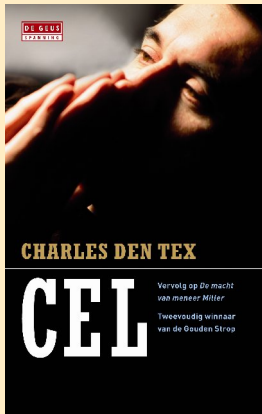




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# Charles den Tex

## *Cell*

Original title: *CEL*

CRIME NOVEL

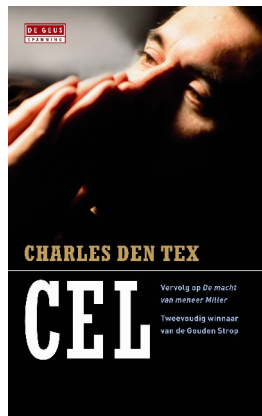
**Brave New World in the year 2008**  
**Identity theft is one of the most rapidly growing crimes on earth**

In a variety of ways, people trustingly forward their personal information to organisations and companies. After all, aren't discretion and safety guaranteed? But what if your identity gets stolen? What if things occur in your name and on your behalf, things you do not know about? Until it is too late and you are confronted with the facts. At the breathtaking pace of an action film, Charles den Tex, three time winner of The Golden Noose, describes a nightmare that can happen to anyone. In *Cell*, Kafka is made real.

Charles den Tex  
*Cell*

### **About the author**

Charles den Tex (Australia, 1952) studied photography and film in London, taught English in Paris, and returned to the Netherlands in 1980, where he established himself as a copywriter and later as a communications and management consultant. Almost all of his thrillers have been nominated for The Golden Noose, an award he won three times already. In 2002 with his fifth thriller, *Chance in Hell*, in 2006 with *The Power of Mr Miller*, his eighth thriller, and again in 2008 with its successor *Cell*.



### **About the book**

Michael Bellicher is the witness of a fatal car accident. More specifically, he is the sole witness. When the police question him, they turn out to be interested in him for another reason as well. To his astonishment, he is accused of causing a fatal hit and run that took place a few months earlier. Michael does not have a clue. There is only one possibility: someone has posed as Michael Bellicher, has driven a car with his licence plates, in brief, has robbed Michael of his identity. Besides the road accident that involved a car registered in his name, Michael is made the perpetrator of a ram raid at a jeweller's, and in his name a mortgage was taken out on a void company. Michael hits upon a bustling trade in identities. He must get his identity back in order to prove that someone is impersonating him.

Charles den Tex, *Cel*  
ISBN 978 90 445 1108 6  
Hardback, 384 p.

### **Bibliography**

*Dump* ('The Waste Game') (1995)  
*Claim* ('Claim') (1996) motion picture in 2001  
*Code 39* ('Code 39') (1998)  
*Deal* ('Deal') (1999)  
*Schijn van kans* ('Chance in Hell') (2002)  
*Stegger* ('Stegger') (2003)  
*Angstval* ('Anxiety Trap') (2004)  
*De macht van meneer Miller* ('The Power of Mr. Miller') (2006)  
*Cel* ('Cell') (2008)

Charles den Tex  
*Cell*

### **Awards**

2002 Golden Noose for *Chance in Hell*  
2006 Golden Noose for *The Power of Mr. Miller*  
2008 Golden Noose for *Cell*  
Longlisted for the 2009 Libris Literature Prize for *Cell*

### **Rights**

*CEL* has been sold to:

- Germany (Grafit Verlag)
- France (Presses de la Cité)
- Italy (Edizioni E/O)

*The Power of Mr Miller* has been sold to

- Germany (Grafit Verlag)
- Italy (Edizioni E/O)
- Turkey (Okuyan)

### **The press about *The Power of Mr Miller***

‘Despite its boy’s book title, *The Power of Mr Miller* is a very mature crime novel. (...) Den Tex writes with a clarity and precision rarely seen in the Dutch language area. (...) A truly consummate thriller.’ - *Jury Report, The Golden Noose*

