

A vital tribute to love, art, and resistance to sorrow

Before Forgetting

PETER VERHELST

Peter Verhelst's mother dies unexpectedly. He witnesses his father's grief and must also find his own way of coping. Father and son try to overwrite the traumatic image of her death with good memories, images and visual arts which hold her echo. It is a process full of harshly realistic, mythical, sensual, essayistic and poetic journeys. The author grimly excavates his memories, at the same time opening up new worlds occupied by red deer, fish, works of art, white cats and Japanese gardens.

'Before Forgetting' is a dance. A painting of words. A hand touching our sorrow. *****

DE STANDAARD

Verhelst combines language and imagery to give form to loss. This novel is packed with comparisons and metaphors: grief is a parasite, a pet, a room you would rather avoid, a bubble of air. It makes the sorrow tangible and keeps this novel about emptiness and loss from being too abstract or too sentimental.

'Before Forgetting' is neither a book about mothers, nor a book about death, but rather a fervent ode to our floundering, tentative resistance to meaninglessness and sorrow. Verhelst struggles tooth and nail to create something vital—something that could continue to remind us, so that ultimately we can forget.

A novel which pays tribute to love and resistance at the same time.

DE MORGEN



AUTHOR



Peter Verhelst (b. 1962) is a novelist, scriptwriter, myth and theatre maker, poet and picture book author all in one. As a child he wanted to become a painter, but decided to write from a live model instead. His work has been praised for its powerful images, the sensuality and richness of its language and the author's unbridled imagination. In 2018 he won the Sybren Polet Prize for Literature, a prize for authors with an experimental literary oeuvre. *Photo © Chris Ward*

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