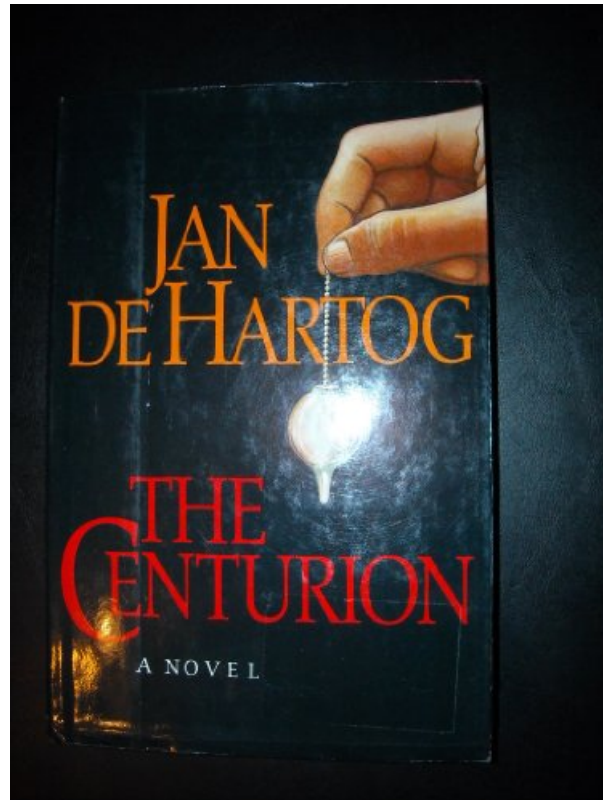
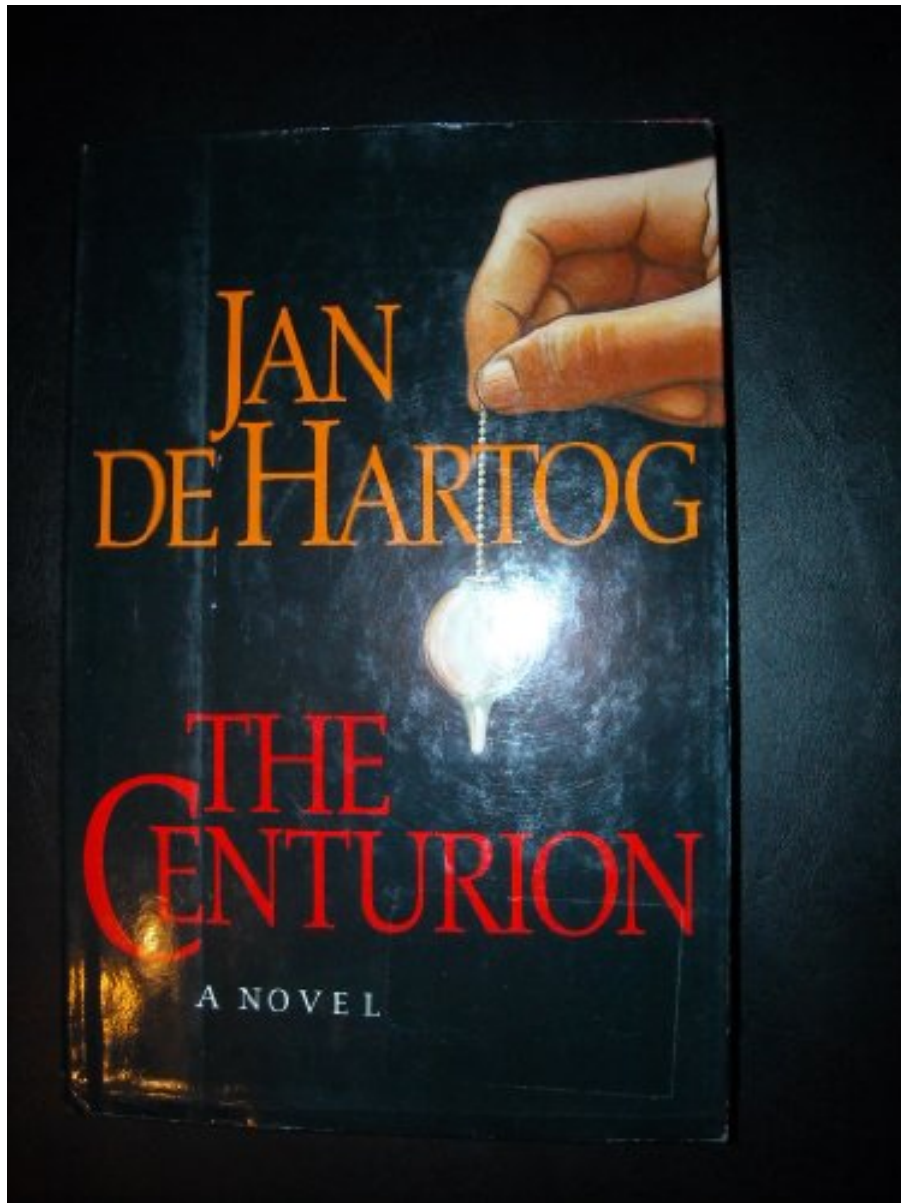


