FICTION

Life in an asylum centre

Problemski Hotel

DIMITRI VERHULST

The narrator, Bipul Masli, sketches an intriguing picture of life in an asylum centre. The inmates, who come from vastly different countries, are clever at stretching their slender resources and there is a certain rivalry among them: who has survived the worst horrors and therefore deserves asylum? Boredom can be a problem, emotions run high and are compounded by impatience.

Masli is perhaps the only one who realizes how little chance they actually have of being granted asylum. Most of them survive on false hopes or are making plans to escape from the centre to England if their application is rejected.

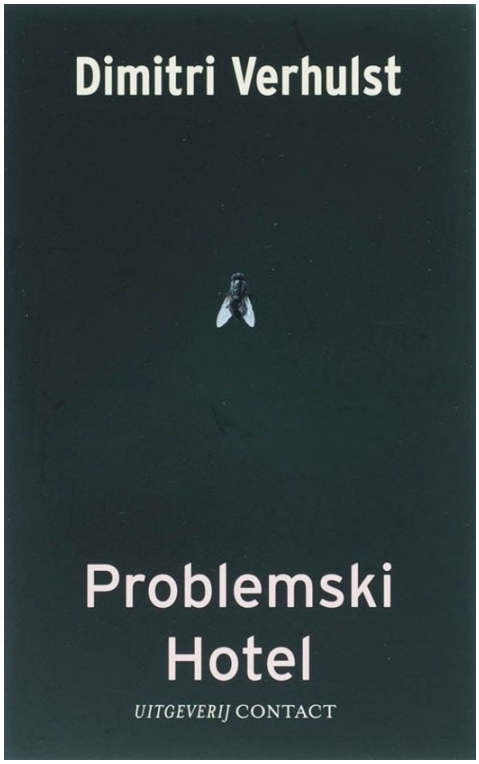
> **An extremely fascinating book in which the everyday lives of asylum seekers is told in an unparalleled fashion.**
>
> DE STANDAARD

Masli describes the daily routine with detached irony. Disappointments, humiliations, even unsuccessful attempts at integration in the world outside are recounted with a generous dollop of humour. His tireless attempts to gain recognition as a refugee are both comic and touching.

Verhulst – who spent some time in an asylum centre himself as research for this novel – totally empathizes with these people and with their amazed, uncomprehending view of Western society, and uses them as a mirror to his readers to see themselves through the eyes of strangers.

> **A hundred pages are enough for Verhulst to hit the reader harder than many a journalist or cameraman ever could.**
>
> DE VOLKSKRANT

FLANDERS LITERATURE



AUTHOR

Dimitri Verhulst's (b. 1972) breakthrough came in 2006 with the novel The Misfortunates. It won several awards, was made into a movie and is now in its sixty-first reprint. He is renowned for his pitch-black worldview, his tragicomedies, his juicy language, his engagement and his intimate portraits. *Photo © Ringel Goslinga*

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