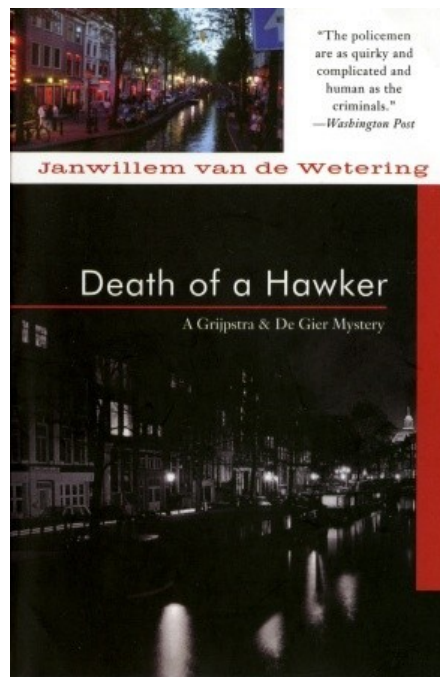




Death of a Hawker

Janwillem van de Wetering

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A riot has erupted in New Market Square, transforming the normally sedate streets of Amsterdam into a mass of angry protesters. So when the body of the “King” of the local street market is found in his house with his head bashed in, the police are puzzled. The adjoining street has been closed off all day, and the constables stationed outside the scene of the crime didn’t detect any unusual activity. There are only two people who could have reasonably committed the violent act: the victim’s roommate upstairs and his beautiful sister downstairs. Both claim to have seen or heard nothing suspicious when the crime took place. But something isn’t adding up. Is one of them the killer?

Death of a Hawker Details

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From Reader Review Death of a Hawker for online ebook

David says

Charismatic alpha male Abe Rogge is found dead in his room, every bone in his face broken. His sister is in the room below, and an admiring roomer above, while police stand outside as riots scrimmage around the Summer streets. He appears to have been killed by a spiked ball, but nobody saw a thing. The fourth entry in van de Wetering's Amsterdam Cops series opens like a classic locked room mystery, but these mysteries are anything but traditional. I've always enjoyed crime novels that aren't really about the solution to the crime – James Sallis' Lew Griffin books, for instance – and though it is interesting to find out how the victim died, the real attraction of these books is just spending time with detectives Grijpstra and de Gier, and their aging commisariss boss and philosophical sensei. Van de Wetering, who died recently, is more like Simenon than McBain, but brings his own whimsical, large hearted version of that hardboiled weltschmerz. There is a laid-back, offbeat humor here that just makes me smile, deeply, although it is rather hard to capture here. I re-read this one recently while sailing up Alaska's inside passage, and that was pretty much heaven. Newcomers should start with *Outsider in Amsterdam*. I'm also a fan of this author's trilogy of Zen memoirs, for much the same reason - his low key down-to-earth shruggy funny sensibilities.

Arjen says

Redelijk detective verhaal, maar het hangt allemaal met plakband aan elkaar vast.

James Proctor says

This was my first time reading the author and I had no real expectation going in. Now I anticipate reading many more, if they are as good as this one. Curious little passages took me constantly (and pleasantly) by surprise, like the following:

"Grijpstra found de Gier contemplating a tree trunk. The lithe body of the sergeant swayed slightly as he stood, hands folded on his back, staring moodily at the elm's green bark.

Cardozo was watching the sergeant too. 'Don't disturb him,' Cardozo said, holding Grijpstra back. 'He is busy. He is swaying. Look.'

'So he is,' the adjutant said.

'He isn't Jewish, is he?' Cardozo asked.

'Not that I know of,' Grijpstra said. 'Although, yes, I think he told me once that he has a Jewish grandmother.'

'You see,' Cardozo said. 'He is Jewish.... And Jews sway, they always sway. When they have a problem, that is, or when they are concentrating on something. They do it during prayer. Back and forth, back and forth. The Spanish Inquisition used to catch us because we swayed. We couldn't help ourselves. And they'd burn us. A strange habit, isn't it?'

'No,' Grijpstra said. 'The sergeant is an ordinary man, like me. He is swaying because he feels like swaying.'

Not because he has Jewish blood. Maybe he hasn't got any, maybe somebody else told me he has a Jewish grandmother.'

'Holland had only one philosopher,' Cardozo said, speaking very slowly, articulating every syllable. 'Spinoza. He was a Jew, and he didn't even write in Dutch, he wrote in Latin.'

'Why didn't he write in Dutch?'

