

A gripping initiation novel

# Bad Blood

MARITA DE STERCK

1961. Emma's atheist parents send her away to a strict Catholic boarding school. She has to leave home because her sister is seriously ill. Emma arrives at the school as a complete innocent. She doesn't know much about boys, for instance, only that their bodies are different and that there's something below their navel that serves no useful purpose. And of course that she has to be careful around them, because they 'use their brains barely a quarter of the time' and because their flesh is so weak.

Some of the other girls initiate her, sometimes spitefully, into the secrets of womanhood, and she discovers her longing for the forbidden. Slowly she begins to realise the nature of her sister's mysterious sickness, and it dawns on her just how far her parents are prepared to go to avoid the embarrassment and scandal of an unwanted pregnancy.

## Marita de Sterck's language dazzles on every page

NRC HANDELSBLAD

Marita de Sterck beautifully depicts the claustrophobic atmosphere of the strict boarding school and the shame and secrecy surrounding menstruation and budding sexuality. Her rhythmic sentences are bursting with sensual suggestion and thrilling secrets about the body, secrets that must not be spoken.

## A book about shock, shame, the power of imagination and longing for forbidden fruit

DE MORGEN



### AUTHOR



**Marita de Sterck** (b. 1955) has spent much time travelling the world as an anthropologist, searching out narratives rooted in age-old oral traditions. Recurring themes in her work include learning to love without losing oneself, the power of stories, and the often complex relationship between generations. She has a very recognizable style that plays with registers and does not shy away from direct language. *Photo © Koen Broos*

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