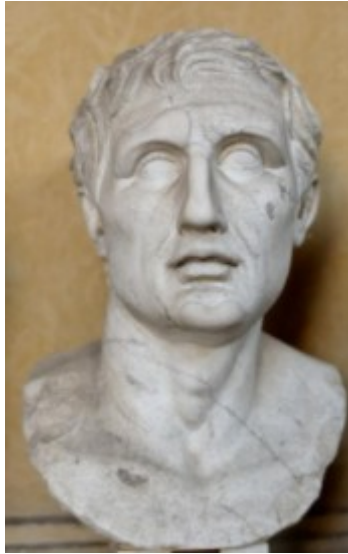


THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PORTRAIT

By: Olga Pitcairn



MENANDER

ATHENIAN PLAYWRIGHT

342—293 BCE

I HAVE THE STRUCTURE WORKED OUT

I NEED ONLY SET THE LINES TO IT





Chapter One

VELP

Gelderland

CHRISTMAS DAY 1910

Cees (*Cornelis*) Jonkheer gifted his son Anton, born Christmas Day 1885, for his 25th birthday a trip to Paris.

PARIS

MAY 1911

Anton Jonkheer stood at the entrance of Hotel Monnier. He looked at the train ticket for his return home—Paris/Brussels/Amsterdam—and, smiling, put it in his coat pocket. Concierge Pieter Smid hailed a Hansom cab and bade Mr. Jonkheer “*Tot ziens en goede reis*” (farewell and safe travels).

AMSTERDAM

Noord-Holland

When Anton left Centraal Station, he went like a honeybee straight for the offices of *Het Laatste Nieuws* on Kerkstraat. At the reception desk, he asked for the editor. The clerk said his boss was out of town. Anton took a job application form.

Eager to see his father, Anton sent him a telegram saying that he had arrived and would take the late train to Arnhem the next day. He checked into a hotel and spent his time writing an essay on French authors that he intended to submit with his résumé to the editor.

Anton entered Centraal Station. A porter took his valise and led the way to the train for Arnhem; where he took him to his compartment. A young man stood up and introduced himself as Leopold Moojer, known as Leo. His family had their roots in Almelo, Overijssel. Anton said that his family

resided in Velp, but their roots were in Brabant. All smiles, the young men sat across from each other.

Anton informed Leo that he had been in Paris; that he wanted to be a journalist working for *Het Laatste Nieuws*; that he had two older brothers and a much younger sister, Cornelia; that his father was a military man and until his retirement had been stationed in Java, the Indies, where, Anton smiled, he was born.

Leo told Anton that he worked for a real estate agency in Arnhem; that his father was a police constable; that he and his sister Dina were the youngest of eight children; that he had been visiting his sister in Amsterdam, and that Nicodemus Uhrbach, his brother-in-law, had asked him to rent them for the summer a cottage in Gelderland.

Formalities settled, the young men had a lively conversation about life in general. They exchanged addresses.

The train stopped at Arnhem. (*Gelderland*) It was 20:00 (8pm).

The men shook hands on the platform, promising to meet again. Hans, the Jonkheer's family coachman, took Anton's valise. Leo waved as the Barouche Landau left direction Velp.

The carriage stopped at **Villa Amourette** in Annastraat. Hans took the valise and informed Anton that Mrs. Jonkheer and Miss Nel had left for Den Haag (*Zuid-Holland*), and his father was in bed with a cold and wished to see him right away.

Worried, Anton entered the house and dashed upstairs. Cees was in bed wedged between pillows: a blue silk scarf around his neck covered his beard, and a fluffy white night cap crowned his head. Anton rushed into his outstretched arms. He took the cap, ruffled his father's white-streaked black hair, and planted a smack-kiss on his pate. He put the cap back and confessed he was glad to be home. Cees laughed as he took Anton's hands to squeeze them, saying he should tell him about the City of Light after breakfast.

Anton arose early. From the walnut wardrobe in his bedroom, he took a gray-checked suit. As he combed his black hair, he scrutinized himself in the mirror above the washstand. "The spitting image of Father except for the beard," he whispered, his brown eyes twinkling. "Maybe I'll grow a moustache?"

Tall and lanky, Anton went downstairs. He entered the kitchen. Cook put the coffeepot on the table and opened her arms, ready for his embrace and kisses. In high spirits, Anton squeezed her, saying he missed her; then he sat at the table. Her eyes all smiles, Cook poured him coffee while softly pulling his ear. She went to the stove to prepare breakfast. She let the cat out of the bag that

Nel had been courted by an unsuitable young man, and Mother decided to take her to relatives in Den Haag for a change of scenery. Out of sight, out of mind, was the motto.

Anton got to his feet and said it was urgent that he talk to Hans, and blowing her a smack-kiss, he left.

It was a clear day, and Anton walked to the bus stop on Hoofdstraat. The privately owned horse-drawn omnibus started in Arnhem, on to Velp/Rheden, then to Doesburg/Westervoort, and back to Arnhem. He got out in Rheden; from there he took the dirt road to Dieren: to **Boerenplezier**, the family farm.

Hans was in the barn. He inquired about Anton's trip, who replied that he had a fantastic time. Then Anton broached the subject he came for: about boarding a poor young artist, a painter born in Zwolle (*Overijssel*). His parents left for Paris when he was a child. His name was Phlip Smid. Smiling broadly, Hans said he had a cousin in Zwolle; perhaps he would know some Smid relatives. With a nod, he said Phlip was welcome. He drove Anton to Villa Amourette; then he took Cook to the market.

Cees sat in his cherry-red velvet Victorian wingchair when Anton entered the sun-filled parlor. The drawn velvet curtains, an attractive shade of salmon, showcased a large, gilded bird cage that stood in front of two windows. A yellow parrot cackled as soon as it saw Anton. Cees held out his arms for an embrace. Anton sat in the chair that fronted a table with a coffeepot, sugar bowl, creamer, and two cups and saucers as well as a plate with *stroopwafels*.

"Anton, tell me about your escapades." Cees took a handkerchief from the pocket of his charcoal-gray cardigan that enhanced his silvery beard.

Eyeing the plate with the syrupy cookies, Anton said, "Let's have coffee first." He gave him a steaming cup.

