

Family drama and Balkan gangs in Brussels

Brussels Blues

WOUTER DEHAIRS

Private detective Keller Brik, who stands comparison with Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, is in every sense a classic detective: pig-headed, cynical and distrustful, but cursed with an immense sense of responsibility and the conviction that the bad guys must never win. One day Karel Deridder walks into his office, pulls out a pistol and shoots himself in the head. Elise, Deridder's seventeen-year-old adopted daughter, has at that point been missing for a month. On the day her father ends his own life, her lifeless body is found in a wood on the edge of Brussels. Karel's brother-in-law committed suicide just a few weeks earlier. Brik and his assistant Gwen Van Meer refuse to believe that so much family tragedy can be a matter of chance and set out to investigate.

Meanwhile, Brik is hired to search for a vanished transmigrant. In exchange for information about the young illegal resident, he goes to work for a Serb called Dragomir Mihailovic. It becomes a remarkable, far from commonplace collaboration with the biggest mob in the Brussels underworld. Rival Balkan gangs are fighting for supremacy in the city's criminal milieu and Brik's life is at risk on several occasions. It is in that dark underbelly of the city that the key to the Deridder mystery turns out to lie.

One of the best Flemish crime novels for a long time

DE STANDAARD

In this third book about private detective Keller Brik, Wouter Dehairs appropriates the traditions of the genre, but he does so with a voice and style of his own. Furthermore, 'Brussels Blues' is a socially relevant thriller; Dehairs draws into the story controversial issues including international gang wars and immigration. The plot is clever and complex, and the central character is thoroughly convincing as a 'flawed hero'. The writing of 'Brussels Blues' is lively and engaging, full of wry humour, and impressive in its tension, composition, subject matter and narrative technique.

A believable, rather disconcerting portrait of the underbelly of Brussels

FLANDERS
LITERATURE



AUTHOR



Wouter Dehairs (b. 1981) is a writer of crime novels that are often set in Brussels, the Belgian capital that commands the stage as a capricious, inspiring, shady central character. With 'Night City', his third novel, he won the 2021 Hercule Poirot Prize for the best Flemish crime novel. *Photo © Koen Broos*

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SERIES 'Brussels Blues' is the third book in the series featuring private detective Keller Brik, any of which can be read separately.

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