'He couldn't do it. Have you ever tried to express subtle thoughts in Dutch?'

'Yes,' de Gier said and stopped swaying. 'You'd better do something for a change, Cardozo, instead of proving the superiority of your race. The commisar is wants you to help me. Listen.'

...Cardozo folded his hands on his back, closed his eyes and began to sway. After awhile he opened his eyes again.

'I'll tell you, sergeant, when I know. It'll come to me. But not when you rush me.'

'Bah,' de Gier said."

Lynne-marie says

I enjoy the setting and idiosyncrasies of Amsterdam, the self-proclaimed character of the Dutch protagonists and the general zen-like attitude that pervades van de Wetering's books. The plots may wander a bit as does the dialogue, but to my mind, those are part of the appeal of the series and of de Gier & Grijpstra in se.

Jeffrey Keeten says

I had just sent my agent a copy of my latest novel which involved reams of paper, buckets of sweat, and even some blood from a rather nasty paper cut. My agent called me back and said he'd watched the movie with Robert Redford and he had heard the book was really good too. I was incensed. "Are you telling me they made a movie out of "The Great Hatsby"?" He explained that sometimes great writers have similar ideas and that my book was too close to the book called *The Great Gatsby* by some New York golden boy named Fitzgerald.

I asked him about an advance on a book I was thinking about calling "A Rebel Without a Kleenex".

CLICK!

I was out of money. The landlord was starting to bang with more authority on my door and yell threats through the rickety slats of my shaky door with enhanced belligerence in his tone. The hungry bear in my stomach had quit growling and was now just tearing chunks out of the lining of my stomach making me nauseous and fretful. My fingers trembled on the keys of my typewriter. I was starting to despair that I would starve to death before my talent could find it's way onto the shelves of every bookstore from New York to London to Paris to San Francisco. For a moment I nestled in the glow of memories yet to be made. The women, the fame, the fortune all created by just putting words into paragraphs and paragraphs into chapters.

I swore I wouldn't call him again. It was beneath me, but that bear in my stomach would have me hemorrhaging by the end of week if I didn't throw some chunks of meat his way soon. Janwillem answered and called me by name even though I know he had no way to know that I was calling.

"Jeffrey I have been waiting for you to call."

"You could have called me if you needed me Janwillem."

"Oh, no, you had to be ready and only you know when you are ready."

Janwillem studied under a Zen master by the name of Oda Sess? and so this philosophy or "lifestyle" colors all of our conversations. Last time we talked he thought I needed some extensive time meditating in his rock garden.

I sighed into the phone.

He laughed gently. "I would like you to go back to Amsterdam and spend some time with our mutual friends. My publisher is demanding a new novel and I do not want to be the cause of the stroke that will ultimately kill him."

"How do you know he is going to die from a stroke?"

"It surrounds him like an ominous cloud."

"Ahh yes, well, due to circumstances regarding current trends in publishing I will need to become your note taker once again Janwillem."

"Isn't it wonderful how life has brought you back to me at the very moment that we need each other my friend?"

I could imagine him sitting in his beautiful home in Maine probably in a kimono or maybe nothing at all. Beautiful women sprawled around his house like ornaments. His droopy mustaches drowning his mouth. His brown eyes twinkling just over the pouches that threaten to avalanche down his cheeks. He has a nest of dark hair that reminds me of pictures of Abraham Lincoln. Oddly enough his middle name is Lincoln.

Janwillem Van de Wetering

Van de Wetering forgot to mention that Amsterdam was in the middle of a riot. The Hippies are upset about some buildings that are being demolished to make way for a new metro. The Commissaris and I watched as the riot police arrived marching in step. Their boots thumping menacingly on the brickwork. I noticed that the Commissaris shivered. He looked at me and said "we had enough of that during the war." He had confided to me on one of our past cases together that he had spent three years locked up during the war and his legs had given him trouble ever since. A German had knocked out six of his teeth and even though he tried to put the past behind him, the man was almost as naturally Zen as Janwillem, he had confided to me that he still had trouble giving directions to German tourists without being overcome with emotion.

Grijpstra described the Commissaris as a *"dry stick topped by a razor"*. After saying that he had promptly turned to me and said to not repeat that, but of course I passed it to van de Wetering because...well...that is my job.

