



The Flowers of the Forest

Joseph Hone

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It is an idyllic setting: the forest sweeping down to the valley, sunlight on the loch, the heather loud with bees: but one hive stands dismantled and a man has vanished. That man is Lindsay Phillips, head of a section of the Secret Service. Peter Marlow, restless in his Cotswolds retreat, thinks he has left the world of espionage behind him, but sudden unexpected pressures lead him to take up the search for Phillips. He is short of money; colleagues from the shadows of the past are persuasive; above all, he owes an intricate debt to the family, to recollections of his own childhood. Marlow is instantly caught up in a web of violence and intrigue that embraces Downing Street and anonymous hired killers, runs from domestic deceit to political kidnapping. As the search leads unpredictably from Scotland to Oxford, from Belgium to Eastern Europe, Marlow finds that his journey signposted by death and by forgotten betrayals, is a voyage into his own past, a voyage into the painful recesses of public, private and clandestine treason. 'This is the best thriller I've found in years, perhaps the best I remember; too serious and rich for the word thriller and what it implies though sticking closely to the thriller genre: a novel about the mysteriousness of human beings rather than the mysteries of intelligence and diplomacy. The weaving of the story is so close, so tight, that no image, no hint is ever wasted: everything links up with something else ...Above all there's a sense of densely packed layers of memory and interconnected experience: in families, in friendships, among colleagues, lovers, even spouses; and of secrets even among the closest, the impossibility of knowing the truth - with ultimate, total exactness - about anyone' - Isabel Quigly, "Financial Times". 'A densely-textured, subtle and allusive novel; a pleasure to read' - "Times Literary Supplement". 'A galloping plot ...thoroughly British in tone and outlook.' Guardian 'Mr Hone writes Len Deighton into the ground ...goes roaring confidently up to the front line' - "New Statesman".

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