

book |

The Discomfort of Evening |

Marieke Lucas Rijneveld

"It is no wonder that Marieke Lucas Rijneveld's parents are "too frightened" to read "The Discomfort of Evening" (or, in the original version, "De avond is ongemak"), as the author told The Guardian. The Dutch writer, who prefers to go by non-binary pronouns, was already a literary sensation in their home country since the novel first came out and quickly became a national bestseller, in 2018. Now that the book has been translated by Michele Hutchison and published in English, they've been catapulted into international stardom - especially after it took home the coveted International Booker Prize Award.

Given all this, it is now expected many will rush to take it home from the bookstore. But make no mistake - "The Discomfort of Evening" is not an easy read. It is not a book to carelessly flip through on a relaxing evening; one could even advise against eating and reading. This is because the author's debut is as remarkable as it is stomach-turning.

"The Discomfort of Evening" tells the story of ten-year-old Jas, whose family is struck by tragedy when her eldest brother, Matthies, dies in an accident. What ensues is a chronicle on the effects of unspoken grief and parental neglect on the remaining three children, in a land where religion is both a path to ruin and to salvation (as the narrator muses at a certain point: "some people lose God when they find themselves; some people lose God when they lose themselves").

Rijneveld's book may not be a thing of beauty, and it might even turn some readers away with its grim portrayal of violence that is as human as it is repulsive. However, it is a debut like few others, and an unforgettable one. Do read it, but proceed with caution.

Beatriz Negreiros