A twinkle in his brown eyes, Cees sipped, watching Anton. He put his cup on the small table next to his chair and took a stack of cards. "Thank you, son, for sending me these wonderful memories." He held up a postcard of the Eiffel Tower. "Paris! The City of Light!" His face lit up as well. "I am eager to hear about all the wonders you encountered."

Anton reached for the postcard. "The City of Light, indeed," he gushed. "Those French invented a wonderful new way of living at night. Father, you should see the boulevards and the monuments when lit up! The city is like a huge cabaret with people dining outdoors and dancing." He held up the card. "This emblem is their beacon. It was the entrance to the 1889 Paris World Exposition, but I've been told that it commemorated the 1789 centennial of their bloody revolution. This beacon is a marvel lit like a Christmas tree!" He put the postcard on the table.

“Father, you know that I was eager to visit the home of my favorite author, Stéphane Mallarmé?” Cees nodded. “So, I paid homage and went to Rue de Rome. I stood there in awe, thinking of his influence on me; on how to use language: that all words have meaning.” He reached for the postcards Cees was holding and took one. Laughing, he held it up. “This is a portrait of Debussy. He set Mallarmé’s poem ‘Afternoon of a Faun’ to music.”

“Of course you attended the concert?” Cees smiled.

“Father, it was memorable! And I made up my mind to become a literary journalist.” Anton went to the bird cage. Wagging a finger, he crooned, “Queenie! Queenie! Tell Nel that I have applied for a job at *Het Laatste Nieuws* in Amsterdam!”

Clapping filled the parlor. The parrot screeched.

Anton returned to his chair, clapping softly.

“Son, congratulations!” Cees beamed.

“Well . . . I still must fill out my job application,” Anton confessed. “I decided to include an essay on French authors, so the editor knows I’m serious.”

“French authors?” Cees leaned forward.

“I thought of Victor Hugo, who wrote *Les Misérables*. Balzac was an expert on human nature. And there’s Flaubert; *Madame Bovary* is still a big hit with ladies.” Anton chuckled. “It was considered pornographic because she wasn’t hiding her adultery.”

“How about Emile Zola. He wrote a letter about that dreadful Dreyfus Affair.” The military man was visibly agitated.

“That letter, *J’Accuse*, made Zola famous. He was a defender of downtrodden. I admire Zola. I hope I can step into his footsteps.” Anton took a postcard and gave it to Cees. “This is Hotel Monnier where I was staying. Monnier was a famous caricaturist. Our concierge, Pieter Smid, guess what, Father,”—he beamed—“Pieter was born in Zwolle! Well, he got me a theater ticket for the play ‘Joseph Prudhomme’.”

“What was it about?” Cees stroked his beard.

“Oh . . . you know, about the quintessential ‘citizen’. Joseph was of course pictured clownish, so the audience could laugh without being embarrassed. I’m sure they saw in Joseph their own neighbors, and . . . hopefully themselves.” Anton grinned. “Indeed, Monnier was a word painter describing the bourgeois period.” He put the stack of cards on the table. “More coffee, Father?”

Cees gave him his cup. He was sipping coffee when Anton blurted out, “Father, I promised Pieter Smid to ask you if his son Phlip, a young painter, can stay at Boerenplezier. Hans said Phlip is welcome if you agree.”

“How can I refuse?” Cees smiled. “What is he like?”

“I haven’t met him, so I can’t tell you what he’s like,” Anton apologized. “Phlip wants to paint Dutch scenes.”

“Cook told you about Mother and Nel visiting relatives in Den Haag?” Cees winked. “Most likely, they will not return until August. The young man must come soon. Son, send a telegram.”

Relief showing in his face, Anton got up and embraced him. “I’ll go to the post office right away.” He went to the kitchen and left a note for Cook, saying that he would not have lunch; he was going to Arnhem. Then he ran upstairs to get Leo’s address.

Whistling softly, Anton walked to the bus stop. In Arnhem he entered the post office and sent the telegram; ‘Smid, c/o Hotel Monnier, Paris. Phlip welcome in mid-June. Confirm arrival to Leo Moojer, Makelaar Tom Gelder, Arnhem. Anton Jonkheer.’

Still whistling, Anton entered the office of Makelaar Tom Gelder. Leo jumped up from his chair, and smiling broadly welcomed him with a handshake. Anton suggested lunch at restaurant De Schimmel. As they were eating veal croquettes with mustard sauce, their specialty, Anton told Leo to expect a telegram from Paris regarding the arrival of a young painter by the name of Phlip Smid. The artist would stay at Boerenplezier, the family farm near Dieren. He invited Leo for Sunday lunch at Villa Amourette.

The two parted outside. Leo returned to his office and Anton went toward Velp; on the way he bought the local newspaper. He entered Park Larenstein and sat on a bench to read the paper. Then he walked to Annastraat and entered the front garden of Villa Amourette. The apple trees were flowering; and as he strolled up the path he inhaled the air, enjoying their scent. He opened the front door and stepped inside.

When Anton entered the parlor, Cees was sitting in his wingchair reading a newspaper. “Son, what have you been up to? Cook is curious to know what you had for lunch in Arnhem.”

Laughing, Anton gave his father a smack-kiss on his head. The parrot screeched. He went to the chair next to the cage. The bird moved to be near Anton when he sat down. “Queenie,” he said, “I had lunch with a handsome young man, and we ate delicious croquettes.” The parrot hopped around the cage, cackling its heart out. Anton reached for a jar on the windowsill and took out a nut. Queenie flapped her wings and rushed up to get her treat.

Anton went to the chair across from the coffee table and sat down.

“Croquettes?” Cees wagged a finger. “That spells De Schimmel. How long have you known this handsome young man?”

“We met on the train. He was visiting his married sister in Amsterdam.”

The parrot screeched “*Fiepjes! Fiepjes!*”

Anton made a face; he got up and went to the jar. He gave Queenie one more nut, saying if she again interrupted—he stuck his tongue as Nel did—he would cover her cage with the lace cloth; neatly folded on the windowsill. He returned to his chair.

“His name is Leopold Moojer.” Anton glanced at the door to the kitchen. “The family is from Almelo. Leo works in Arnhem at Makelaar Tom Gelder.”

Waving the paper, Cees rose from his chair. “What a coincidence! The father sold me Villa Amourette when I married Mother! She fell in love with the name. The house needed repairing, but the garden was a delight.” He sat down. “We never regretted living here. Go ahead, son, and tell me what you were contriving with handsome Leo.”

