

# The search for a foothold

# Incomplete

GIE BOGAERT

Journalist Bernard, about to retire, writes articles about loss and loneliness for a newspaper. After a long career in the international news department, he is now asked to devote a weekly column to smaller, everyday tales. He interviews ordinary citizens, who tell him their life stories. That is how he meets Hennie, an artist with a murky past, and her deaf son. Hennie was adopted and met her biological parents when she turned eighteen, which confronted her with an impossible choice: who did she feel most affection for, for her real or adoptive parents? By telling her story to Bernard, Hennie hopes to come to terms both with herself and with her past. Bernard himself faces exactly the same difficulty. During an interview with a former lover, she tells him he has a daughter, Toni. Bernard goes to find her at the coast and the two of them soon feel a bond, even seeing a resemblance in their looks. That is until a DNA test proves they are not related. The hard truth immediately marks the end of the relationship they have built up. Bernard and Toni are each thrown back into a solitary existence.

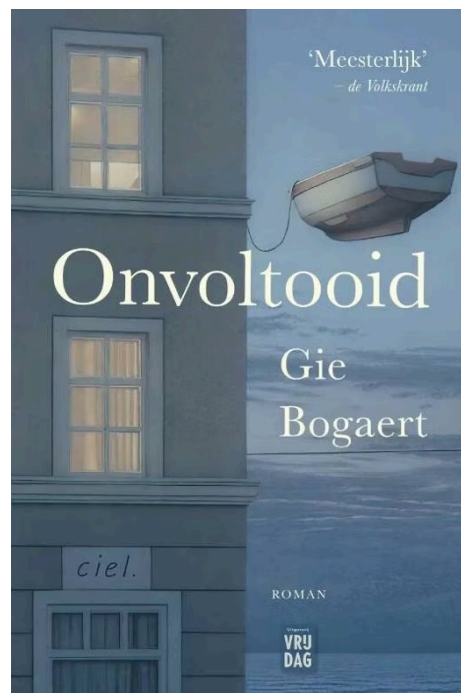
**Bogaert once again proves himself a sensitive seismograph of relational interaction and odd family relationships.**

DE MORGEN

'Incomplete' is an intimate novel about the stories we tell. Those we use to build our identities, those about origins and kinship; truth and lies; and hope and disappointment. Like a Flemish Graham Swift, travelling back and forth between sympathetic melancholy and empathetic humour, Bogaert writes about loss and longing and succeeds in making his characters into real people - vulnerable, but at the same time strong enough to withstand friction. They feel obliged to part, from their parents or from a daughter they never had, and realise that ultimately they can only find comfort in each other.

**It's as if you've picked up a book by Patrick Modiano.**

DOORBRAAK



## AUTHOR



Gie Bogaert (b. 1958) has gained a reputation as an author of atmospheric prose that vividly expresses the unspoken, conjuring up human desire and impossible longings in his pared-down, minimalist, poetic language. Love, loss and loneliness are the central themes of his work. Bogaert's stories and novels are mostly populated with characters who are occupied with their own rather banal cares and activities. Gradually however a hidden world of very human emotions and desires emerges – a world that reflects the author's vision on la condition humaine. In his novels he follows in the American storytelling tradition set by Raymond Carver. *Photo (c) Koen Broos*

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