



by
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Fiction

🏆 Longlisted for the
German Book Prize 2017

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Walter Nowak Won't Get Up

Walter Nowak bleibt liegen

review

Walter Nowak, a retired businessman, returns from his daily swim and collapses on the bathroom floor. His wife Yvonne is away at a conference and won't be back for several days. Nowak, who seems to have hit his head, remains where he fell. Memories come flooding back to him as he reflects on his childhood growing up as an illegitimate son, his life with Yvonne, his relationship with his friends, his ex-wife and especially his estranged son Felix. When Nowak finally gets up, he mistakes the cleaner for his wife – an action that is wholly in character.

Entirely told from Nowak's point of view, Wolf conveys his state of confusion and the haphazard nature of his memories in an inner monologue that makes surprising use of an ongoing stream of consciousness. There are unique glimpses into the life of a man who is not a typical protagonist, and beautiful, well-observed descriptions of physical activities. Wolf displays her stylistic and technical mastery throughout, as half-sentences and word associations effectively reflect Nowak's state of mind. Her excellent control of language and rhythm was on full display – and duly rewarded – at the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann awards in 2016.

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Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt (Alemania)

Contacto: Nadya Hartmann

Tel.: +49 69 74 30 55 97

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hartmann@frankfurter-verlagsanstalt.de

www.frankfurter-verlagsanstalt.de/