“I told him about the telegram I sent. And that Phlip will contact him when he arrives in Arnhem. Hans will fetch him.”

“Tell Hans to bring him straight to the farm.” Cees shook his head. “We will meet later.”

“Father, I invited Leo over for Sunday lunch. I thought you would like to meet him.”

Cees chuckled and, as sternly as he could, said, “Tell Cook to make her famous chicken dish, but to go easy on the spices. Dutch folk are not used to eating Javanese cuisine.”

Visibly pleased, Anton jumped up. “At your command, Sir!”

In her native Java, she was *Kokkie*. When Mrs. Jonkheer Senior asked her to come along to her native Holland—she had not been feeling well after the birth of Anton—*Kokkie* accepted because she adored Anton; the thought of never seeing him grow up made her bones ache. Subsequently, *Kokkie*, a diminutive, brown-skinned woman, now in her early sixties, became “Cook”.

When Anton entered the kitchen, Cook was at the stove. With a chuckle in her voice she said, “Easy on the spices?”

“Been listening at closed doors again?” Anton sat at the large kitchen table.

“Sunday lunch with handsome Leo the potato-eater? My delicious, curried potatoes will do the trick.” Cook stirred the pot with a ladle.

Anton smacked his lips. “You know it is Father’s favorite, and delicious with your chicken in coconut milk. But be easy on sambal. Rice for me, *Kokkie!*”

Kokkie smiled, saying, “My famous fried rice for the apple of my eye.”

Anton joined her, put his arm around her, and kissed her. “What will be the dessert?”

Cackling, imitating the parrot, Cook held up the ladle and pointed toward the door. “That will be *my* surprise.”

Sunday, Cees did not attend the Dutch Reformed Church but read the Bible at home. Legs crossed, Anton sat across from him, holding his Bible close to his face. Through the window behind his father’s chair, he could keep an eye on the front garden.

Cook entered holding a tray with a bottle of genever, three glasses, and a plate with fried peanuts that she put on the coffee table. She whispered in Anton’s ear that the table was ready; with a smile she returned to her domain.

Anton got up slowly, sneaked up to the cage and put the Bible on the side table near Nel’s chair. A finger to his lips, he approached Queenie. The parrot cocked its head and softly twittered. He pointed to the jar with nuts on the windowsill and whispered, “Father. Father.” Queenie flapped her wings and screeched “*Father! Father!*”

Hearing the bird’s screeching, Cees glanced in the direction of the cage.

“*Father!*” the bird screeched excitedly. Anton gave it a nut.

“Yes, Anton?” Cees took off his reading glasses.

“Cook said the table is ready. Can I open the doors?” Anton took a few steps toward the dining room.

“No, son. You can play host next time.”

The front doorbell rang.

“Hans will answer.” Cees put the Bible on the small table near his chair. He got to his feet and joined Anton.

Hans opened the parlor door and their guest entered.

Leopold Moojer was slender and of medium height. His thick hair was the color of honey. Clean-shaven, he had a square jaw, straight nose, a well-formed mouth and sapphire blue eyes. He entered holding a bouquet of white carnations.

Cees held out his left hand to take the flowers. He shook Leo’s hand as he said, “Anton thinks highly of you. Welcome, Leo!”

Hans took the bouquet and closed the door.

“*Fiepjes! Fiepjes!*” Queenie screeched.

Anton dashed to the cage. He fumed “NO!” and took the lace cloth to cover the cage. He turned to Leo. “Nel taught it dirty words and now Queenie bribes us. She wants her nut.”

Leo laughed and said to Cees, “When I was a child, we *loved* to fart in front of guests.”

Snorting, Cees poured genever. He nodded to Anton, who took two glasses, handing one to Leo. Holding up his glass, Cees said, “Let us drink to childhood memories!”

The trio had a wonderful time reminiscing; trying to outdo each other with stories about their careless boyhood. Choking with laughter, Cees poured more genever. From the open door to the kitchen, Hans waved frantically. Cees waved back; then drank bottoms-up. “Anton, lunch is served. Open the doors!”

Anton took Leo by the elbow, and they went to the French double doors leading to the dining room. “Leo, you take the left and I the right. And when I say sesame, we fling them open . . . to reveal a feast you’ll remember forever!”

“SESAME!” Cees shouted; then he whistled softly. Anton blinked, eyeing the set-up. Leo’s eyes were fixed on the crystal vase with white carnations in the center of the table. Cees entered. “Cook,” he said, “has outdone herself decorating. My mother’s favorite tablecloth that she uses *only* on special occasions.” He turned to Leo. “Indeed, this lunch is something to remember *forever*. Leo, you *are* special!”

His heart thumping, eyeing his bouquet, Leo entered. He looked at Cees and said, voice choking, “You make me feel like family.” His chest heaved. “Please, call me Poldie, my family nickname.”

“Poldie,”—Anton took him by the elbow—“I’ll show you a photograph of Father and his soldiers when he was stationed in the East Indies.” Cees followed them when they went to the fireplace. On the wall was a framed black-and-white photo. Straightening his shoulders, Cees said, pointing, “This was my fifth infantry. I was a colonel when I retired. Anton’s mother was unwell, and so we returned to Holland.”

From the kitchen entrance Hans announced, “Mister Jonkheer, lunch is ready.”

Cees took Poldie by the elbow and took him to the table, pulling out the chair facing two paintings. “Sit down, Poldie.” He nodded at Anton that he should sit facing the parlor.

“The feast can start, Hans!” Cees sat in his armchair facing Anton.

Cook entered with a serving platter that she put next to Cees, murmuring “Ahdoo.” He laughed, and said to Poldie, “Cook’s coconut chicken is everyone’s favorite.”

Hans came with the curried potatoes. Anton waved to put the dish next to Poldie.

Cook brought the bowl of fried rice and put it next to Anton, breathing “Ahdoo.”

Hans returned with a jug of beer and put the jug between Cees and Poldie.

“I will take care of the chicken.” Cees took the carving utensils. “Poldie, you pour the beer.”

The dishes were passed around.

Poldie mashed a potato in the creamy coconut milk, put a forkful into his mouth, and ate. “It’s delicious, better than gravy.” His tongue swept between his lips. “What’s the yellow spice?”