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From Publishers Weekly

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Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A soldier is a soldier, wherever and whenever . . .

By Michael K. Smith

While I'm aware of who the author is, I've never read any of his stuff, having a very limited interest in fiction

about World War II. But this one caught my eye because I definitely *do* have an interest in historical novels about the ancient world. Martinus Harinxma, Dutch oceangoing tugboat captain and the protagonist of several of De Hartog's earlier books, is now in irascible retirement in the south of France, driving his wife and grown kids crazy, unable quite to come to grips with the lack of physical action seemingly incumbent on a man in his seventies. On a trip to Canada and the U.S., he somehow gets involved with dowsing and turns out to have a great knack for it. His wife suggests he combine his new-found talent with his longstanding interest in Roman military history, which leads them both on a sort of guided tour of southwest England in the present -- and also sixteen hundred years ago. Praepositus (Colonel) Mellarius, adopted son of the centurion of the title (the old man with whom Martinus seems to be linked), leaves the Rhine in the summer of 368 A.D. as part of an expedition to pacify a revolt in Britain, a campaign which will lead him to question his lethal way of life and which will end up being the death of him for political reasons. We watch the Colonel's weary trek while learning a good deal about the *real* and thoroughly unglamorous life of the middle-rank Roman army at a time when Christianity was becoming a major (and generally detrimental) influence on the empire and its governing institutions. And we watch while the Dutchman in 1987 asks the wrong questions of his pendulum, misinterprets the visions he receives, and refuses to believe anything that goes against his own prejudices. This book is somewhat more than that surface story, though. Mellarius and Martinus are each on their own quests, to "find themselves," as we used to say, to figure out where they belong in their respective worlds. The Colonel worries about having been an insufficiently good son to the adopted father he literally worships, while the tug captain worries about having been an inadequate father through all his lengthy absences at sea. De Hartog's style is one of simple narrative combined with highly evocative description, but he certainly understands character, as well as Roman Britain.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Journeys (personal, physical, spiritual, emotional)

By A Customer

I absolutely loved this novel!! It is the story of a retired naval commodore who takes journeys of another kind when he decides to take up dowsing, and ends his journey with the best discovery of all--about himself! The book deals with spirituality without becoming preachy nor holier-than-thou, as the main character, Martinus, is forced to look at himself as seen through the eyes of a 4th century Roman centurion. Personal relationships, family relationships (and the love and frustration that go along with them) are explored, often with a sense of humor that will leave you laughing and crying at the same time because you will probably recognize yourself (or at least parts of yourself) and your family in his descriptions. As Martinus begins to question his long-held beliefs (not just the religious ones), so too will you.

I have since read other books by this author, but none have the same quality as this book. This is a book that I shall read again and again.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

fascinating story

By lucylake

this book was ordered to replace a copy which I lost several years ago. the original copy was given to me as a gift and I spent many an hour fascinated by the journey of 'the centurion'. Anyone who likes a good adventure spiced with a bit of the supernatural should give this book a try. I don't think you'll be sorry.

See all 5 customer reviews...

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