

Literary true crime about a master con artist

The Miracle of Belgium

MAARTEN INGHELS

Over a period of forty years, master con artist Piet Van Haut has presented himself as a diplomat, as director of Johnson & Johnson, as an examining magistrate, as the CEO of Belgian Railways and as a billionaire. He has thereby stolen millions and now has a luxurious lifestyle featuring sportscars, private jets and classy hotels. Maarten Inghels became fascinated by the man and realized he had his hands on a brilliant subject for his next novel. He went in search of Piet Van Haut, and after countless meetings and telephone conversations gained unique insights into his life. He discovered that Piet is not merely a compulsive liar with a pathological craving for attention – he carries with him the burden of traumas and complexes that originate in his loveless childhood.

A true page-turner

KNACK

The better Inghels gets to know Piet Van Haut, the bigger the puzzle becomes. The author's hunger for a sensational story carries him into a web of fiction and megalomania that the charlatan weaves tighter and tighter. Inghels also realizes that he is not immune to the criminal's allure, since he finds himself all too keen to believe in the illusion of a guaranteed international bestseller that Van Haut puts into his head. Things take a truly menacing turn when Piet Van Haut changes his name to Maarten Inghels.

'The Miracle of Belgium' tells the story of a real-life swindler, but also demonstrates what a perilous undertaking the writing of the book was in itself. Inghels looks at the role of lies on many levels, in literature, for instance, and in life and authorship. Inghels meanwhile plays an interesting game with the boundary between fact and fiction. 'The Miracle of Belgium' is a shocking story about heroism, vanity, greed, ambition and manipulation, not just on the part of the con artist but on the part of the author too.

Maarten Inghels



AUTHOR



Maarten Inghels (b. 1988) is a multidisciplinary artist, poet and writer who does not limit himself to paper. He was the official city poet of Antwerp from 2016 to 2018. In his poetry he makes innovative use of techniques and methods from the visual arts. His poems have been applied as tattoos, he made a river trip on a one-word poem, and he developed 'The Invisible Route', a map for pedestrians to enable them to cross the city without being filmed by security cameras. He is the founder of 'Lonely Funeral' in Antwerp, a literary and social project in which poets write personal poems for those who died lonely deaths, which they then come to recite at the funerals. Photo © Joris Casaer

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