“It is curry. Friends in Java send us spices, making Cook and me happy. In exchange they get food for thought: books and magazines.” Cees waved toward the paintings. “That picture shows the island Bali and the famous rice paddies. On the right is a coconut tree. The flesh of the coconut fruit is grated and put in airtight containers. Cook also makes a delicious coconut pudding.”

“I think that will be her surprise dessert,” Anton blurted out. “I hope she’ll serve it with rum sauce.”

Soon, the plates were clean as a whistle.

“We had an invasion of locusts. Cook will be happy.” Cees wiped his mouth and took a sip of beer.

Hans cleared the table. He returned with a tray: on it were crystal bowls and a saucer. He put the bowls at each place setting, and the saucer next to Poldie.

Cook came with dessert. She put the serving dish on the table near the saucer. “My famous Dutch vanilla custard,” she boasted. And pointing at the saucer, she stated, “And your famous Dutch berry sauce.” Poldie eyed the Dutch treat, saying Cook had outperformed his grandmother.

Looking at the ceiling as she entered her domain, Cook chuckled “Adhoo.”

The men returned to the parlor for coffee and a smoke. They discussed the arrival of the painter. Poldie said that his brother-in-law was a Sunday painter and would like to meet with Philip. The family farm at Dieren was not too far from Laren, where he had rented a furnished cottage for his sister Dina’s family.

In a jolly good mood, enjoying the company of the two enterprising men so full of *joi de vivre*, Cees said, “Anton, tell Hans to get ready. We shall take Poldie home.”

Chapter Two

<https://www.philippesmit.com/catalogue/>

(to locate PS paintings on the internet)

TEN DAYS LATER

Hans drove the carriage into the partly paved kitchen garden. He tethered the horses. Then he went to the kitchen door and entered Villa Amourette.

Cook was at the table shelling peas. Hans smiled broadly as he sat across from her. He said, “I just took the painter to Boerenplezier, the artist had on a beret.” He guffawed. “I thought Mister Jonkheer would like to know what he’s like.”

“I’ll tell Father you are here!” Anton waved from the parlor door.

Cook cupped her hand at her ear and pointed at the closed door. Hans grinned. Anton returned and asked Hans to come, who left his cap on the chair.

Screeching from the top of her little lungs when she saw Hans, Queenie flung herself around the cage. Cees held his hands to his ears, shouting at Anton to stop the bird’s antics. With a flourish, Anton took the cloth and covered the cage, saying the bird recognized Hans as he often walked by the windows, tapping the panes. He waved at Hans to sit down, pulling out Nel’s chair.

Anton went to the chair next to Cees.

“So Phlip arrived,” Cees stated. “What is he like?”

Hans fidgeted in his chair; then he put his hands on his knees. “He’s not like his relatives. Cousin Jan told me that those Zwolle folk are plain farmhands. And Phlip is fancy, wore a beret. I take . . . that’s how a French artist looks like.” He glanced at Queenie; then continued. “He got a brown beard and a moustache; not much hair left on top. I think that’s why he keeps his beret on. **[PS187]** The fancy artist wears a city suit.” Queenie chirped softly. “He had a valise and a backpack with painting stuff, and he held his easel as if it were a bishop’s crook.”

Anton looked at Cees, who raised his eyebrows. “What did Phlip say,” he blurted out, “about Boerenplezier! Not excited living in such a beautiful farmhouse?”

Hans leaned forward. “He kept looking around for a while, and then he said he would paint Boerenplezier **[PS38]** and give the painting to you, Mister Jonkheer, for inviting him.” He

nodded. “Phlip likes painting Dutch scenes and told me that he wants to go to Dordrecht to paint sailboats. **[PS54/56]** I told him to go to Zuiderzee.” **[PS76]**

“What is your impression of him?” Cees wanted to know.

Hans fidgeted, eyes flitting around the parlor. He looked at Anton. “You met Anneke, our new milkmaid?”

“Yes. She’s young and pretty. Well?” Anton frowned.

“I said if he needed a model,”—Hans clasped his hands—“that I would ask her.” His tongue moved rapidly between his lips. Then he blurted out, “But Phlip wasn’t interested in her!”

Looking at his father, whose mouth opened on hearing this puzzling tidbit, Anton went to the cage. In a flash, he removed the cloth. Queenie screeched “*Fiepjes! Fiepjes!*”

As if a grenade had exploded under his seat Hans jumped up and ran out of the parlor—bumping into Cook, who shrieked, “Ahdoo!”

A cab came to a halt in Annastraat; Poldie waved. Anton closed the gate. He joined Poldie, saying he was looking forward to this adventure of exploring Dina’s cottage in Laren (*Gelderland*). And, as it was a cloudless day, the trip would be enjoyable.

On the way they stopped at the farm. Phlip was at his easel putting *Boerenplezier* on canvas; behind him stood Anneke. Anton scrutinized the milkmaid. Elbowing Poldie, he whispered to give her a look-over. Eyes twinkling, he put his hand on Phlip’s shoulder and whispered into his ear that a little birdie informed him that this painting was a gift for his host, Mr. Jonkheer. Anton straightened, and nodding at Poldie he announced that Phlip could stay until August. When they left, Phlip waved his paintbrush; and Anneke, blowing Phlip a kiss, went inside the barn.

The cab took the road to Zutphen. Poldie wanted to know why he had to look at the milkmaid. So, Anton let out what Hans had observed. Poldie said with a chuckle in his voice that perhaps the milkmaid was not his type? Then he said that, as he was now part of the Jonkheer family, he wanted to get it off his chest that Dina and Nico had a family secret. Anton should know that Dina was pregnant with her fourth child. The oldest was a girl of six, her name was Mieke; then the boys: Nicolay, four, and two-year old Claudius. The boys could not talk properly; they had their own language.

