

Not only waves break

Breakers

PAUL VERREPT

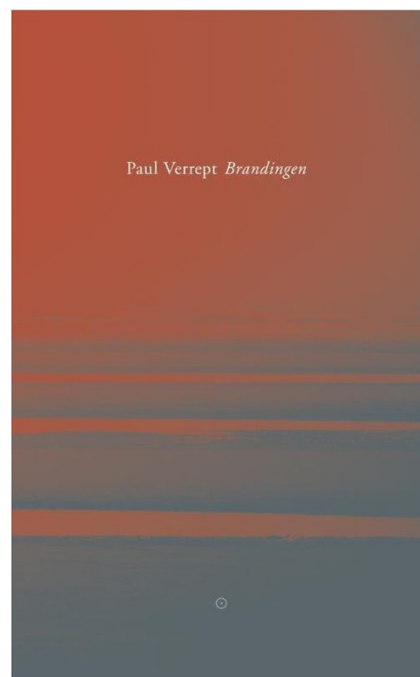
Five lifeless bodies wash up on a beach close to a couple's home, followed not long afterwards by the body of a child. From that moment on, everything between the man and woman who live in the beachside house will be different. Their safe world belongs to the past, now that the refugee issue has disturbed their harmonious world. Torn between guilt and impotence, the man and woman drift further and further apart until their relationship hits the rocks. The woman cannot forgive herself for failing to rush to help in time. The man flees in the night without any discussion and ends up in a virtually lifeless village, where he meets a castaway who helps him to see the error of his ways. Paul Verrept places two very different stories of flight side by side: a refugee who arrives by boat and over time brightens up an ageing community, and a man who leaves his wife, singing the swansong of a lonely European.

'Breakers' is a compact, visually oriented novella with a dash of magic realism.

MAPPALIBRI

'Breakers' brings together two perspectives on this breakup. It was earlier staged as a diptych called 'The Flood' and 'The Flight'. In precise and measured monologues in a musical, rhythmical language that has a magical, hypnotizing effect, the woman and the man speak separately. Both seek in vain to restore their former happiness. They struggle with the question of how to give shape to their life, now that it has become the background to a tragedy, and how to reconcile themselves with the consequences of their powerlessness.

In this carefully composed novella, Paul Verrept addresses feelings like empathy and responsibility, and translates the contemporary refugee issue into a timeless and personal drama.



AUTHOR



Paul Verrept (b. 1963) is an author and illustrator. He writes his gently philosophical stories about life, love and death with candour and an eye for vivid detail. Verrept's characters have a certain innocence: they gaze at the world with wide-open eyes. They are vulnerable, but also resilient. No matter how badly life bruises them, they always stand back up again. Verrept sketches them with a great deal of compassion. *Photo © Marleen Nelen*

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