

## FICTION

An essential love story

# Madame Verona Comes Down the Hill

DIMITRI VERHULST

Many years ago, Madame Verona and her husband, both musicians, moved to a house on a hill outside the village of Oucwègne. When he fell ill, he built up a large stock of firewood for her, and then hung himself from a tree. She wants to have a cello made from the wood of this tree, but the instrument is only delivered to her twenty years later.

**A slow, constant, melancholic book.  
Brilliant.**

LEEWARDER COURANT

The village gradually becomes deserted, and there are only a few inhabitants left. The few bachelors left hope to gain the newly widowed woman's favour and wait patiently for a sign that she is ready to move on, a sign that will never come. One cold day, she goes down the path to the village, knowing she will never have the strength to climb the hill again.

Verhulst portrays this worn-out village with an extraordinary sensitivity to simplicity and authenticity. The exceptional care he devotes to style, as a master of the craft, shows some very appealing geniality and intimism. This classical earnestness of style with its felicitous formulations nevertheless overlays a mocking irony that enables all the emotions evoked to be accommodated in a cleverly ambiguous tension. The novel is a modest proof of literary mastery.

**Often preposterous, sometimes poignant  
and, above all, consistently charming**

THE INDEPENDENT



## AUTHOR



Dimitri Verhulst (b. 1972) is one of the most successful contemporary writers in the Dutch language. He produces a steady stream of literary work which has been translated into 25 languages. He is renowned for his pitch-black worldview, his tragicomedies, juicy language, social engagement and intimate portraits. Verhulst's style can only be described as 'Verhulstian': raw, archaic and with an eye for the grotesque. His texts are suffused with alliteration, rhyme and word play. Many of his characters inhabit the fringes of society and it is these people he wants to give a voice. He draws extensively on his own life, including his childhood, for his novels.

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**ORIGINAL TITLE** Mevrouw Verona daalt de heuvel af (2006, Atlas Contact, 110 pp.)

**PRIZES** Shortlisted for the AKO Literature Prize

**RIGHTS SOLD** English (Portobello), German (Luchterhand), Croatian (Andrijići), Arabic (Al Arabi)

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