Anton put his arm around Poldie, saying he would appreciate it if, on their way to their cottage, the Uhrbach family would visit Villa Amourette. He would serve lemonade in the front garden beneath the apple trees, so the children could play. Poldie agreed it would be a great idea to introduce them, because once in Laren, the family would have a busy schedule; most likely

spending a few days in Almelo where the couple got married in 1903. Dina was their father's favorite, and he had not seen granddaughter Mieke since his last trip to Amsterdam when Claudius was born. The family was moving in the autumn from an apartment in Amsterdam to a house in Laren, 't Gooi. (*Noord-Holland*)

Poldie told the driver to stop at Makelaar Frans Poes. They entered the office. He inquired about getting transportation; his brother-in-law liked to paint outdoors, and the family was looking forward to picnics at enchanting sites. The agent told him that a nearby farmer had a horse-and- buggy for hire. Locals delivered the daily necessities: the butcher came by; the greengrocer; the baker, and the farmer sold milk, butter, cheeses, and eggs. They left with the key to the cottage.

While the cab was taking the scenic route, the two chit-chatted. Poldie said that the day the cottage came on the market, Nico told him to rent it, sight unseen. He showed Anton a black-and-white photograph of a farmhouse with dormers and a thatched roof; underneath was written: **Vergeet Mij Niet** [Forget me not]. Anton snickered, saying he was intrigued.

Arriving in Laren, a rural village, the coachman asked for directions to Vergeet Mij Niet. The country lane weaved between wheat fields and finally reached the cottage; it was painted a light blue and the shutters bright blue.

They walked around the farmhouse; Anton commenting about the blue, white and pink forget-me-nots in earthenware flowerpots. In the rear were a large table and two benches. The apple orchard bordered a wheat field ablaze with poppies and cornflowers. A path led to the outhouse. Poldie was aglow with praise; Nico would be in his element as painting was his heart's hobby. They went to the front. Peeling with laughter, Poldie pointed at the Delft blue rocking chair next to the door, saying he could picture Dina enjoying the view. Still chortling, he put the key in the lock, and, taking Anton by the elbow, shouting sesame, he opened the door. Anton snickered and gave him a shove with his elbow.

The vestibule was tiled brown. The open door on the left showed the kitchen; it also had brown tiles. In the center, stools were around a table and on it were kerosene lamps. In front of the large chimney facing the vestibule stood a pale blue bench. A black-painted cupboard showcased the dishes. Near the window facing the backyard stood a huge black range and a pile of wood logs. On the wall, cooking pans hung from hooks. Poldie opened the kitchen door to the yard; the water pump was in easy reach. He made sure the pump was in working order; the water was fresh and pure.

They returned to the vestibule. Poldie opened the door to the room for receiving company. The floor had black-and-white lozenge-shaped tiles. White linen curtains festooned the three windows. On the mantle of the white painted chimney were rows of red ceramic candle sticks. And in a half circle fronting the chimney were arranged three ruby-red velvet armchairs and two floral-print upholstered armless chairs. Small, black painted stools served as side tables. Poldie remarked that

the decoration was up to date. The chairs were from a furniture establishment in Arnhem. Anton agreed it was quality cottage-style. They returned to the vestibule and walked up the stairs to the bedrooms. The two large ones each had a double bed, and the smaller one had a single bed; the covers were brown linen. No rugs on the wood floors. White linen curtains covered the windows. Each room had a dresser and, on the wall, pegs for hanging clothes. Anton commented that it was rather Spartan. Poldie acknowledged it was bare looking, but bedrooms were for sleeping and not for lounging around: especially not on vacation.

Once more, the two friends made the rounds of the rental. Anton gathered some blue forget-me-nots and put them in his lapel. Elated, Poldie whistled softly as he took notes; who owned Vergeet Mij Niet?

Cook stood at the parlor door and announced that Hans was in the backyard with information about the family of Mr. Moojer. Anton jumped up, he sprinted to the kitchen, and into the yard where Hans sat in the carriage. The message was that Mr. Moojer's family would arrive on Monday the following week. In the meantime, could he come to Mr. Poldie's office? Excited upon hearing that the day of meeting the Uhrbach family was nearing, he decided to see Poldie right away. Hans took him to Arnhem. The two friends had lunch at De Schimmel. Poldie revealed that he would set up a meeting with Nico and Philip at Boerenplezier. The two painters would keep each other company, so he had his hands free. This was the season for selling real estate: he had to work!

MONDAY

Hans set up a table and garden chairs in the front garden. Cook draped the table with a bright pink tablecloth embroidered with bright red cherries; mentioning that this was Nel's favorite, and the children would also like to look at it. Hans said it was 'toooo' pretty, and smiling at her, he left to get a tray with glasses embossed with red dots and a red ceramic plate with sugar cookies. Cook got the carafe with lemonade; looking at the inviting scene, she nodded. Anton asked her to open the parlor window because Queenie liked children. Her eyes smiled as she said Ahdoo and she went on her mission, leaving the parlor door to the hall ajar as well.

Anton pulled up a cushioned chair for his father. Eyeing the festive table, Cees wanted to know about this impromptu party for a family they had never met. Anton handed him a glass of lemonade and explained he was doing Poldie a favor. The visit would be short. The family, residing in Amsterdam, was on their way to Laren for the summer. The children needed fresh air and to play outdoors. With loud hoof-clattering and coachmen shouting, two carriages came to a halt in

Annastraat. Anton went to the gate. Poldie, holding hands with a dark-haired girl, shouted that Dina needed help with the youngest boy. So he took Mieke by the hand and introduced her. The girl's hazel-colored eyes took in the pretty set-up. She licked her lips, winking her lashes at Cees. He invited her to take a cookie.

Poldie came with short, stout, dark-haired Dina; a woman in her early thirties holding Claudius in her arms. They were followed by tall, dark-haired Nico holding hands with Nicolay.

Anton made the introduction.

Cees said to Nico, "I heard that you are interested in art. I read in the *Batavia Post* that Theodoor van Erp just finished repairing the Buddhist temple of Borobudur. I have a friend in Amsterdam whose cousin is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture in Magelang, Central Java. I wonder if you know Hendrick DeBron?"

"Mina, Hendrick's wife, is my best friend!" Dina exclaimed as she put Claudius down so she could take the glass of lemonade Poldie offered. She turned to Cees. "Wilhelmina DeBron manages **Gallery Ava Riss**." She looked toward the parlor window. "Mieke! What are you up to?"

The girl turned around. "Can I go to the bird?"

Within seconds Anton seized the boys by their hands and hurried to the front door, saying, "Mieke, let's say hello to Queenie."

