different now. He sat up in bed. Shaka was barking away frantically. That could only mean that there was an elk in the vicinity. Or a bear. Bears were shot every year in this area. He'd never seen one himself. Shaka was still barking just as frenziedly. He got out of bed and put on his dressing gown. Shaka fell silent. He waited, but nothing. He took off his dressing gown again and got back into bed. He always slept naked. The lamp by the radio was on. Suddenly he sat up again. Something odd was going on, something to do with the dog. He held his breath and listened. Silence. He was uneasy. It was as if the shadows all around him had started to change. He got out of bed. There was something odd about Shaka's last barks. They hadn't stopped in a natural way, they seemed to have been cut off. He went into the living room and opened one of the curtains in the window looking directly out onto the dog pen. Shaka didn't bark, and he felt his heart beating faster. He went back into the bedroom and pulled on a pair of trousers and a jumper. He took out the gun he always kept under his bed, a shotgun with room for six cartridges in the magazine. He went into the hall and stuck his feet into a pair of boots, listening all the time. Not a sound from Shaka. He was imagining things, no doubt, everything was as it should be. It would be light soon. It was the shadows making him uneasy, that was it. He unlocked the three locks on the front door and slowly opened it. Still no reaction from Shaka. Now he knew for certain that something was wrong. He picked up a torch from a shelf and shone it into the darkness. There was no sign of Shaka in the pen. He shouted for Shaka and shone the torch along the edge of the woods. Still no reaction. He quickly shut the door. Sweat was pouring off him. He cocked the gun and opened the door again. Cautiously he stepped out onto the porch. No sound. He walked over to the dog pen, then stopped in his tracks. Shaka was lying on the ground. His eyes were staring and his greyish-white fur bloodstained. He turned on his heel and ran back to the house, slamming the door behind him. Something was going on, but he had no idea what. Somebody had killed Shaka, though. He switched on every light in the house and sat down on his bed. He was shaking.From Publishers WeeklyMankell, known in this country for his Kurt Wallander police procedurals (Faceless Killers; The Dogs of Riga), sets this intricate, stand-alone tale of murder and intrigue in the vast pine forests of north-central Sweden. Stefan Lindman, a 37-year-old policeman in the city of Boras, sees his life, both professional and personal, as absolutely ordinary. Then he discovers a strange lump on his tongue; it's cancer, and his life changes dramatically. At the doctor's office he picks up a discarded newspaper and reads that former colleague Herbert Molin has been murdered in the northern forests. Because Lindman needs to take his mind off his upcoming cancer treatment, he decides to investigate Molin's death. As the details of the crime come to light, Lindman realizes he never knew the real Molin. The plot involves the secret world of Nazis, both past and present. The prose can be cold and spare, at least in translation: "There was a smell of paint in the house. All the lights were on. Lindman had to bow his head when he entered through the door." The unrelenting Lindman turns out to be an innovative investigator, though those seeking fast-paced action rather than meticulous introspection will be disappointed. Secrets are slowly and methodically teased from the evidence, and by the satisfying end readers with a taste for the unusual will find Lindman, and the mystery he solves, not in the least bit ordinary. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.