



# Styx

*Bavo Dhooge*

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## Styx Bavo Dhooge

From the #1, award-winning Flemish crime writer, an atmospheric, genre-busting crime novel about a cop who comes back from the dead to track down the same serial killer who shot him.

A serial killer is on the loose in Ostend, Belgium. Nicknamed The Stuffer, the mysterious killer fills his victims full of sand and poses them as public art installations—and the once idyllic beach town is in a panic. The fact that Rafael Styx is on the case is no comfort. The corrupt, middle-aged cop has a bum hip, a bad marriage, and ties to the Belgian underworld, but no leads. And if he wants to catch the killer before he's replaced by the young, ambitious, and flamboyant new cop, Detective Delacroix, he'll have to take matters into his own hands.

When a chance encounter puts him face to face with The Stuffer, Rafael's life is cut short by a gun to the chest. But the afterlife has only just begun: Styx wakes up a zombie. Gradually he realizes his unique position. Not only is his body in decay, now that he exists between life and death, he can enter a "different" Ostend, of the Belle Époque in all its grandeur. There he meets the surrealist painter, Paul Delvaux, who gives Styx his first clue about the killer.

With a fresh lead and a fresh start, the dirty cop decides to change his ways, catch The Stuffer, and restore his honor. But as his new hunger for human flesh impedes his progress, he'll need his old rival, Detective Delacroix to help him out. Only one thing is for sure, even death can't stop Styx from catching his own murderer.

Complex and compelling, full of suspense, action, and black humor, *Styx* is an exciting thriller with an intriguing protagonist and evocative setting.

## Styx Details

Date : Published November 3rd 2015 by Simon Schuster/ Simon451 (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781476784649

Author : Bavo Dhooge

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Genre : Mystery, Horror, Fantasy, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Crime, Science Fiction, Zombies

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## From Reader Review Styx for online ebook

### Rebecca Maddison says

Written by Belgium novelist Bavo Dhooge, this serial killer/zombie novel is set in Belgium in a town called Ostend.

Styx is a 40 year old with a bad hip and a booze problem, aging him before his time. He has become bitter and corrupt and is resentful of an up and coming detective who he believes is chomping at the bit to replace him. Not knowing how to fix his failing marriage or relate to his teenage son who seems to hate him, he determines to catch a serial killer on his turf at any cost.

Well the cost is three bullet wounds the chest. How can you kill a main character off at the beginning of the book? Easy. Just turn him into a zombie with crazy links to the ghosts of Ostends artistic past.

I really enjoyed this book. I found the characters unique and enjoyable to read and the detective genre really lends itself to a zombie or two.

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### Ingrid says

Like a lot of the books I've read lately, this one was... weird. But it moved quickly and was very engaging!

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### Finck says

2.5 stars, actually. Started strong, tripped over itself by the end.

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### Artur Coelho says

Raphael Styx é um típico polícia veterano, corrompido pelo sistema. Acredita piamente na justiça enquanto espanca suspeitos e faz negócios com criminosos ligados ao contrabando. Também acredita na felicidade familiar, apesar do filho não lhe falar e a mulher estar cheia de vontade de pedir um divórcio. Tem de aturar na esquadra um chefe demasiado intrometido na sua vida pessoal e um colega novo, um belga de raízes congolezas que decidiu passar a vestir-se como um *sapeur* após o suicídio da irmã.

Styx está embrenhado numa caça ao homem. A sonolenta e provinciana cidade de Ostende está a ser palco de uma vaga de assassínios macabros cometidos por um assassino em série que se inspira nas obras icónicas dos pintores surrealistas belgas para dispor os corpos das suas vítimas. Quando confronta o assassino, o impensável acontece. Styx é abatido, mas renascerá como um zombie que vai apoderecendo pelas ruas da cidade enquanto continua a busca pelo psicopata. Renascido na morte, confronta os dilemas da sua antiga vida, descobre que é capaz de saltos ao passado para visitar a Ostende da Belle Époque, apercebe-se que de vez em quando convém dar umas trincadinhas em carne humana para se manter um morto-vivo apresentável, e só poderá contar com a ajuda do colega cuja propensão para roupa cara e garrida não consegue compreender.

Um mimo, este pequeno romance policial com um toque de horror do escritor belga Bavo Dhooge. Leitura

rápida que desperta e mantém a curiosidade do leitor, faz bom uso das estruturas narrativas do policial com um toque do visceralismo do terror zombie. O recordar das belas artes belgas, com referências a Ensor, Delvaux e Magritte, dão-lhe uma certa elegância erudita. Styx será editado em novembro de 2015.

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### **Amy says**

Reviewed for Library Journal 11/1/2015

Rafe Styx is a disillusioned man; a crooked Belgian cop with a failing marriage and a partner he despises. His discontent is not helped by a string of grotesque murders committed by "The Stuffer," a madman who eviscerates his victims, stuffs their bodies with sand, and then poses them in public locales. Early on in the story, Styx confronts the killer and is murdered. When he awakens from the dead, his initial elation is replaced by horror as he realizes he has become a zombie. Determined to bring the killer to justice, he masks his putrid stench with cologne, and his gruesome pallor with makeup, and enlists the help of his once loathed partner. The paranormal nature of the tale expands when Styx discovers that he can travel back in time; doing so he meets the surrealist painter Paul Delvaux, who provides crucial insight in solving the case. VERDICT: This attractive fusion of genres by award-winning Belgian author Dhooge (Scam Alarm) tells a captivating tale with excellent pacing and tension. Styx's rookie partner, Delacroix, is a sympathetic character with an absorbing backstory and unusual cultural perspective. The genre bending works, for the most part, but the time-travel element is an unnecessary diversion. Hand this one to lovers of detective fiction who aren't afraid to mix it up with urban fantasy.