Nico sat next to Cees who said, "Paul, Hendrick's cousin in Jogjakarta, is a dear old friend of our family. For three generations we have served our country in the military." He turned to Poldie. "Please, fetch the photo in the dining room so I can show Nico."

Poldie came with the photograph. Dina and Nico were all ears and eyes when Cees began talking about the past. Poldie went to the parlor. Queenie was chirping softly, fluttering from perch to perch as the children whispered her name.

"I'll see if Cook can make us lunch," Anton said. "You stay here to keep an eye on them. If it gets unruly, Queenie is unpredictable, give her a nut."

At the stove, Cook was stirring in a pot. Hans was at the table dicing cooked chicken. Anton joined Cook. He stroked her head. "Everyone likes your fried rice."

"I got jugs of beer from the tavern," Hans said. "Lemonade is for ladies."

The door to the parlor opened. Mieke entered. "I'm hungry," she stated.

"Mieke," Cook said, "I'll make you something special. Come here, I want to look at your beautiful dress." The girl held up her pink skirt, showing off pink shoes, and made her entrance

quickstepping toward Cook, who put the ladle in the pot. “Girls look very pretty in pink,” she said, shaking hands.

“I’m hungry.” Mieke made no bones about her kitchen mission.

“Sure. Shall I make Peef Puff Poof for you and your brothers?”

“Claudius stinky-stinky.” The girl sniffled.

Cook raised her eyebrows. “Do you know how to change diapers?”

Mieke nodded.

“Anton, Mieke will show Uncle Poldie how to change stinky-stinky.” Cook wrinkled her nose. “Diapers are on the dresser in the bathroom.”

As soon as the two left, the parlor door opened and Nicolay entered. He went straight for Hans, who was wiping away tears because Anton had made a face. The boy stared at him in silence; then uttered sounds as if he was in distress. “What is it, boy?”

“Peepeekaka!” Nicolay wailed. “Peepeekaka!”

Hans looked perplexed. Cook hollered, “Show him the toilet and make sure it’s clean when he’s finished.” Hans had a fit of laughter and took Nicolay by the hand; they left.

Cook began the preparations for the children’s meal. From the pantry she took six eggs, three bowls, and a set of small bottles labeled red, green, and yellow, and put them on the table. Then she got three small pink ceramic plates and three small spoons. She went to the room next to the pantry and got a highchair for Claudius as well as four cushions that she put on two chairs.

Nicolay and Hans returned, who rolled his eyes. “I’m getting sandwiches for the coachmen,” he announced, and strode for the exit door, snorting, “Peepeekaka? It’s your turn next!”

Taking Nicolay’s hand, Cook sat him on one of the cushioned chairs. She pointed a finger at her mouth and, looking into his eyes, said, “Hungry-hungry?” The boy nodded. She took his hand and, stroking his fingers, said, “Mieke-Mieke wait.” He nodded. She took a pink plate and a spoon and put them in front of him. The boy took the spoon and, all smiles waved. She returned to her stove and added chicken to the rice dish.

When Poldie, Claudius, Mieke and Anton entered, Cook pointed at the highchair next to Nicolay. Poldie put the toddler in his seat. Eagle-eyed Mieke took two plates and two spoons, gave her little brother one set, and put hers next to Nicolay. Swift as a swallow, she joined Cook at the stove.

“You promised to make us Peef Puff Poof!”

“Yes.” Cook nodded. She turned to Anton. “Please tell Father that Hans is getting the coachmen sandwiches. He can’t help me serve. So, I’ll serve the rice on a platter in the kitchen. Poldie and you can clear the yard table?”

The men left, laughing, Anton saying that Father would be in his element introducing his guests to Javanese fried rice.

Cook turned her attention to Mieke. “Everything’s on the table. Let’s start.” She took a whisk and beat the eggs in one of the bowls until frothy. She then took a teaspoon. “Give me the red bottle.” She put some red liquid on the spoon and added it to the bowl—whipping until the egg-froth was red.

Mieke clapped. “Is this Peef?” Cook nodded. Then she beat the eggs in the second bowl. Without being asked, Mieke gave her the green bottle. Cook whipped until the mixture was bright green. “That’s Puff!” Mieke shouted. Cook laughed.

Mieke gave Cook the yellow bottle as she whipped the last batch. The girl giggled as she shouted, “Poof!”

“Mieke, over there”—Cook pointed to a small table—“is a plate with pink meringue kisses. Be careful! Put it here.” She made space on the kitchen table.

Licking her lips, Mieke came on tiptoes and put the plate on the table, popping a kiss in her mouth. The girl looked at Cook, who wagged her finger.

“And now, we’ll cook Peef Puff Poof on the stove. Watch me.” Cook lit a burner. In a large omelet pan, she added butter. “See how it melts?” Mieke nodded. “Don’t let it get brown. Now, give me that bowl.” She pointed at the red one. The girl handed it to her. Cook used a large spoon to put Peef in the pan. “Get me another bowl.”

Mieke rushed to give it to her; and before Cook could ask for the last one, she held up the bowl. Big-eyed, she watched her shaking the pan. “Oooh!” the girl exclaimed. “Confetti eggs!”

Cook laughed, and waving her spoon, she shouted, “Confetti eggs!” In her element, she told Mieke to sit in her place. The children were sitting next to each other like parakeets when she doled out the colorful omelet.

The adults entered with the tray with glasses, carafe, and cookie plate.

“Moeke!” Mieke looked at her mother. “Look! Peef Puff Poof confetti eggs!”

Dina rushed up to help Claudius, who was eating with his fingers. Cook gave her a kitchen towel. Dina asked for the recipe.

“I know how to make it, Moeke!” The girl nodded vigorously. “I’ll show you at home!”

Poldie was feeding Nicolay, saying, “This is a magic omelet.”

Anton put his arm around Cook; saying she was everyone's fairy godmother.

Cees went to the stove. "Fried rice! Thank you, *Kokkie!*"

Kokkie took the huge pan from the stove and asked Dina to get a spoon and scoop the rice on the large, round serving plate. As everyone was watching her, she garnished the dish with cucumber slices. Her lips pursed, Cook put the platter on the sideboard, next to a stack of napkins, plates, forks, glasses, and the jug with beer. She smiled and said, "Lunch is ready!"

While Cook and Mieke were feeding the boys, the adults were having a feast eating under the apple trees. Cees, in his element, put his arm around Poldie and said not to be formal and call him 'Father' as he considered him part of his family.

