

FICTION

Tender novel about the love between two women in a 19th century village

Colombe

CHRISTINE VAN DEN HOVE

It is 1838. In a mountain village, deep in the south of France, close to the Spanish border, two children are born on the same day. The two girls, Colombe and Amparo, grow up together, and feel increasingly attracted to each other. But they live in a place and an era where there are as yet no words for what they feel. Expressing your feelings simply isn't done.

Subtle tale of an impossible love****

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When Colombe marries the reclusive shepherd Michel, and goes to live on a hill some way from the village, the women are driven apart. When Michel accidentally mutilates Colombe, Amparo suddenly disappears. It is only many years later, when Michel has died and the women are already in their fifties, that they see each other again. Amparo turns out to have built up a new life and career as a sculptor. She was able to do so by taking on a new identity: after leaving the village she lived as a man.

Christine Van den Hove has written a tender novel that lets each of the three characters speak in turn. She beautifully captures the soberness of rural life, the daily routine and the things that are unspoken. The love triangle is developed subtly, with an eye for nuance and the complexity of the multifaceted love between the characters. Her style – restrained, sober and clear – and the important role played by the hills and the pastoral landscape bring to mind Paolo Cognetti's 'The Eight Mountains'.

Beautifully written debut*****

BOEKLOVERS



AUTHOR



Christine Van den Hove lives in a mountain village in the South of France, where she works on her novels, short stories, poetry, blogs and blovels. She has published extensively in various literary journals and has been praised for her succinct, clear and sober style, which reflects the finely drawn psychology of her characters.

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