

A ruthless and claustrophobic debut

Daughter

LENNY PEETERS

Daughter is interrogated by the police. She has no idea why. The girl with learning disabilities has no sense of moral values and lives in a bubble. She grows up under appalling conditions with her eccentric father. She tries to find some comfort in the care of her guinea pigs, but fails to realise that she is actually causing the creatures to die one by one. And then there's Jonas, the boy next door. Daughter does not recognise cruelty and is unaware when Jonas's first tentative kiss turns into abuse.

Gradually, the story of her solitary childhood makes its way into the interrogation and it emerges that Daughter has done something dreadful. The knife that she sticks into the ground in the book's opening sentence has seen blood.

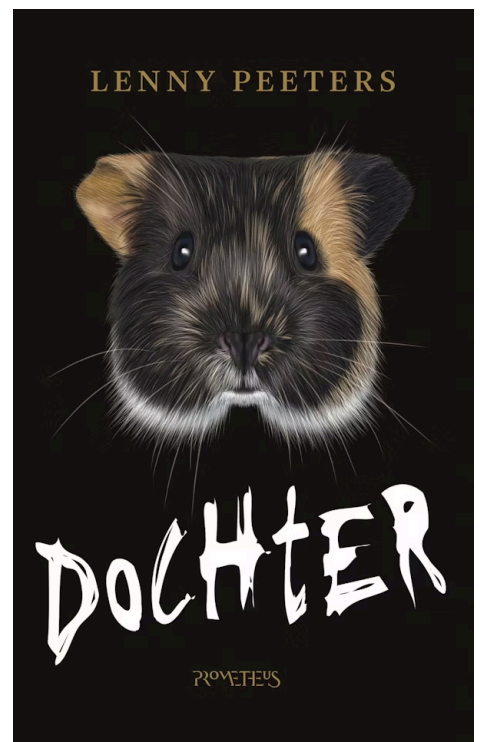
Peeters' style pins you to your seat

TROUW

Peeters tells the story from the perspective of the backward, naïve girl. She narrates her painful tale in a childish and expressionless tone. The events are shocking to the reader, but not to Daughter herself. The disconcerting effect of this contrast is reinforced by the book's extremely efficient, economical style: brief chapters with short sentences that paint a clear and credible picture of the reasoning of a mentally deficient and vulnerable girl. With its unsentimental yet suggestive tone this poignant debut has a devastating impact.

Shockingly raw and enchanting in equal measure *****

KNACK



AUTHOR



Lenny Peeters (1975) teaches Dutch as a foreign language to adults. When she is not doing this, she writes in the Bourgogne in France. Her short stories have been published in magazines in Flanders and the Netherlands and some have won awards. Daughter, her first novel, received very favourable reviews in the Dutch and Flemish press. The book won the bronze owl, the most important debutant prize for literature. She spent more than six years on the book, in part because of the thorough research. "I'm quite an upbeat person myself, but my work is pretty dark," the author explains. *Photo © Johan Jacobs*

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