Anton and Poldie took the plates to the kitchen. They returned with a coffeepot, sugar bowl, creamer, and cups on a tray. Cook was shepherding the boys and Mieke held the plate with pink meringue kisses.

"Father," Poldie said, "I'd like to introduce Nico to Phlip at Boerenplezier. Do I have your permission?"

"Dina," Cees addressed her, "do you think Hendrick DeBron may be interested in evaluating his paintings?"

"Mina will," Dina replied, "after all, she manages Gallery Ava Riss."

"This gallery"—Nico put his coffee cup on the table—"was once owned by the antique dealer Adolph Riss. And when Antonia, the present owner, got him interested in paintings, they started exhibiting young, Dutch artists. I'm sure Mina"—he nodded at Dina—"will get Antonia's ear to get involved with Phlip."

"Ava," Cees said, "why Ava Riss and not Antonia Riss?"

"Antonia had a child," Dina replied, "before she married Adolph. The boy's name is Anton Welling. When Adolph died, she decided to rename the shop Gallery Ava Riss. You see,"—Dina laughed—"her full name is Antonia, Vera, Amalia. . . so it became AVA Riss."

Anton said, "I'd like to meet Anton."

"He's a teenager." Dina smiled.

"Well, Anton," Poldie said, "how about going this Saturday to Boerenplezier and introduce them?"

"You have my approval," Cees said with a nod.

The children hugging Cook, and Nico promising to visit often, the Uhrbach family left.

Cees turned to Anton, saying, “Son, I want to thank you for inviting this delightful family. I had a wonderful time!”

Chapter Three

The next day a letter arrived from *Het Laatste Nieuws*. Anton raced up the stairs to his bedroom. Two minutes later, he galloped down and rushed into the parlor.

“Father,” he shouted, waving the letter, “the editor wants to interview me! Read!” His face aglow, he went to the cage and offered the bird a nut, saying, “Sorry, Queenie. Soon I’ll be gone and no me to spoil you.”

“*Anton! Anton!*” the parrot screeched.

“Son,”—Cees waved the letter—“this is news for celebrating.”

“Yes, Father! How about your rum punch and Cook makes her delicious corn fritters?”

“Good idea. Invite Poldie for dinner.”

“I’ll go to Arnhem to make sure he’ll come. And, Father, you talk with *Kokkie* about dinner.”

Anton left in a hurry to catch the omnibus.

Hans waved his whip as the carriage came to a halt at Villa Amourette. Poldie got out. He entered the front garden illuminated by kerosene lamps. Cees was putting a carafe on the table; set in red-and-white checked linen.

“Good evening, Father.” Poldie put a hand on his shoulder.

“Poldie, son, I shall miss Anton . . . I hope you will keep me company?”

“It will be my greatest pleasure, Father.” Poldie waved at Anton holding a tray with glasses and plates; Cook followed with a plate in each hand.

“Father,” Cook said, “I also made peanut fritters.” She smiled at Poldie. “I know you like peanuts.” He took a fritter; his face lit up as he ate. “*Kokkie*, you spoil me.” Poldie put his arm around her.

Anton laughed. “You’ll never replace me, Poldie. I AM the apple of her eye.”

Cees poured the punch. “Boys, help yourselves.” He eyed his glass; the rum punch was his secret recipe.

The men were chit-chatting about the future when Cook and Hans arrived with the food.

Poldie got up. “*Kokkie*, that looks sumptuous.” He took a satée. “How do I eat this?”

Cook put the platter on the table. She gave Poldie a plate. Using a fork, she put the chicken bits on his plate, and the bamboo stick on the side. She smiled at him, took a saucer and said, “This peanut sauce”—she took a spoon—“is really tasty.” She dribbled some on the chicken. “And this is coconut rice.” She took a bowl and spooned some beside the chicken. “That”—she pointed at a bowl on the tray—“is pickled cucumber. And in this bowl”—she pointed—“is a spicy ginger-red currant sauce. Which one you want?”

“Everything you cook is tasty. I want everything!” Poldie blew her a kiss.

Cees laughed. “In that case, whenever you are hungry, YOU come here. *Kokkie* will feed you.”

“Poldie, eat your heart out,” Anton snickered. “They say a man’s love goes through his stomach.”

Hans guffawed. With a sly smile Cook left, followed on her heels by Hans, horse-laughing.

The cheerful celebration was ending when, out of the blue, Anton said, “I’ve decided to leave on Friday so I get acquainted with Amsterdam before my interview on Monday.”

Bewildered, Poldie slowly put his fork on his plate. “Can’t you wait until Sunday?” He looked at Cees. “Nico is counting on us.”

“No worry,”—Cees nodded at Poldie—“I shall go with you. I am curious to meet Philip.”

SATURDAY

Hans took Poldie to Villa Amourette. Cees stood outside, eager to visit his Boerenplezier. Poldie helped him get into the carriage. Cook handed Hans a hamper, bottles with punch and lemonade as well as glasses. He gave her a big smile and rubbed his stomach. She pursed her lips.

Sitting next to each other, the two men talked about Anton playing tourist in Amsterdam; Cees mentioning that Anton would need suitable rooms, and that he should look for an honest real estate agent to help him.

When the carriage entered the dirt road to the family farm, Cees took Poldie's hand. "Son, I am excited to meet this painter."

"Father,"—Poldie put a hand on his arm—"I've never seen you this excited. What happened?"

"I want to surprise Anton. It is a secret." Cees' eyes twinkled. "But I shall tell you because you are now brothers. If I like what Phlip paints, I will commission a painting for Anton's 30th birthday."

"I like that." Poldie nodded. "It will stay a secret."

The carriage came to a halt in front of the barn.

Nico came to greet them, saying Phlip was in the orchard sketching Mieke. He smiled, saying he had a surprise in store for them.

Hans scampered past them carrying the hamper. Anneke followed him with a brown terrycloth blanket and a large, soft pillow for Cees; Cook had thought of everything.

Poldie wanted to know if Nico had seen the *Boerenplezier* painting.

