

Four girls disappear in the forest

Sacrifice

TONI COPPERS

Alex Berger, a rather unusual private detective, was chief of police in Brussels in an earlier existence. Now he leads a solitary life and regularly heads out into the natural world. Berger is on a retreat in the Italian Alps when inspector and friend Sara Cavani of Interpol asks him to come back to help investigate a gruesome murder. Alex hesitates, but eventually takes the bait.

In the Ardennes, in the ancient Anlier Forest, a ranger has found the body of a young woman lying naked on a tree stump, abused and strangled. The scene of the crime conjures up sinister memories of a cold case from several years ago, when a young woman was found murdered in the same woods. The investigation focuses on Suzy, an isolated village in the middle of the forest, inhabited mainly by elderly people and by eccentrics who are trying to build new lives for themselves.

An exceptionally good thriller. Cinematic.

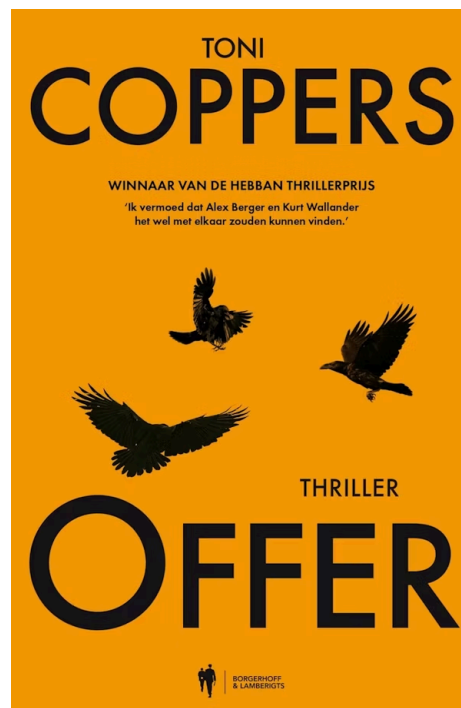
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The local detective is none too pleased that 'busybodies from Brussels' are meddling with the investigation, but that doesn't deter Berger from making his own unconventional inquiries. He goes to ground in the enormous forest and is confronted there with his own fears and demons. While the bond between him and local police commissioner Roos Collignon grows increasingly intense, the murderer is already in search of a fresh victim.

Most striking about 'Sacrifice', aside from an ingenious and exciting plot, are the detailed psychological descriptions of the personalities of those involved. Coppens' language is accessible, but it provides space for reflection and depth. Through the character of a friend of Alex Berger, a bookseller, literature has a special part to play in the book.

A real treat. ****

VRIJ NEDERLAND



AUTHOR



Toni Coppens (b. 1961) is a crime writer. His thrillers are known for their ingenious plots and in-depth psychological descriptions of the characters. He writes about people of flesh and blood, few of whom are wholly good or evil. His books fall into two series, one about police chief Liese Meerhout and one about private detective Alex Berger, but they all work fine as stand-alone novels. His novels have won him several prizes, including the Hercule Poirot Lifetime Award and the MAX Gouden Vleermuis Oeuvre Prize.

ORIGINAL TITLE Toni Coppens and co-author Annick Lambert, Offer (2022, Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, 366 pp.)

SERIES 'Sacrifice' is the third book in the series featuring private detective Alex Berger, any of which can be read separately.

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