

The temptations of violence

Billie & Seb

IVO VICTORIA

Seb and Billie are seventeen and are both a little strange. Thanks to their friendship, the quiet Seb blossoms and opens up. But then Billie has an accident on a trampoline and ends up in a coma. Seb stops going to school and shuts himself away inside his room and inside himself. His despairing parents give him an airsoft gun for Christmas.

His sentences are balanced and rhythmic, his language shines. *****

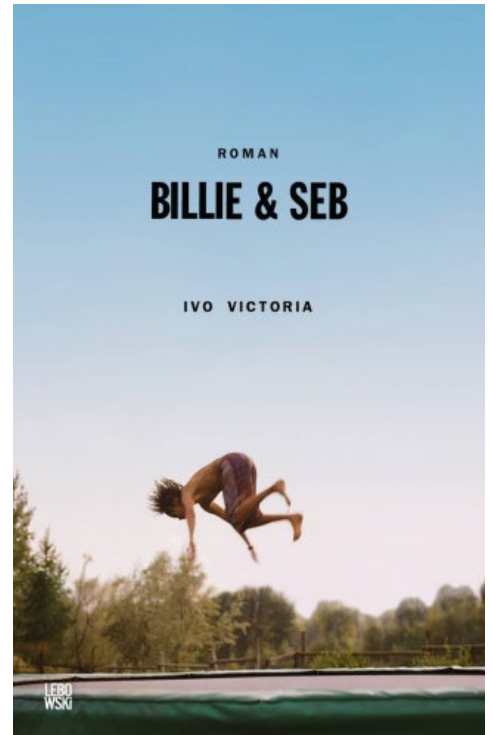
HAARLEMS DAGBLAD

In the weeks and months that follow, Seb loses himself in the battles that he fights with his friends at a remote farm, which was also the setting of a forgotten wartime story. Meanwhile his parents discuss the situation with an uncle, in long, impotent conversations that revolve around everything that happens to Seb. During that mercilessly hot summer, their game becomes increasingly vicious and more realistic. The rules blur and fade and, inside Seb's head, there is barely any distinction between dream and reality. When one of Seb's friends brings his dad's service revolver to the farm, the stakes of the game change for good.

'Billie & Seb' is a story about soulmates, guilt, playing and reality, but above all about the question of whether we are still capable of really feeling in a world we no longer have to fight for. Or do we?

In his circular, meandering prose, Victoria knows how to build up tension that does not let go of you for an instant

KNACK



AUTHOR



Ivo Victoria (b. 1971) made his debut in 2009 with 'How I Never Won the Tour de France for Under Twelves (and Regret It)'. His second novel, 'Fortunately We're Powerless', was shortlisted for the 2012 Libris Literature Prize. 'Thieves of Passion' is an inspired novel about the youthful years that we lose, and spans three decades in the city of Antwerp. In 2017 Victoria published his fourth novel, 'Billie & Seb'. *Photo © Katerina Plevkova*

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