

A social critique and satirical coming-of-age story

The Reward

FIKRY EL AZZOUZI

The Flemish-Moroccan Zakaria, also known as Skidmark, Abu Batman, Jihad and bunny rabbit, is taught by his mother that good manners are essential if he wants to get ahead in life. But life does not take much notice of that. In fact, life is a real struggle for Zakaria. His family falls apart after his father dies and his mother is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. His romantic escapades come to nothing either. Zakaria does not seem to fit in anywhere, until he meets Tupac Shakur. Following an act of aggression against an elderly Flemish man they flee to Morocco together. There they plan their return to Belgium. Under the influence of drugs and the wrong friends, Zakaria starts to see radicalisation as a more and more attractive way out.

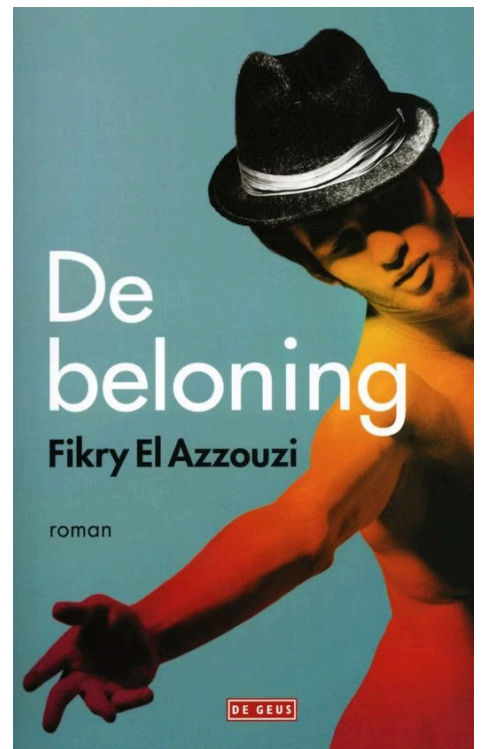
El Azzouzi wields humour like a socio-critical scalpel.

KNACK

In order to address several hot topics, Fikry El Azzouzi opts for all-out satire in 'The Reward'. With acerbic wit and absurd humour he writes the coming-of-age story of a boy in search of both his sexual and national identity. Although Zakaria is torn between Morocco and Flanders, he does everything he can to be accepted as a Belgian. In a rite of passage that is as hilarious as it is painful, he is put to the ultimate test. El Azzouzi portrays him as an insecure follower, someone who craves assurance and only finds it in the identity of a suicide terrorist. The author steers well clear of preachiness but delivers a challenging and funny literary work with 'The Reward', full of sparkling dialogues and wonderful magic-realist elements.

A beautiful, intriguing and at times shocking book.

CHICKLIT



AUTHOR



Fikry El Azzouzi (b. 1978), a Flemish-Moroccan author, writes novels, columns and plays. His texts are relevant, multifaceted and often deal with current topics. He portrays a generation of young people looking for meaning and identity in our society, and depicts the clash between people with different backgrounds in an open, impartial way. He does so in a highly distinctive style that is fast-paced, has lots of dialogue and is laced with biting humour. His is a unique voice in Flanders, for which he received the Ultima for Literature (The Flemish state prize for literature) in 2021. Photo © Jimmy Kets

ORIGINAL TITLE De beloning (2019, De Geus, 256 pp.)

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