FICTION

A razor-sharp ‘whydunnit’ about a traumatized woman

Raw and As If

VALERIE TACK

A young woman murders the man with whom she’s been having an affair for some time. He always called her Bird. How could she have got to the point of killing him, and mutilating him with a knife? In her highly praised debut, Valerie Tack takes us with her into Bird’s past. Along with her parents and brother, she lives on a farm that is run with an iron fist by her alcoholic and violent father, who calls her his ‘devil’s child’. Unlike her mother and brother, however, Bird manages to escape. She seems to succeed in starting a new life as a teacher in the capital city.

But even in the city she is unable to shake off her past. She enters into a string of amorous adventures with men and women, in which she proves herself pitiless. She keeps tight hold of the reins of every encounter and also directs the parting, which she marks by stealing a cup from her new conquest. When she meets a barman, who turns out to be a talented painter in a steady relationship, she finds herself unable to escape his power games. For the first time the roles are reversed and she has to follow him. The knife she always carries with her gradually becomes her only way out.

‘Raw and As If’ has been praised for its original and clever structure. The disturbed chronological logic challenges the reader to make connections. Tack’s unemotional style builds the tension and sustains the dark world and psyche of the narrator. She opts for an original female central character, who with her intelligent and cynical voice creates an oppressive atmosphere. ‘Raw and As If’ is not just a gripping ‘whydunnit’ but an expressively written psychological story about the consequences of a loveless childhood.

> **Tragic, funny, addictively ingenious ******
>
> FOCUS KNACK

AUTHOR

Valerie Tack (b. 1981) grew up in the countryside and graduated in Dutch and English language and literature. She is interested above all in the dark and destructive forces that lurk inside every one of us. The central characters in her stories are mostly strong women who despite everything are struggling with themselves, with other people and with the world around them. Her debut, the psychological crime novel 'Raw and As If', has been praised for its irresistible and remorseless style, unique narrative structure and unforgettable scenes. Photo © Joost Devriesere

ORIGINAL TITLE: Rauw en Alsof (Houtekiet, 2020, 292 pp.)

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