We had to dodge Hippie bombs of paste that clung to us like flour, turning Detective de Gier's mustaches and hair white, as we made our way to the site of the murder. The victim, a very successful hawker at the local market, whose face was caved in as if someone had repeatedly punched him with a mountaineering ice pick was lying in a pool of blood. De Gier became a little woozy, he doesn't like blood, and Detective Grijpstra helped him over to a wall to lean against. I stayed in the corner, trying not to be part of the case, but merely observe their actions, but I did notice that the hawker had a copy of *Zazie in the Metro* on his bedside table. If I could read French I would have nicked it. I'd heard something about that crazy French writer named Queneau.

The victim's sister, Esther, also lives in the house, a beautiful woman, and a reader. I attempted to flirt with her, testing the waters, but she only had eyes for de Gier. As the case advances it becomes apparent that de Gier is shaking the bed slats with Esther. I mentioned it to Grijpstra, breaking my own rules about involving myself in the case, he gave me a sour look probably because he could tell my intentions were not honorable, but were laced with jealousy. He shrugged. I wondered about Grijpstra's marriage. He answered that unasked question when he took me to see Nellie. Nellie needless to say was not his wife.

I must say I was a little shocked, more shocked when the white headed Commissaris also showed up. De Gier, of course, also appeared for what they termed "a meeting" to discuss the case. I must confess that I drank way too much Jenever, in fact every time I'm in Amsterdam that Dutch Gin bites me in the ass. Janwillem complains that my writing becomes muddled when I drink too much and made the audacious recommendation that I switch to water or lemonade.

I didn't bother to respond to such a ludicrous suggestion.

After de Gier left, for some reason Nellie doesn't like him and must be the only female in Holland that feels that way, the buttons on Nellie's top came loose and the most amazing grand tetons I've ever had the pleasure to woozily scrutinize were on display. As I slowly slid to the floor, my notes spilling ahead of me like a white breadcrumbs. The last scene I remember was Nellie straddling Grijpstra. He was in mortal danger of suffocation. When I came around I found that someone had stuffed my notes in my coat pocket. They had been copiously annotated in a shaky scrawl, and some words had been crossed out. If my head hadn't been exploding every few seconds I would have been furious at the impertinence.

As part of the case we visit a very tall transvestite with large feet and despite the dress and the makeup looked...well...not very feminine. He/she called themselves Elizabeth and I could tell the Commissaris was very fond of her. They had worked together on the force. De Gier was visibly shaken by this close encounter with the brazen queen. It makes me gleeful to see him so distressed. After we leave, De Gier explains how uncomfortable he was which I knew would mean he would get a bit of philosophy from the Commissaris. My pen was ready as I knew this was exactly the kind of mumbo jumbo that Janwillem got a chubby over.

"We are all connected," the Commissaris said softly. "Elizabeth is part of you, and you are part of her. Better face up to it."

De Gier looked unconvinced and when he noticed my pen scratching he gave me a tight look.

We go to see a friend of the victim. A mound of rippling flesh, drinking beer after beer as he evasively answered their questions. He was sweating out fluid almost as fast as he was replacing it. The air was redolent with the nose twitching effervescence of body odor. He was the kind of suspect we hope is guilty, unpleasant, disgustingly rich, and so crass as to have two call girls as alibis. Empty champagne bottles and the general disorder to the room spoke to a long and boisterous party. I wiggled a few bottles to see if there was any bubbly left, but whatever was once in the bottles was now dripping out of the pores of the fat man.

De Gier is dispatched to check the story with the girls. I tag along. The girls are purring like kittens when they meet De Gier. One was barely five feet tall, *an imp, a prancing imp*, but well rounded in all those places that men's hands like to go. The other was kind of chunky, but still attractive. The Imp suggestively bites off the ends of two cigars and lights them for us. I'm reminded of a story I want to write about a President and a cigar smoking intern. My agent will flip.

Because the air conditioning was on the fritz The Imp takes off her blouse, reasonable I suppose given the general stuffiness of the room. She flips her hair in front to hide her breasts, but not before De Gier and I catch a glimpse of those small, firm areas of interest. I wait for De Gier to remember I'm there and ask me to leave. I have a glimmer of hope that maybe I'm finally going to get involved in some of the more interesting attractions of Amsterdam, a bit of exploitation of the natural resources. *wink wink* Much to my disappointment De Gier stays professional, finds out what he needs to know, and leaves without doing anything to enhance his reputation as quick zipper De Gier. I lingered and did manage to elicit a phone number from The Imp, and fortunately my job does not require me to disclose what exactly transpired during my summit meeting between the US and Holland.

