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Shadow of the Leopard

Henning Mankell
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The struggles of nineteen-year-old Sophia Alface, a real-life landmine victim from Mozambique and depicted in Mankell's previous novels *Secrets in the Fire* and *Playing with Fire*, continue in this equally eye-opening mix of "truth and invention." Ten years since losing both of her legs, Sophia is raising two young children and expecting a third, yet constantly trying to understand life and figure out what it means to be an adult.

Although she still grieves the loss of her sisters to a landmine and AIDS; lives without electricity and other modern conveniences in her village home; and faces the constant threat of crocodiles, hippos, and leopards in the wild, she considers herself lucky to have healthy children and Armando, a caring lover. These happy times are short-lived, however, as Sophia catches Armando with another woman in the city. Constrained by poverty, she must decide whether to follow her mother's advice and hold on to her children's father, his meager income, and their place in the village, or trust her heart.

Swedish crime writer, dramatist, and children's author Henning Mankell divides his time between Sweden and Mozambique, where he is also involved in several relief organizations. He has won numerous literary awards for his notable mystery series featuring the iconic Inspector Kurt Wallander, as well as for his children's novel, *A Bridge to the Stars*, the first book in his Joel Gustafson series. His first Sophia novel, *Secrets in the Fire*, was the recipient of the International Sankei Children's Publishing Culture Award. Literary translator Anna Paterson is also accomplished; she won the Bernard Shaw Prize for her translation of *Forest of Hours* by Kerstin Ekman.

In this stand-alone docu-novel, Mankell explores the impact of loss and desperation in the midst of extreme poverty. The clear translation combines an unhurried pace, keen sense of place, and stark realism to recreate the harsh yet hopeful life of an enduring young woman. *Shadow of the Leopard* will open teens' minds and hearts to one of Africa's most dire concerns today and linger long after the book is finished.
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