

Satirical manual for success

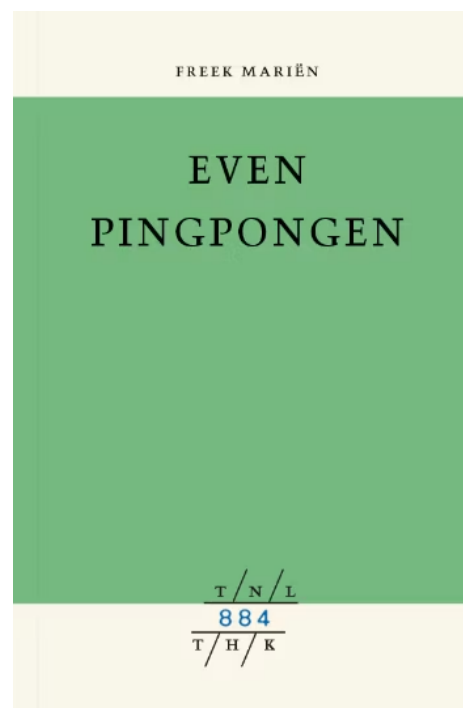
A Quick Back-and-Forth

FREEK MARIËN

In 'A Quick Back-and-Forth', Christine, Hekuran and Susanne warmly welcome the audience to the pre-launch of Worth It 2.0 – The Next Step, their biggest and most experimental project of all time. The following day the three consultants will present their state-of-the-art technology to a group of heads of state to whom they are hoping to sell the concept. On the pretext of combatting poverty and improving efficiency, Worth It provides a rating system that stimulates social progress. Every resident or customer of Worth It is given a rating: someone with an A rating has no trouble getting a mortgage or a good job, while 'a D' will be watched particularly closely in the supermarket. But no worries, by means of a curated subscription package, Worth It coaches you towards making a fortune. In other words, anyone willing to pay a monthly fee can look forward to success. That's the story of consultants Christine and Hekuran themselves; they've both fought hard to work their way up from low scores. Susanne, by contrast, comes from a long line of 'A-types' and grew up with privileges that seemed hers by right. Slowly but surely, their philanthropy starts to exhibit totalitarian traits and the pressure of their rating system corrupts even the relationships between them. The situation eventually reaches boiling point.

'A Quick Back-and-Forth' is a satirical thought experiment for teenagers and adults about the route to success. Mariën bases the language and style of the play on an intensive study of marketing- and management-speak. Superficially the ideas the trio have and the things they say are clever and uplifting, but the deeper you dig, the more manipulative they seem, and concerned only with appearances.

The play carries techno-optimism and self-improvement to their most extreme and horrifying consequences. In a time when we are deluged with unsolicited advice, inundated by the heroism of self-help and self-made triumphalism on social media, it poses questions about the boundaries of independence and objectivity. Is happiness impossible without pressure?



AUTHOR



Freek Mariën (Ghent, 1988) is an author and a theater maker. He studied drama at KASK in Ghent. He and Carl von Winckelmann are the artistic leaders of the theater ensemble Het Kwartier, mounting productions for young people and adults that emphasize powerful writing, socially relevant topics, and unexpected forms and themes. Freek has won awards such as the Dutch-German Kinder- und Jugenddramatiker*innenpreises 2012 and 2020 for plays for young people, the East Flanders Literary Prize 2014, and the Toneelschrijfprijs for the best Dutch-language play (winner in 2015, nominated in 2017 and 2019). His writings have been translated into German, French, Finnish, and English, with public readings and performances in various European countries and the United States.

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CHARACTERS 3 characters (1 M, 2 F)

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