



A riveting story of two teenagers who are involved in the killing of a German soldier during the occupation of Holland in World War II. Together they cover up the killing. The novel explores the consequences and the effect of guilt on their lives and on the people they love.

#### About the author

Johannes Kerkhoven is an artist and author. Born in Rotterdam he spent the first nine years of his life in Franeker. During the war he lived in Hilversum and later in Utrecht before emigrating to Australia. He now enjoys living in Hove. His *Mixed Concrete – Visual Poetry* was published in 2006.

#### What people say

It's not often that a thriller has quite such an impact on me, but this book by Johannes Kerkhoven caught me out three or four times with completely unexpected eye-popping oh-my-god developments. The suspense is jaw-dropping. Other readers, almost in unison, have all said they couldn't put this book down. I was no exception. It starts with a shocking death of a young German soldier, and the shocks keep coming as the two teenagers involved cover up the killing.

What makes the background so realistic is that Kerkhoven –also a talented artist and poet (who certainly doesn't look anything like his age) – was around in the suburbs of Hilversum as a small boy when WW2 was coming to an end. He actually witnessed marauding German soldiers in the streets, invading houses, just as they do in his novel. On the very first page, we read, in the teenaged hero Piet's words: "Ten or so German soldiers were jumping out of the trucks at the end of our street...The first thing would be to set up a machine gun at each end of the street...Escape routes blocked, we waited our turn as the Germans entered each house. If your door was not opened promptly when they knocked with their rifle butts, they kicked it in."

To escape arrest – or worse – Kerkhoven's father would disappear into a space he had dug under the floor of their back room. This real-life scenario from 1945 is reproduced as an important theme in *State of Guilt*.

But in spite of its brutal military background, much of the drama surrounds two young women, each of whom Piet falls in love with, in turn. Hold on to your hat when you read this book. You might need a stiff drink or two while you read it. And when you finally put it down.

Arnie Wilson, author, *Big Name Hunting, A Limerick Romp through Time, Snow Crazy: 115 years of British Ski History*

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