‘Unpredictable Charles den Tex unfolds an action thriller unparalleled in the Dutch language area. (...) *The Power of Mr Miller* is a conspiracy novel of the purest kind. (...) Lucid, compelling prose. A must read.’ - *VN Detective & Thriller Gids 2006 - 5 stars\*\*\*\*\**

‘Charles den Tex demonstrates that suspense can be strangulating in a entirely different way in *The Power of Mr Miller*. (...) A powerfully thrilling, tightly written story, with considerable physical and technical violence, and remarkable characters.’ - *de Volkskrant*

‘Den Tex does not pen a single sentence rashly. His language sparkles and awes ceaselessly, and that is why in his books there is no loss of intensity of events. It is in fact the language that makes it tangible.’ - *NRC Handelsblad*

### **The press about *Cell*:**

‘A full-blooded thriller, enthralling and topical, funny, intrusive and, above all, very exciting.’ – *Gouden Strop 2008 jury report*

‘In *CEL*, people are stripped to the bone, erased or transformed as individuals into people who are said to have committed cold-blooded crimes. (...) A convincing, intriguing story about the individual who loses out to the criminals.’ – *de Volkskrant*

‘*CEL* is a mad book, a spectacular adventure and a spectacularly well-written one at that. Den Tex is the poet of the Dutch thriller-writing art. (...) Den Tex succeeds in making a bizarre situation feel all too real.’ – *NRC Handelsblad*

‘A sequel is rarely better. That’s the rule. *CEL* is the exception. (...) Another powerful and provocative gem has arrived in the world. What a book! What a writer! (...) *CEL* is simply right, in every sense. (...) Den Tex is indisputably a hero in the world of the thriller.’ – *Crimezone*

‘Den Tex proves again to be a master of originality and suspense.’ – *Trouw*

‘Den Tex demonstrates that he is a master of plot, and excels in action sequences. (...) I cannot imagine that the *Gouden Strop* [Golden Noose] jury will overlook this quality thriller in the nominations.’ – *Parool*

‘The way in which Den Tex juggles matters such as right and wrong, justice and injustice, is nothing short of breathtaking. *CEL* is a very disturbing and exciting book.’ – *Brabants Dagblad*

‘*CEL* is another high point in the genre. The story is original, humorous and beautifully written. A lot of funny dialogue. And, above all, very exciting.’ – *Leeuwarder Courant*

‘That [Den Tex] writes well and that he captures dialogue keenly on paper is well known. But he’s never written such an exciting book as *CEL* before.’ – *AD*

‘Written with a lot of pace and full of surprising ideas and imaginings. (...) So exciting and charming that it’s difficult to put down this boys’ book for adults.’ – *De Morgen*

‘Really grisly. (...) A lot of humour, remarkable characters and a plot that is frighteningly realistic.’ – *Libelle* (Belgium)

‘An exciting action thriller about identity theft. (...) exceptionally frightening plot.’ – *VPRO Gids*

‘While reading it, you imagine you are on a roller coaster. The pace doesn’t let up, apart from a short breathing space. But be warned: after that it only goes faster. *CEL* is by far and away the best Dutch thriller of recent years!’ – [www.ezzulia.nl](http://www.ezzulia.nl)

‘The way in which Den Tex juggles with things like right and wrong, justice and injustice, is nothing short of breathtaking. *CEL* is a very disturbing and exciting book.’ – *PZC*

