

AMSTERDAM

By Maya Arad Yasur

The play is intended for a minimum of three performers

One should consider the play a Matrioshka of sorts as one sets out to reconstruct and reassemble a story. The characters reconstructed in the first chapter reconstruct the characters in the second.

The footnotes are to be read as an onstage text, upon appearance in the book.

Part One

1.

- She, umm... what do they call it? She uh...
- Took a bite out of Amsterdam.
- Took a bite out of Amsterdam. Right; like it was some sort of omelette
- She took a nice, juicy bite out of Amsterdam, right, like it was some sort of omelette she'd made without even cracking her eggs.
- She couldn't crack her eggs.
- She couldn't crack her eggs. Okay; what, like in a glass ceiling kind of way...
- No. *She couldn't crack her eggs*. There was no glass ceiling. Hell, there wasn't even any ceiling there. Just eggs... a pair of them she literally had in her hands but couldn't crack, to make the omelette or pancake or whatever it was she was trying to make. Yes.
- So she didn't crack the eggs.
- She didn't crack the eggs, no, she just let them run in her hands, or maybe she just put them back in the fridge or whatever, cos what was it... the gas was turned off? The gas was turned off.
- The gas was turned off. That's it. The gas had been turned off cos...
- Well here's the thing; she has no idea why.
- Her gas had been turned off and she has no idea why...
- No idea why. Truth is, she's no idea why her gas should have been turned off, until all of sudden –

2.

- 8.27am. And all of a sudden – a knock at the door.
- The postman.
- No, the postman never takes the stairs.
- Not ever?
- Not ever. In Amsterdam, the postman never takes the stairs. In Amsterdam, the postman pops the envelopes through that street-facing flap thingy in the front door.

- Flap thingy; right...
- He just pops them through and then they start piling up on the stairs in bulk.
- The tenants get in the stairwell, and because they'd like to avoid having to step on a pile of envelopes, they take their time digging out the ones that are addressed to them and the rest – yeah well, the rest, they put together in a perfectly neat pile and leave it on the second step. Could be the third step too though.
- Fourth step – at most.
- And this postman, Hendry he's called; yes, Hendry, he's not your garden variety postman, oh no! He isn't some Joe Schmo cycling around town in the dark, delivering people their letters just to make ends meet.
- He's not?
- He most certainly is not! The man's a Biomedical Engineering student.
- But the postman's not very essential, is he? No one's really all that interested in hearing about the postman; not really. The postman could be a Biomedical Engineering student; he could also be some street tramp for that matter; a Rockstar, refugee... hell, he could even be one of the Royals. Point is, the postman's just the footnote, coz the only thing we really care about are the envelopes. Those envelopes that he pops through those front door flap thingies, day-in-day-out.
- That's how it's done in Amsterdam. And they all do it the same way.
- And Victoria always gets them stuck on her heels.
- Merde!
- We'll have to come back to Victoria a bit later. Because, right now–
- A knock at the door.
- But they don't knock on doors in Amsterdam.
- Except there very much is a knock at the door right now. And there is no way it could be anyone else... anyone but the upstairs neighbour, coz it's a small building; only two storeys; and each one's only got the one flat.
- Only the one flat, that's right. And no one, no one but her and the upstairs neighbour has the key to the front door that's facing the street.
- Well it must be the neighbour, then. Must be the neighbour, the one called Jan... Must be the old, upstairs neighbour called Jan who's always smoking those cigars that stink up the stairwell.
- The narrow, winding stairwell, with the old, red carpet.
- The old red carpet that's soaked in Jan's stinking cigar smell.

- Jan? Jan, is that you?
- She answers the door and sees –
- No one.
- No one?
- No one. Just an envelope that Jan - yeah, must have been Jan – that he's & slid under her door. That's it. Slid it right under her door.
- Slid her an envelope right under the door and then just walked away.
- Unless he didn't knock on the door.
- But there was a knock at the door.
- Because he doesn't want her to see him.
- He did knock on the door.
- He doesn't want her to smell old age on him.
- He doesn't want her to smell all that cheese on him.
- But he did knock on the door.
- They don't knock on doors in Amsterdam.
- He wouldn't knock on the door because he doesn't want her –
- But he did knock on the door!
- They don't bloody knock on doors in Amsterdam!
- ...smelling those cigars on him.
- That's not it.
- The Jenever then.
- That's not it!
- The smell of those cigars he'd picked up at the tobacconist's on Damrak.
- No, that's not... it isn't...
- The smell of the Jenever he always buys at the Wynand Fockink distillery under the Krasnapolsky Hotel at de Dam.
- No!
- Dam Square! Yes! The one she always cycles through on her way to Frascati Theatre.
- Dam square; the one she always cycles through on her way home from Central Station.

- When she's getting the train back from Rotterdam after a concert.
- Yes!
- When she's getting the train back from Maastricht after rehearsal.
- Yes!
- When she's getting the train back from Paris.
- Yes!
- When she's getting the train back from Berlin.
- Yes!
- When she's catching a plane back from Tel-Aviv and is heading to Central Station – by train.
- But Jan doesn't. He doesn't go to Central Station.
- Jan only pops over to Dam every six months when he's run out of Jenever.
- *Wynand Fockink, Superior Jenever*
- 100 percent distilled Juniper.
- He cycles from his road all the way to Dam Square; into an alleyway right under the Krasnapolsky, locks the bike, props it up against the amsterdammetje¹ and heads into the distillery.
- Hans is there to welcome him.
- Hans?
- Uh-huh, Hans. Good-old smiley, bald-headed, Amsterdammer Hans.
- Bald-headed, Amsterdammer Hans who looks like a yellow, life-size, smiling Emoji; Like the most perfect hunk of aged Dutch Gouda; like a radiant sunshine at high-noon, who goes up to him and says:
- Dag Meneer Jan, Wat kan ik voor U doen²?
- Like he doesn't know Jan's there for his fresh bottle of Jenever.
- Like he doesn't know Jan shows up once every six months like clockwork when he's run out of Jenever.
- Thirty years now!
- Forty!
- Fifty!

¹ A small, short post at the edge of the pavement.

² Hello Mr. Jan, Sir, what can I do for you?

- Like he doesn't know Jan's about to ask him for a fresh bottle of *Jenever Superior* to take away.
- But not before he's had one for the road; and then allows himself a little go at some random German tourist, telling them to "Give me back my bicycle!"
- While having a bit of a laugh under his moustache.
- Bit of a laugh...
- Right, under his moustache.
- His bicycle.
- The bicycles that the Germans took from the Dutch.
- Huh?
- In World War II.
- Not before the German tries to cool off his flushed cheeks.
- And Jan half mutters something about how "they took all our bikes, all of them."
- Huh?
- For the iron.
- He, uh... he wouldn't knock on her door.
- He wouldn't knock on her door coz he doesn't want to have to look at her.
- Her sacrificial, noxious, Tay-Sachs, Sachsenhausen face coming at him.
- Who, Jan?
- Her noxious, Sachsenhausen face, and that dark, unruly mop of hair.
- Bit like Anne Frank's, eh?
- Those Jewish eyes plotting to take over the world.
- Her Jewish gaze, usurping his view.
- Her Jewish breath, stinking up his air.
- Those filthy tassels she's got the kid in her belly wearing; right there in her womb.
- Who, Jan? Nah...
- Jan, that's right. Jan...
- The upstairs neighbour?
- No, surely not. Not Jan.

- Then. Why. In. Fuck's. Name. Won't. He. Knock. On. That. Door?!