

## FICTION

An enchanting tale of love and migration

# The Very Last Caracara of the World

PETER VERHELST

The Belgian Doctor Duval moved to a magnificent tropical island years ago. Together with the priest and the Madame from the coffee house, he involves himself in the destiny of Cassandra, the girl who stands constantly at the waterline. She looks out silently over the waves, or evokes all the winds of the island in an intoxicating litany.

The caracara is not only a rapacious falcon; on this island it is also a devastating wind. It heralds approaching doom.

**Verhelst creates visual prose and will not readily be surpassed in that respect**

DE STANDAARD

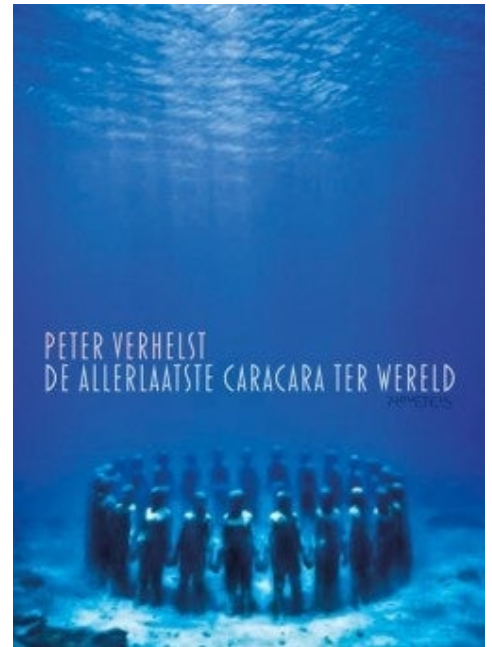
Life on the island is abruptly disturbed when several whales and a number of women and girls who are unable to speak are washed ashore. In the commotion, a hidden past of occupation and repression comes to light: Cassandra is the daughter of Madame and a wanted rebel. When she was born, Duval's father, a hard-hearted officer in the occupying army, pressurised Madame into giving up her baby. History repeats itself and old scores are settled. The current rulers avenge themselves and Madame, Cassandra and all the women mysteriously lose their lives.

An inconsolable Duval wants to leave the island, but is killed in a flying boat accident. All this takes place amidst the glorious light and intense scents and colours bursting from each page.

**Magic: a compelling story, told with the subtlety of a young poet. \*\*\*\***

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**FLANDERS  
LITERATURE**



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## AUTHOR

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**Peter Verhelst** (b. 1962) is a novelist, scriptwriter, myth and theatre maker, poet and picture book author all in one. As a child he wanted to become a painter, but decided to write from a live model instead. His work has been praised for its powerful images, the sensuality and richness of its language and the author's unbridled imagination. His breakthrough came in 1999 with the novel 'Tonguecat', which won him the Gouden Uil and the Flemish State Prize for Literature. In 2018, he wins the Sybren Polet Prize for Literature, a prize for authors with an experimental literary oeuvre. *Photo © Chris Ward*

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