ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

THRILLER

The Dutch Institute
Huppes Kemp
AuthorHouse
978-1-4817-8228-9
Two Stars (out of Five)

An ambitious political thriller, *The Dutch Institute* raises a number of interesting questions about health care in the twenty-first century, but could use more suspense to make it a page turner.

Maarten Keyser, a doctor, journalist, and government worker, temporarily cures himself of cancer by using an experimental treatment banned in the Netherlands by the Dutch Institute, the entity that regulates the state-run health care provided to citizens. Maarten's wife, Shifrah, a former Israeli operative, is convinced that with enough sleuthing she can uncover evidence of financial corruption involving the institute's top administrator, Stronghold, thereby setting the stage for changes that might increase citizens' access to alternative therapies.

Husband-and-wife writing team Wim Huppes and Mirjam Kemp join forces under the pen name Huppes Kemp to offer an intriguing look into the seedy inner workings of a national health-care system gone wrong. Readers aware of the worsening reputations of today's pharmaceutical companies will not find it difficult to buy into the corruption that runs rampant in the authors' institute. In addition, an American audience—particularly those who support the establishment of national health care in the States—may find it interesting to read about the potential disadvantages of such a system, as portrayed through Maarten's struggle to save his own life.

Unfortunately, the novel suffers from a lack of tension and suspense. Readers are told that Maarten has the means to get the treatment he desires in the United States, but he stubbornly refuses to do so. This knowledge renders much of the action of the plot needless, especially because Maarten doesn't fully support the methods his wife is using to bring down Stronghold and the institute.

The story is told in first person from multiple perspectives, which results in a lack of character development for Maarten and Shifrah, both of whom have interesting backstories and great potential to carry the novel.

With a writing style reminiscent of a screenplay, moments such as an ice-skating escape

scene will stick with readers. However, so many small actions are described in detail—Shifrah's heel gets caught in a crack in the sidewalk, Maarten's friend makes coffee and pours it—that it can be difficult to weed out which ones are significant to the plot.

There are several inconsistencies throughout the book, such as the Dutch Institute being referred to in places as the "Care Authority Institute" and the "National Healthcare Authority" as well as the more significant error of the antagonist's name, which is Cooper on the back cover but Stronghold in the narrative itself.

Those interested in health-care corruption stories should certainly read *The Dutch Institute*, but the errors and lack of suspense will likely keep the novel from gaining a wide readership among fans of the thriller genre.

Margaret Fedder