

In search of the first-time sensation

Like the First Day

STEFAN HERTMANS

'Like the First Day' is a novel of three trilogies, three times three short stories set in different decades and with various protagonists.

The first trilogy is set in the 1950s and represents childhood. Three young boys are consumed with desire for the sublime. One of them tries to strangle his dream love on stage, another one pushes a girl off the balcony, simply because he wishes to preserve his first sexual experience. The second trilogy, set between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, focuses on a group of school children who make their teachers' lives hell. And the last trilogy – a symbol for the perversity of adulthood – finishes with the story of a psychopath losing himself in a pornographic fantasy.

An outstanding novel with a gloomy message

DE TELEGRAAF

All the stories, with their varying characters, perspectives and styles, are mysteriously linked to each other and make a beeline for doom. Every story starts with a burning desire for the intensity of love, for experiencing the first time anew. To achieve this apparently innocent aim, Hertmans' characters overstep the psychopathological boundary, lose their way in the dark and slip into the abyss. 'Like The First Day' has an oppressive, hallucinatory power that will haunt the reader.

A book about extreme people and feelings, which beats the living daylights out of the reader

HP/DE TIJD



AUTHOR



Stefan Hertmans' (b. 1951) biography reads like a 'bildungsroman': from teacher to jazz musician to professor and writer's writer to Belgian State Prize Laureate and major international success. He has published novels, short stories, essays on literature and philosophy, plays and poetry. Immediate classic 'War and Turpentine' was chosen as one of the 10 Best Books of 2016 by The New York Times. Photo © Praet

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