There was so much more, but I have been instructed by Janwillem not to reveal anything truly interesting. I'm just supposed to tease you. He does want you to purchase and read the book. I will say there was a duel between two megaton pieces of construction equipment, several sordid moments of jealousy, a parrot that mimics barfing, sexually promiscuous women, a flying head, adultery, sinful thoughts (not just by me), and of course interwoven around all of it like an ivy vine on a trellis is Janwillem's Zen philosophy. This book is recommended for those who are interested in a bit of enlightening without squeezing the little gray cells too hard.

I've been dreaming of a whale, a white whale, and a captain named Albert. Oh man, this is the one, an epic tale of revenge and obsession. I have the opening line already... call me Igantius.

Tim says

Death of a Hawker takes us back to 70s Amsterdam. It is not an elaborate murder case, it could almost be a TV show in its simplicity. The pleasure is in accompanying the detectives, each from their own unique perspective, as they eat, drink, investigate, and talk with one another against a background of riots across the city.

Mark says

Not so long ago I received the first two seasons of " Grijpstra & de Gier" television show that was shown in 2014-2008 on the Dutch television because I was known as a fan of the book series and the two cinema movies (in which a certain young actor by the name of Rutger Hauer played the Gier in the first movie). When watching the series I noticed that the it was updated to the new century and it lacked the freshness the original writer chose for. The book series as written by van de Wetering are police procedurals but they cannot hide the writers zen-Buddhism believes and background. It gives the books a very authentic and philosophical feeling. The new show was far more a police series with most of that lacking. What remains is the police adjutant Grijpstra as a family man who wants his freedom from Mrs Grijpstra on one side and knows he is stuck simply because he knows he cannot handle living on his own. And his sergeant De gier

being a bachelor living with his Siamese cat Oliver who is unlucky in love. It made return to the original source novels that made me like the couple so much.

As the story opens a dead man has been found by his sister and the couple is send to the location to investigate. As it happens there is a civil unrest as too often happened in the seventies this time due to the demolition of houses to replace them with new houses and the civil unrest comes out in force and so do the police which becomes a big clash, which the police generally wins but does not deter people from keep trying to win nonetheless.

As the unlucky couple have to find a way through the unrest and fighting, called the Nieuwmarktrellen, they get to the house where they find the dead person clearly being killed through violence even if no weapon can be found on the premises. Age Rogge, a market trader for living, has been murdered while he was at home looking out of his window looking at the Rechtboomssloot in Amsterdam.

The police is hard pressed to find a motive for his death and even is sister Esther who lives in the same house cannot shine a light on a possible motive. His "business partner" Louis Zilver who rents a room in the big house is more philosophical about Age's demise as he suspects Age himself would have been.

The victim did live his life on his own principals and ideas and considered far too many people living a life of idiocy instead of choosing for life. His business, "friends" and large amounts of women do show a remarkable person whose views might have gotten him into trouble but by whom and how exactly.

The couple together with their remarkable police commissioner who tries to train his favorite cops while being on the job and considered fairly good nonetheless, they seek for answers. He is also a survivor of the prison during the German occupation and is plagued with rheumatism since that time and his views are remarkable humanist.

There will be three deaths, of which two are murder, before they can find closure on a remarkable case with a somewhat bloody ending.

The writing of van de Wetering shows us an Amsterdam in the late seventies and a Netherlands that is far less complex as today. The characters of Grijpstra & de Gier, the commissioner and their new cop Cardozo do get highlighted in the way the book meanders towards its tragic conclusion. The world of the Market vendors of the (in)famous Albert Cuyp market gets shown and so we are shown a world where the police has to find his way into the changing times. While the leading characters do feel somewhat melancholic about what was and what will come this series really does a great job in layering the ordinary police procedural and shows that there are far more colours than Black and white.

When reading this great books that should get more attention I always see Rutger Hauer as De Gier and the incredible Rijkman Groenewijk as Adjutant Grijpstra (which he played in both cinematic outings by the way). Well bloody worth your time.

Ignore the recent tv show placed into the modern time which is far too PC to do credit to the source novels of van de Wetering. While his books do not suffer from too much isms you can clearly feel that they are best placed in their own time.

There have been three novels released about the characters created by van de Wetering, which I did manage to find. But I expect them to be as out of sync of times as the tv show was. But then again perhaps the original writer was way undervalued with his books and has created a far better series than he ever expected to write. I know that I discovered the book early in my life and found them really great and with this reread are still in awe and pleasantly surprised how well they stand up these days.

