

Egg cells and real estate

The Collective Breakdown of the Hofmeyer Family

JULIE CAFMEYER

Julie is a 37-year-old performance artist with a broken relationship to deal with when her father offers her a sum of money. He advises her to have her eggs frozen and to invest in real estate. Julie is not planning simply to accept that role, however. She's satisfied with her life, which is devoted to freedom and independence. So she moves from one apartment to the next, dragging a handful of inherited items with her.

In 'The Collective Breakdown of the Hofmeyer Family', Cafmeyer describes a protagonist who battles against the social expectations placed on a woman in her thirties. In a radically honest and vulnerable quest, she goes in search of the woman she wants to be and seeks connection with other women around her. That attempt to liberate herself results in a collective family breakdown. The novel also tells of efforts by other generations of women to escape the straitjacket of a stereotypical female role. There's Julie's mother, for example, who suffocates in her new role of homemaker. Or her sister Olga, who opts for marriage and a renovation project, but eventually succumbs to the implicit demands of the society to which she belongs.

A sharp sketch of our times, beautifully constructed and centred on the question of what is truly important in life.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

This exceptional debut consists of nine chapters in different literary registers that are brought together in a tight composition. Cafmeyer pushes her characters to their limits and combines her story with a surreal and powerfully symbolic layer, reminiscent of Latin American authors such as Mónica Ojeda or Ariana Harwicz.



AUTHOR



Julie Cafmeyer (b. 1987) is a theatre-maker, author and columnist. She graduated as a theatre director and grew to become an unconventional and high-profile voice in the cultural landscape. In her work she investigates feminist themes, often from an autobiographical starting point. Her work plays with the tension between reality and fiction, and is typified by tragicomic humour that dares to be acerbic and uncomfortable. Photo © Athos Burez

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