Charles den Tex  
*Cell*

### **A fragment from the book**

The second interrogation was more tough, more fierce. Van Bilt and Jonse were taking turns, sometimes leisurely, as if they had all the time in the world, sometimes in such rapid succession that I hardly had any time to respond. Which obviously was not their intention. They wanted to overwhelm me with questions, to confuse me, to see if I would contradict myself, saying things I would forget later. After an hour they had every chance of that, as I had absolutely no recollection of what I had said thirty minutes before. I clung to the instructions from the lawyer. Try to get information out of them, she had told me. However, the barrage of questions they fired at me made it extremely difficult to concentrate on issues that might be of importance to me. Like a well-trained team, they kept intensifying the pressure until I seemed to have lost control over the sequence of the things I wanted to say. Jonse was the tough one. He kept asking about the BMW. Where was the car, he wanted to know and, as he kept hammering away at this question, Van Bilt inquired about anything and everything. Why was I in Monster? Who did I know here? Did I have an appointment here? It seemed I was working for a company that manufactured agricultural machinery, maybe also horticultural? How long had I been here? Had I been here more often? He had a enormous amount of questions that he continually rotated in different forms. Each time I attempted to answer one of them, Jonse would interject with his questions about the car, the bronze BMW. Placing my elbows on the table I hid my head in my hands.

‘The car isn’t mine’, I said for the umpteenth time. ‘I have only one car, the Golf I was driving yesterday when I witnessed the accident on the secondary road to Staphorst.’

‘Oh’, Van Bilt said. He stared at me intently. A mixture of amazement and satisfaction. He had a bite.

‘Do you have only one car?’

‘Yes.’

‘Because yesterday I asked you if you occasionally loaned any of your cars. Cars. Plural. You answered affirmatively.’ He scanned his notes. ‘Here’, he said. “‘Do you occasionally loan out your cars?’” I asked, and you replied, “‘Sometimes, if it’s convenient.’” So yesterday you said that you had more than one car, and today you are saying that you have only one car. Is that right?’

‘I meant...’ Nothing more came out.

‘I mean, what are we to do? You sit here saying all kinds of things, and now it seems you are just talking trash. First one thing, then another. What are we to believe? That you have one car, or that you have several cars? That you were in Monster, or that you were not in Monster? Are you getting it?’

They were turning the world upside down with me at its centre. Black became white and white became black, left became right and the other way around. Yes became no, maybe became certainly, lies became truth and the truth dissolved in the face of distorted statements.

‘I have never been in Monster’, I said.

‘We do want to believe you’, Jonse said. ‘Nothing would be better, but we cannot believe this.’

Lies. Twisted truths.

'I have one car.'

'You said something else yesterday.'

I kept silent.

'So, you agree with that?'

'No.'

'You don't agree that you said something else yesterday?' Van Bilt questioned.

'You asked me something else yesterday.'

'So, your reply depends on what we are asking?'

'Of course.' The logic of this seemed inescapable to me.

Van Bilt was quiet for a moment, as if digesting the reply. 'What you answer is not what you know or what is true. Are you letting your answers depend on what I ask you or what Mr. Jonse asks you? Most people I know just tell things the way they are, they have nothing to hide.'

Everything I said got twisted around in the whirlpool launched by Van Bilt and Jonse. It was as if we were living in two different countries, where people happened to use the same words, making it seem they were speaking the same language. In the meantime, the confusion heightened.

'What are you hiding, Mr. Bellicher?'

'I have nothing to hide.'

'Don't you now? You are hiding a bronze BMW for a start, license plate NN-BD-80,' Jonse said, 'as it is nowhere to be found. Nowhere. Maybe you rushed it out of the country?'

Eyes glaring, Jonse awaited my reply, watchful of every move I made. Ready to react immediately.

I said nothing.

'To Germany perhaps? And from there to Poland? I'm just considering possibilities.

Didn't you just return from Germany? You took the train, right?'

'I went to Germany by train', I said. 'The ticket is still in my carryall. If you would like to take a look, it could be verified in a moment.'

'Anyone can buy a train ticket, Mr. Bellicher.'

'Yes.'

'Think along with us for a moment', Van Bilt said, as if he would have to ask. I knew every detail of this case. If I was a detective, I would know what to do.

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Translation June Derlacher

Translation quotes *Cell* Anne Hoey

Last updated 29-Dec-09