

Love and betrayal in wartime

Dusk

MARITA DE STERCK

Mona is sixteen in 1935 when her aunt sends her to Café De Londres, where she learns the tricks of the trade as a *serveuse*: she is expected to use her feminine charms to coax men out of their money and water down their drinks. She falls in love with Stan, but he only has eyes for Marieke. Marieke in turn, cannot choose between the borish Stan and his refined cousin. In the meantime, fascism and anti-Semitism are on the rise, and the young people that populate the story must choose which side of history they want to be on.

A vivid depiction of what war does to 'ordinary people'

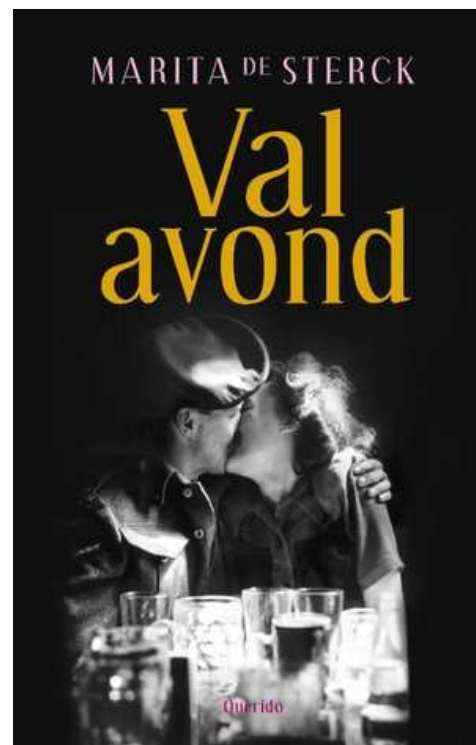
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Mona is playing with fire when she bails out her best customer, a shrewd 'Jew hunter'. In the chaos of wartime, she makes a stubborn decision that will turn her friends' lives upside down. But can she mess with people's lives the way she messes with their drinks?

'Dusk' is based on stories and rumours that Marita de Sterck collected in her village, not far from Antwerp. With her evocative style and extensive knowledge of local history, she paints an atmospheric and convincing picture of a time when the line between good and evil was not always so clear.

Transports you to another time and another world – not least through the sensuous Flemish style

NRC NEXT



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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