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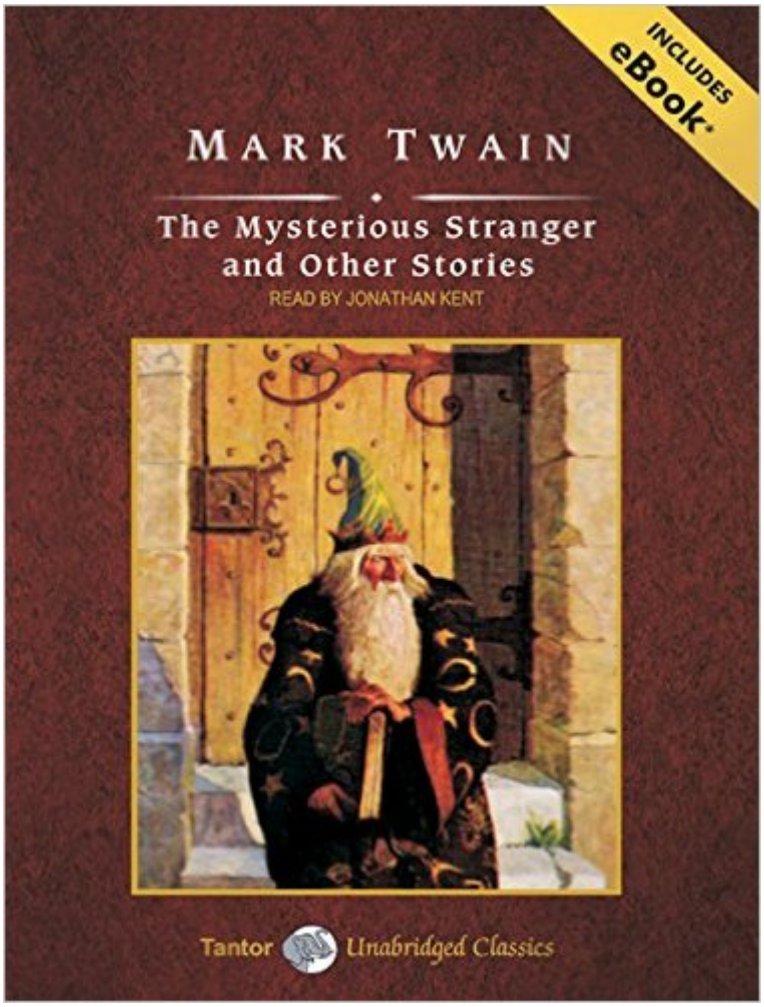
The Mysterious Stranger And Other Stories, With EBook (Tantor Unabridged Classics)



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Synopsis

The Mysterious Stranger, Mark Twain’s fantastical last novelette, took him twelve years-and three long drafts-to complete. Based on boyhood memories of the Mississippi River Valley and of the print shops of Hannibal, the story is set in medieval Austria at the dawn of the printing craft. It is a psychic adventure, full of phantasmagoric effects, in which a penniless printer’s apprentice-a youthful, mysterious stranger with the curious name 44-gradually reveals his otherworldly powers and the hidden possibilities of the mind. Ending on a startling note, this surprisingly existential tale reveals a darker side to the author’s genius. The Mysterious Stranger is a rarity in the work of Twain-a story in which the author turns his sardonic, free-wheeling wit to the problem of Eternal Evil in a distant time and place. In the other stories presented here, Twain debunks his Gilded Age; he ransacks the backyards of daily life and fable to find his notorious, sometimes preposterous metaphors. He is as apt to deal with the great minds of the law hunting a wayward elephant as with a man who has a bank note no one can cash. In addition to The Mysterious Stranger, this volume includes the stories "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg," "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," "The Diary of Adam and Eve," "Edward Mills and George Benton," "The Joke That Made Ed’s Fortune," and "A Fable."

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Customer Reviews

In 1590 three Austrian boys - Nikolaus, Seppi, and Theodor (the narrator) - meet a mysterious stranger in the countryside near their small village. This stranger possesses strange powers, and

delights the boys not only with his magic tricks (such as lighting their pipe with a breath or creating a miniature civilization from dust), but with his stories and observations regarding the human race. Though he identifies himself as an angel by the name of Satan he assures the boy that he is merely the nephew of the more famous figure, and gains their trust and their friendship. The boys continue a strange and often taxing relationship with the supernatural individual, and though they are unnaturally sedated by his physical presence his influence on their thoughts and morality creates a kind of lasting damage to their individual psyches.Mark Twain's narrative views on religion, faith, and humanity can be found in any number of his works, though I myself am only familiar with those presented in The Diaries of Adam and Eve, Helpful Hints for Good Living, and Letters from Earth. However, his critical presentation in The Mysterious Stranger is much darker than any I have read by him before. Although the story is told by Theodor, the narrative itself revolves around Satan and Satan's view of humanity. Much of the narrative itself is occupied with the sermons he delivers to the boys, which are aggressive and critical towards humanity, and often towards the morality the boys themselves are taught to respect. The kinds of ideas presented can leave readers wondering whether the character of Satan is really the nephew or the dominant figure, and allows them to question the motives of the foremost character in the novel. Is he truly a benevolent spiritual figure?

this volume spans the length of Mark Twain's career, and contains some of his most famous shorter works, which all centre on the subject of Money. 'The Celebrated jumping frog of Calaveras County' is the most perfect tall tale in the English language, three flawless pages about Jim Smiley and the bizarre sidelines he would investigate to win a bet, any bet, written in a miraculous mid-19th century California vernacular. If that isn't enough, Twain tops it with the best closing paragraph of any work I have ever read ever.'The $1,000,000 Bank note' is almost surreal, or Marxist, the story of a derelict made an unwitting guinea pig by two elderly millionaires, curious to see what would happen to an honest but poor man in the possession of such an impractible note. The frightening fetishistic power of currency structures a somewhat creepily benevolent narrative, and the opening paragraphs audaciously cram a novel's worth of misfortune.'The Man who corrupted Hadleyburg' is the masterpiece here, at once an unforgiving morality tale about the temptation of money on an incorruptible town, and a satire on the crippling effect of bogus social respectability. Twain's irony is at its most relentless here, mixing anger at elite hypocrisy with distaste for the savage mob mentality. The scenes of public justice are hilarious but terrifying; the unnamed man taking monstrous revenge on a whole town for a personal slight, exposing its shams by an experiment, could well be Twain himself.The same could be said of the hero of his novella 'The Mysterious

Stranger', Twain's last, posthumously published work.

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