

Perfectly controlled,
melancholy, poetic prose

Christmas and Other Love Stories

KRISTIEN HEMMERECHTS

Love and what follows is the theme of this collection of ten stories: about the catastrophe and the tenderness of sex, about habit, love-hate, memory, selfpity, rollicking revenge.

Her choice of words is dry and unadorned, her narrative tempo is high.

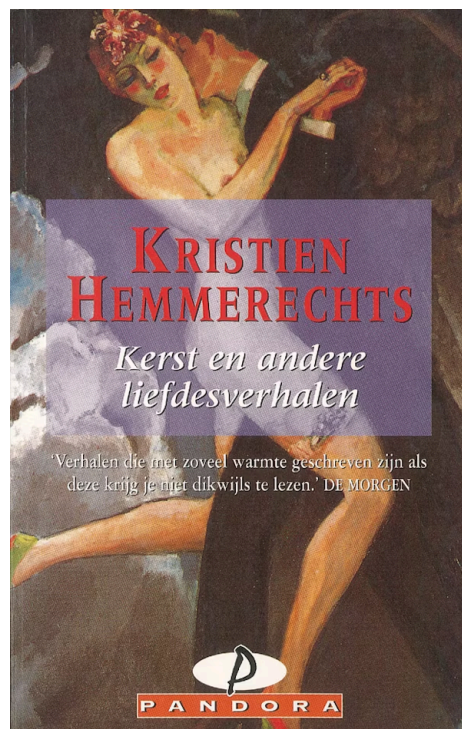
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In the opening story, 'Christmas', a man sets out to find a Christmas tree for his wife and is thrilled by the exceptional reward he gets for his efforts. The story is a genuine and endearing ode to love. In the closing – autobiographical – story, the author tries to find words for the unspeakable: the death of her two infant sons. 'Fairytale' is a key narrative, alluding to recurring themes, motifs, images and symbols in the work of Kristien Hemmerechts.

The author fashions intriguing characters. Her matter-of-fact, razor-sharp descriptions of what is considered normal human behaviour lay bare the burlesque or even surrealistic nature of the apparently mundane. Her work dissects the mechanism by which we – mostly inadvertently – hurt one another. In spite of their shortcomings her characters have a capacity for tenderness.

A writer who manages to generalise personal things so that the other can fill in the emotion, deserves full praise.

TROUW



AUTHOR



Kristien Hemmerechts (b. 1955) is known for her outspoken opinions on social issues in which she doesn't shy away from controversy. Her extensive body of work contains frequently awarded novels, collections of short stories and autobiographical essays, mostly focussing on relationships, trauma and desire. Her most famous work is *Language Without Me*, an autobiographical essay in commemoration of her late husband, the celebrated Flemish poet Herman de Coninck. Photo © Keke Keukelaar

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PRIZES Shortlisted for the AKO Literature Prize

One of the stories, 'Fairy Tale', has been published by *The New England Review*.

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