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### **Davecapp says**

Take a hard nosed detective (or some would say "an asshole"), put him on a tough case, kill him, and bring him back as one of the undead. This premise had all the makings of time waster - but in fact Styx turned out to be an enjoyable read. Expect well placed humor, good character development (especially Detective Delacroix) and a very good plot line (assuming you believe in that zombie thing of course :-)

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### **Wdmoor says**

I picked up this book strictly because of a blurb on the back by Richard Kadrey, but this is nothing like anything by Mr Kadrey. *Styx* starts off as a police procedural for a couple chapters then gently slips into the weird. It was so different it just kept pulling me along with the oddness of it all. It's easier to say what this book isn't than what it is...but how about a gentle, intriguing horror story.

Recommended for readers willing to try something off the beaten path.

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### **Allison says**

A perfect blend of two of my favorite genres, speculative fiction and crime fiction, with a dash of another personal interest (art history) thrown in.

First of all, the translation job was smooth and fantastic. I've seen a good number of European crime novels ruined by poor or rushed translation, but this is not one of them.

Styx somehow managed to be a roughly charming antihero, and I really enjoyed his partnership with Delacroix, who was an interesting character himself. Dhooze writes with a strong sense of place/atmosphere, as well as a certain level of dark humor. Looking forward to more of the author's books being translated into English. (I noticed all of his works start with the letter "S"???)

\*\*\*I also appreciated the shout-out to James Ensor, one of my favorite artists.

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### **Caleb Edison says**

Great idea for a novel! But the dialogue was super tacky. Also, the ending seemed like it was cinched up in a way that leads me to believe that the author got tired of his own story.

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### **Marta Kule says**

What was this supposed to be? So there's a serial killer and there's Chief Inspector Styx, and this is where any similarities to a murder mystery end. It's on the jacket, so no spoiler if I tell you Styx gets killed and becomes undead early in the novel. From then on, for a whodunit, remarkably little room is devoted to exposition or analysis of any clues, while way too many words are used on Styx's introspections, reminiscing, and unravelling family life.

Even once the author gets back on track of the murder mystery, it's painfully devoid of meaning: we follow Styx through events, and right after that comes a long scene in which another detective questions his wife about his disappearance, while we know that the questioning won't bring any clues because we just saw all the events and know she wasn't involved in any way – just pages of filler. Then another few pages are wasted on a long scene about detectives arguing that Styx is not dead, exchanging jabs about being drunk and hallucinating, which has no consequences anywhere later in the narrative. Useless scene, waste of paper.

And then finally two potential leads are introduced, and we know right away that they are red herrings because the first time they come up at all in the whole novel is when the detectives say their names, like, hm, maybe it's this guy, hm, let's check, oh no, it's not this guy. There are no previous clues or even hints of those characters anywhere else, just out of thin air, huh, maybe this guy!

If Styx is some kind of a beloved character in Belgium, then I understand that this novel could be cool for his fans as a fantasy about what would happen if Styx were a zombie. But if this is a standalone purportedly murder mystery novel, then the translator could have used their talents to introduce a more sensical Flemish mystery into the English-speaking market.

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### **Barbara says**

First I want to thank Simon and Schuster for sending me an ARC of this book.

Had someone asked me a couple of days ago if I would like to read a book about a detective who turned into

a zombie, I would have said "no way". I don't usually enjoy zombie or werewolf stories, but this book was just terrific. Bavo Dhooge is a wonderful author and the translation to English was superb. There is a bit of humor thrown in as well. Without any reservations I would recommend this book. Run to your bookstore and buy it. You won't regret it.

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### **Emme says**

4.5 stars rounded up to 5. A zombie crime thriller set in Belgium? Sign me up!! This book was way better than expected, though I admit that I was fairly skeptical at first. I've never read a zombie novel (no, really, I usually go for vampires or magic-beings) so this was my introduction to the genre, and I therefore have no idea how it compares to other zombie novels. I was pleasantly surprised by the introduction of the Surrealist art movement into the plot and also learned quite a lot about Belgian Surrealist artists. Bonus! This book definitely made me wish for more English translations of Bavo Dhooge's books, and also makes me hope that we'll get some more in the future. I see that he's written a sequel - 'Styxmata' - and hope to read it sooner or later, either in English (sooner) or Dutch (later)!!

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### **Jay Dwight says**

My better half slipped this into my "To Read" pile because she said I need to broaden my horizons.

Hadn't read any Belgian crime, and it starts off as a solid police procedural. Raphael Styx is a detective trying to track down the "Stuffer", a serial killer who strips the organs from the bodies of his victims, then fills them with sand, sees them back up and leaves them in artistic poses.

Styx finds the killer, but gets shot by him.

And then things get weird.....

Fair to say that I prefer my crime fiction a tad more grounded in reality, and zombie detectives not quite my thing. But still a good story behind that premise and worth a read.

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### **Marco says**

Nog veel leuker in het Nederlands/Vlaams dan in het Engels!

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### **Femke Allemeersch says**

Het boek leest zeer vlot. Qua locatie zeer herkenbaar, waardoor je af en toe kunt visualiseren waar de gebeurtenissen zich afspeelen. Het zombiedeel was minder mijn ding

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