

Can you flee a world in crisis?

Refuge

ELVIS PEETERS

'Refuge' follows a woman who, after years of activism, leaves her life in Belgium behind and withdraws to a remote valley in Normandy. Her departure is a reaction to a world that paralyses her through continual wars, a sense of political impotence and her own vanishing ideals. The death of her elderly mother becomes the turning point: with nothing tying her to Belgium, she moves to France for a fresh start.

In a simple house, she tries to relearn how to look: at the cows languidly grazing, birds skimming past, the rhythm of the seasons. Nature gives her the stillness she longs for, far from the overwhelming world. She gradually builds a new life for herself and meets villagers such as the local barkeeper, Jeremy the Englishman and his dog, and H el ene, a former concert pianist with whom a cautious intimacy develops. But when the valley is hit by a devastating flood, her fragile new life is swept away overnight. For Peeters this is a way to ask a probing question: can you really flee a world in crisis?

A sophisticated, level-headed story about 'disappointment that brings us to our knees' and perpetually shattered hope.

DE MORGEN

Elvis Peeters writes with sober and controlled clarity. The observations of the landscape, the animals and the seasons have an almost meditative effect. Peeters' style leaves room for silence in this deeply affecting novel about uprooting, the desire for peace, and the impossibility of truly escaping.

Their best book in years.

KNACK



AUTHOR



Writing duo Elvis Peeters (b. 1957) writes fiction, poetry, scripts and children's books. They pour their social engagement and activism into beautifully crafted and unique narratives. In their novels, they succeed in addressing fascinating moral issues through what appears to be a simple story. In their picture books they're able to create maximum (poetic) effect with a minimum of words. Photo © Siska Vandecasteele

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