



# The Stranger Next Door

*By Amelie Nothomb*

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France's bestselling literary phenomenon makes her American debut in "The Stranger Next Door". Selecting a secluded home in the south of France, Emile and Juliette Hazel think this isolated spot is perfect for their retirement--until they are confronted by a bizarre neighbor.

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## **The Stranger Next Door By Amelie Nothomb Bibliography**

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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

A retired high school teacher and his wife buy a house in the country that appeals to them as the house for their golden years. They have been deeply in love since early childhood and look on each other not only as spouse but as each other's child and parent, heart and soul. This should-be idyllic scene is rent by the oppressor, in this darkly comic case an obese, irascible, grimly taciturn neighbor who appears at their door daily for a two-hour "visit." Husband and wife try a variety of coping strategies as the infernal visitations accumulate: gallantry, absurdity, rudeness. All is recounted with a straightforward grace that provides readers with a front-row seat at this black comedy of modern manners. This is the first of the young and already prolific author's books to appear in the United States. Readers will eagerly anticipate more. ?Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley P.L., Cal.

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From Kirkus Reviews

Country life and neighborliness are fat targets in this savage little story, the US debut for young Brussels-based Nothomb, whose previous five novels have won acclaim in France. Emile Hazel, retired high-school classics teacher, relocates to the south of France with his wife Juliette, to what is for them a dream house, isolated and picturesque, and thus in every way the antithesis of their former city lives. On their second day of bliss, however, a knock on the door gives them a jolt, as their only neighbor, the grotesquely obese Dr. Bernardin, barges in for a cup of coffee. He stays for hours but won't converse, answering questions mostly in monosyllables. He proceeds to drop by punctually every day thereafter, with no change in attitude, forcing the Hazels to try a range of futile tactics to deter him. Even second-guessing fails: A dinner invitation to Bernardin and his wife, whom at first he steadfastly refuses to bring with him, results in a memorable evening as a bloated parody of a woman (nicknamed "the cyst" by her hosts) accompanies Bernardin and makes a meal of the chocolate sauce meant for dessert. The neighbor's solo visits continue, until finally Emile resorts to plain rudeness and shoves him violently out the door. The doctor does not return, but soon after a bout of insomnia allows Emile to rescue his neighbor from a suicide attempt, an act that binds them together in increasingly mysterious ways as the rescuer comes to realize the cruelty in his original gesture--and to make amends in a way that reveals alarming, unsuspected elements of his personality. This isn't the first time that the veneer of civilization has been stripped away to show monstrous urges beneath, but the tables turn here in a particularly eerie, chilling manner, in a combination of psychological astuteness and considerable craftsmanship. -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

...Nothomb develops this improbable plot in a highly entertaining fashion.... [it] both disturbs and amuses. -- *The New York Times Book Review, Janet Kaye*

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Graciela Johnson:**

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