

The hidden erotic life of a city mother

Gentlemen

PATRICIA JOZEF

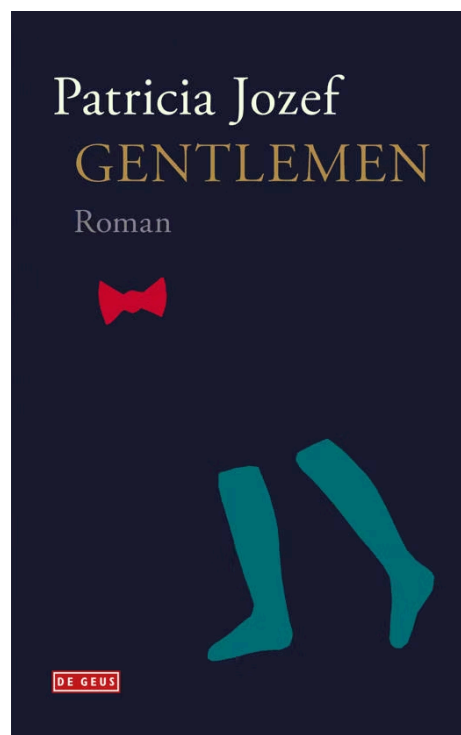
Marieke and Vik have been a couple since they were fourteen. They finish each other sentences, wear each other's clothes, intuit each other flawlessly and are devoted parents to their twin daughters Hasse and Lotte, who were the result of IVF treatment. Years later, Marieke mourns the loss of sexuality. She tries countless times to persuade Vik to rediscover their intimacy but encounters only rejection. In the hope that a change of environment will do them good, the family moves from the city to the countryside. While Vik blossoms, city girl Marieke feels increasingly isolated and shut away.

'Gentlemen' is refined, layered, bloodcurdling, a book about sensuality and desire on the one hand and purity on the other. ****

BAZAROW

The combination of her sexual frustrations and her exploratory, practical nature prompts Marieke to undertake research into male sex workers. After a few meetings with 'gentlemen', who tend to repel rather than to attract her, she meets Rocco. Despite the great differences between them, she feels drawn to this handsome, slightly older man. He provides her with sexual satisfaction for a fee, but also open conversations, innovative intimacy and new perspectives. In between their meetings he binds Marieke to him by sending countless messages. The dividing line between reality and pretence gradually grows vague. Marieke becomes obsessed by Rocco, although she's aware that on a spiritual and intellectual level they are not a match. Furthermore, her search for lust comes at the expense of her commitment as a partner and mother. When Vik's vulnerability surfaces, Marieke makes a decision.

In 'Gentlemen' Patricia Jozef presents us with stimulating ways to carry on thinking about how to create space for colourful desires.



AUTHOR



Patricia Jozef (b. 1975) studied painting and philosophy, and in both she looks for stories. In the lessons she gives to newcomers who don't speak Dutch, she daily sees a diversity of lives pass by. Her work is therefore characterized by an investigative gaze. She goes to great lengths in empathizing with her characters, who have immense psychological depth and are not always what they seem at first sight. *Photo © Johan Jacobs*

ORIGINAL TITLE: Gentlemen (De Geus, 2024, 392 pp.)

RIGHTS SOLD German (Arche Verlag)

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In 'Gentlemen' Patricia Jozef frankly investigates female desire and sexual morality. What happens when we reverse traditional roles and expectations? How can you know what you yourself want if your life is thoroughly intertwined with another person's? In light-hearted and discerning prose, and in filmic scenes, Jozef describes how a woman seeks out her boundaries, norms and values. The hidden world of the male escort is given a human face by Jozef's empathetic writing. Above all, 'Gentlemen' is a book about love and humanity.