

The human story behind international terror

The Butterfly Effect

MARGOT VANDERSTRAETEN

Angela Gutmann, who writes critical reviews of top hotels as a mystery guest, is staying at the famous Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai when, on 26 November 2008, four Pakistani terrorists burst in and start shooting people at random. The terrorists occupy the hotel for three days. At the time of the attack, her son and his best friend are with her. The boys, who are working as volunteers for the Indian Domestic Workers Movement, were eager to spend a year doing something different.

One of the most undervalued Flemish novelists

KNACK

Ten years later Angela returns to Mumbai. During the homebound plane trip, she gets into conversation with Jane, a strange fellow passenger, who asks her a number of confrontational questions. Along the way, the reader is informed of what happened in the days after the attack. Angela tells about other dramatic events in her life and, through an internal monologue addressing her son, lays herself bare. It soon turns out that a five-star hotel is not the only thing with a shiny façade.

The atmosphere evoked alternates between soft and melancholic. In between the vibrant, hypnotising lines smoulders a strong suggestion of suffering, loss and the need for (self-)control. This is a book about the barbed wire beneath the skin that we call self-preservation.

Excellent. Clear proof of her writing talent

DE TIJD



AUTHOR



Margot Vanderstraeten (b. 1967) is a freelance journalist and author. She debuted with the novel 'All People Bite' in 2002, which won the Flemish Debut Prize. 'Mise en place' offers the reader a fascinating glimpse into the world of haute cuisine. The novel was nominated for the Halewijn Prize. 'The Butterfly Effect', her fourth novel, tells a human story behind international terror. Her latest book 'Mazel tov' tells the story of Vanderstraeten's experiences as a tutor in an Orthodox Jewish family. *Photo © Tom van Nuffel*

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