

The devastating power of  
unprocessed emotions in men

# Mauk

JAN VANTOORTELBOOM

From his deathbed, Mauk looks back on his life with few warm feelings. He remembers a loving, nurturing mother who died young, but above all a tyrannical father who was not in command of his own demons and therefore unleashed them on his wife and child. To make the psychological and physical terror rather more bearable, Mauk falls back on his imagination, inventing a world of his own, 'the Wild West', inspired by the books of Karl May. He also dreams up a protective older brother called Henri, who unfortunately turns out to be an incarnation of his own rage.

When Mauk is twelve, his father kills his mother and makes it look like an accident. For three years Mauk suppresses his anger and seeks refuge in his imagination. The more he submerges himself in his self-created Wild West, the more he loses his grip on reality and takes on Henri's rage. In a frenzied fit of anger, he attacks his father.

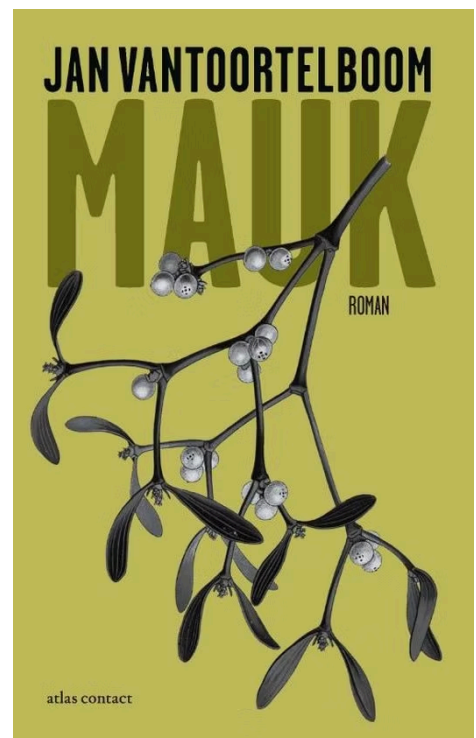
**'Mauk' is a book you won't easily lay aside or forget.**

LITERAIR NEDERLAND

Through suggestive, fragmented memories and leaps between reality and fantasy, 'Mauk' shows how a violent past marks a person for life. Vantoortelboom repeatedly hands the reader small pieces of the puzzle, with which he gradually builds the underlying tension in vivid, hard-hitting and poetic sentences. He proves an acute psychological observer, who convincingly depicts the terror between father and son. Vantoortelboom is a master at describing unprocessed emotions in men. 'Mauk' is a novel about pain, loss of innocence, guilt, loneliness and emotional disfigurement, but also about imagination as a survival strategy. A story both haunting and poignant.

**Reading 'Mauk' means digging deep to reach the bottom, but having got there you find gold.**

DE VOLKSKRANT



## AUTHOR



Jan Vantoortelboom (b. 1975) grew up in Flanders, but now lives and works in the Netherlands. In many of his novels he revisits the region where he grew up and paints a compelling picture of la Flandre profonde. In each of his books he operates within a frightening universe all his own, a world of psychologically broken men and the damage they do. To many of his characters, life is a question of survival, or of death. They are ruled by fate and have to make the best of a bad situation. His work is characterised by the rich imagination that flows through his intuitive writing.

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