

On pride and passion

From Here

HERMAN VAN DE WIJDEVEN

'From Here' is a triptych with stories about the inhabitants of the Veenkoloniën or 'peat colonies', the impoldered marshy land in the north of the Netherlands. The play is about the people who lived in that extraordinary landscape: those who came, those who left again and those who stayed. These are the stories of real people and the pride and passion they feel for this place, despite the sacrifices the landscape demands of them.

'From Here' takes the form of three monologues. The first tells the story of Feij and his older brother Wierd. Life in the village feels like a prison to the adventurous Wierd, so he decides to leave for Brazil, to the great distress of his elderly mother and his brother. Wierd writes letters in which he tries to persuade Feij to emulate him and seek success overseas. Feij is used to following his brother's example and looks up to him, but there is something that continues to bind him to the peat. Feij feels at home on his native soil and does not want to leave.

In 'Alda' we hear the voices of several generations of women who, strong and fearless, choose their own path in life. They haven't always had it easy, and the pain is passed down from one generation to the next. Nevertheless, the women feel fortified by being so firmly rooted in their environment.

Finally, in 'Torf', the peat itself speaks in the form of eco-writing in which nature is given a voice. 'Torf' tells of a slow decline, of all the reasons why there is less and less peat left, and of the enduring impact this has on the landscape.

The monologues are highly poetic and their power often lies in what is left unsaid. The text is rhythmical with a high degree of musicality, inviting the reader to read it aloud. Van de Wijdeven succeeds in linking the personal stories of ordinary people to universal and contemporary themes such as migration, ecology, the depopulation of the countryside and the impact of humans on nature, without for a moment seeming preachy or narrow minded. 'From Here' is a tribute to an exceptional natural environment, the people who live there, and their power to decide for themselves how to live their lives.



VANHIER

Herman van de Wijdeven
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AUTHOR



Herman van de Wijdeven (b. 1961) is a Dutch author living in Flanders. He studied drama and has worked as an actor with various Dutch and Flemish theatre companies. He started his writing career as a playwright and wrote his first children's book in 2013. His style has been compared to the work of internationally lauded authors such as Bart Moeyaert, Aidan Chambers and Niccolò Ammaniti. Photo © Claudia Kamergorodski

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