Do read them in order, they are well worth your while if you enjoy an original police novel and have the time to read them and enjoy them.

Avid Series Reader says

Death of a Hawker by Janwillem van de Wetering is the 4th book of the humorous and offbeat police procedural mystery series set in 20th-century Amsterdam. Rioting in Amsterdam nearly prevents detectives Grijpstra & de Gier from getting across town to investigate a reported murder. They finally make it, but are injured along the way. The murder victim was a man who sold trinkets in a local open-air market. He didn't have friends so much as hangers-on, whom he insulted regularly. The suspects and the murder solution are far less interesting than the eccentric characters we meet in the story, friends of Grijpstra and the commissaris. Rinus de Gier's budding romance is very sweet, totally unexpected based on his character in earlier books. I recommend reading this series in order.

Monica says

This is not the best in the series, for me the least liked so far. The plot was weak, the supplementary characters not very likable and not strongly outlined. I think i also took great offense to one of the main characters speaking so degradingly about his wife and then seeking out the company of a "lady of the night". It was easy to guess who was behind the murder, and why. I think that one of the big complaints i have about this book is that both two of the main characters, Grijpstra and de Gier, have taken huge turns in their characterization that i'm not that pleased about. I'll try the next in the series to see if it resumes the humour and entertainment that the previous books had.

Kin says

Sempre canzonatorio , ma manca di quel sense of humour che caratterizzava i precedenti.Deludente.

Dalia says

I think this is a 3.7! I love this series even when they get over the top (beheading by tractor anyone?)

David says

Charismatic alpha male Abe Rogge is found dead in his room, every bone in his face broken. His sister is in the room below, and an admiring roomer above, while police stand outside as riots scrimmage around the Summer streets. He appears to have been killed by a spiked ball, but nobody saw a thing. The fourth entry in van de Wetering's Amsterdam Cops series opens like a classic locked room mystery, but these mysteries are anything but traditional. I've always enjoyed crime novels that aren't really about the solution to the crime – James Sallis' Lew Griffin books, for instance – and though it is interesting to find out how the victim died, the real attraction of these books is just spending time with detectives Grijpstra and de Gier, and their aging commisariss boss and philosophical sensei. Van de Wetering, who died recently, is more like Simenon than McBain, but brings his own whimsical, large hearted version of that hardboiled weltschmerz. There is a laid-

back, offbeat humor here that just makes me smile, deeply, although it is rather hard to capture here. I re-read this one recently while sailing up Alaska's inside passage, and that was pretty much heaven. Newcomers should start with Outsider in Amsterdam.

Bettie? says

Description: A riot has erupted in New Market Square, transforming the normally sedate streets of Amsterdam into a mass of angry protesters. So when the body of the "King" of the local street market is found in his house with his head bashed in, the police are puzzled. The adjoining street has been closed off all day, and the constables stationed outside the scene of the crime didn't detect any unusual activity. There are only two people who could have reasonably committed the violent act: the victim's roommate upstairs and his beautiful sister downstairs. Both claim to have seen or heard nothing suspicious when the crime took place. But something isn't adding up. Is one of them the killer?

Opening: "YES MADAM," the constable said quietly. "Would you mind telling me who you are? And where you are?"

This is the one that culminates in a fight twixt bulldozer and digger, and de Gier asks a certain lady a certain question - will the cats be compatible?

This is the last I have in this series, maybe I shall track down some more later on in the year.

4* Outsider in Amsterdam
3.5* Tumbleweed
4* The Corpse in the Dike
3* Death of a Hawker

Stefan Percy says

Another in the series of books about the adventures of *Grijpstra & de Gier*. Although, in this one, along with having the Commissaris with them, they also have constable Cardozo tagging along for most of the book.

The book, about the murder of Abe Rogge, a hawker who seemed larger than life, was, as all the books in the series have been so far, very enjoyable. I am really liking Janwillem van de Wetering's writing style. He has a way of telling a story.

So, now I need to track down a copy of the next book in the series, *The Japanese Corpse*.

Brenda Mengeling says

Death of a Hawker is the third installment in the Amsterdam Cops series by Janwillem van de Wetering (often referred to now as a Grijpstra and De Gier Mystery), and unlike the first two books in the series (*Outsider in Amsterdam* and *Tumbleweed*), I didn't like it very much. The plot and the characters unique to this story left me flat. While I highly recommend the first two books, I would give this one a pass. I have the fourth book, and I'll give that a try sometime, to see if this episode was an anomaly.