"Phlip told me that he first sketches his subject with a soft pencil," Nico said. "And then he takes the brush to paint in the colors. I'm sure *Boerenplezier* will be wonderful when finished because I saw two of his paintings with scenes of Paris. He hopes to sell these here." Nico took Cees by the elbow, Poldie following them. "I want you to meet a painter, his name is Johan Josseaud. He insisted on coming along when I told him that I was on my way to meet Phlip. Mieke also wanted to meet Phlip. Let's join them." Nico laughed. "Our artists are having a competition sketching Mieke."

"Faty!" Mieke waved at her father; she sat on a table.

Johan and Phlip looked up from their sketchbooks. When they saw the three approaching, they stood up. Nico introduced Johan. Cees nodded at Phlip, introduced by Poldie. Anneke put the pillow on a chair next to the bench and the blanket. Cees sat down and told Phlip to sit on his right. Turning to Mieke, he said she must sit on the blanket.

Cees said, "Phlip, I would like to look at your two paintings of Paris, so I have an idea of your artistic abilities."

Phlip left.

"Look at my sketches!" Mieke showed the ones Phlip and Johan had made.

Cees took them; scrutinizing one, he gave it to her. “This one,” he said, “I like best.”

Gleefully the girl pointed at Johan. Poldie and Nico laughed.

Philip returned with the canvases and sat next to Cees. “This is Place de Clichy.” **[PS5]**

“I like it!” Cees said, Mieke peering over his shoulder. “Have a look.” He gave the painting to Poldie.

“And this is my favorite.” Philip gave him the other one. “Place Pigalle.” **[PS49]**

“It is . . . as if I am sitting at a window, looking out at this lively square.” Cees smiled. “I like your artwork, Philip.”

Johan had joined Mieke, looking over Cees’ shoulder. “A photograph can’t do justice to this stimulating scene,” he said. “I haven’t been to Paris, but I feel the excitement that we lack in Amsterdam where I was born and have lived all my life.”

“Nico,” Cees said, “Dina must tell Mina to sell them at the gallery. Amsterdammers will acquire them, wishing to visit Paris. If I were younger, I would certainly plan on going.”

“Gallery? Which art gallery?” Johan looked eagerly at Nico for an answer. “Perhaps I can show some of my work as well?”

“Good idea,” Poldie said. He took Mieke’s hand and went to the table where Hans had laid out the food, punch, and lemonade. They became a duo: Poldie playing host and Mieke hostess.

Having fun, Mieke put her arms around Cees, and whispered that she liked him a lot. In his element, Cees said that she should call him ‘Father’. They were ONE big family.

Carrying the hamper, Hans scampered past the party toward the barn.

Cees announced that it was time to go home.

The carriage came to a halt at Villa Amourette. Cees told Poldie that he was in a hurry: he wanted to write the letter regarding the painting for Anton’s 30th birthday. They embraced. Hans took Poldie home.

Cees made a beeline for the parlor; he opened the secretary and took the inkstand and pen as well as sheets of letter paper. He went into the dining room and put them on the table. Softly whistling, he took from the buffet a wood tablet.

He sat in his armchair and put the tablet in front of him: the inkstand on his right and the letter papers to his left. He took a sheet and put it on the tablet. Pen in hand, he stared for a while at the paintings on the wall . . . such wonderful memories.

Cees Jonkheer was ready to compose his letter to Hendrick DeBron.

Villa Amourette
Velp, Gelderland
July 6, 1911

Dear Hendrick,

Your cousin Paul was a dear friend of my family. We, three generations serving our country in the military in Semarang, often visited him in Jogjakarta. Paul took us sightseeing; the reconstruction of the Borobudur truly is his crown jewel.

Hendrick, I have a request. A few days ago, Nicodemus and Leopoldina Uhrbach and their children, on their way to Laren for a two-month vacation, were here for lunch.

As you know, Nico is an ardent Sunday painter. It so happens that I have sponsored a 25-year-old artist presently lodging at my farmhouse in Dieren. Phlip Smid was born in Zwolle, but at age 6 his parents moved to Paris. Nico was eager to meet Phlip, and I arranged for a rendezvous at Boerenplezier, my farm.

Dina told me that Mina is her best friend; your wife manages Gallery Ava Riss. I felt connected, because Poldie, her younger brother, is my son Anton's best friend. Poldie calls me Father. We are that close. Anton's mother passed away 17 years ago. I remarried. Jeanne and I have a 15-year-old daughter, Cornelia. They are visiting relatives in Den Haag. Nico mentioned Willem, your son. I hope he is giving you joy and will follow in your footsteps.

At the picnic lunch, Nico mentioned two paintings of Paris that Phlip took along. He wants to sell them. I asked Dina to ask you to evaluate his work. However, she said Mina will ask the owner of the gallery to appraise the paintings.

At the end of May, Anton returned from his trip to Paris; it was my 25th birthday gift. He told me that this Paris trip was unforgettable because it inspired him to become a literary journalist. Next week, he has an interview with the editor of Het Laatste Nieuws. Anton's favorite author is Stéphane Mallarmé whose poem Afternoon of a Faun was set to music by Debussy.

Hendrick, this is strictly confidential. For obvious reasons, Mina and Dina are not to be involved. I want to commission a painting by Phlip of Afternoon of a Faun [**PS329**] for Anton's 30th birthday. The painting must be purchased by you. I will write my bank to contact you directly regarding the financial transaction.

I will be exceedingly grateful if you consent to this request: a surprise for my son Anton.

With sincere and warm greetings,

Cornelis Jonkheer

He looked wistfully at the two paintings and said aloud, “Where . . . shall I put *Boerenplezier?*” Then, with a nod, he read his epistle twice. He addressed the envelope to: Mr. Hendrick DeBron, Keizersgracht 25A, Amsterdam.

He walked to the hall and entered the lavatory. He ran the tap and, sealing the envelope, spat in the air for good luck. Then he put the letter on the silver tray on the hall table for Hans to mail.

A telegram arrived on July 9th

FATHER CONGRATULATE ME. I HAVE A POSITION. THE EDITOR HAS AN ASSOCIATE WHO WILL LODGE ME. I SHALL WRITE WHEN I COME SO WE CAN TALK, YOUR LOVING SON ANTON

Hans entered the kitchen and waved the letter. Cook said she would give Father the much-awaited news. She knocked on the parlor door and entered. Sitting in his armchair, Cees held out his hand. She gave him the letter, and breathing Adhoo, she left.

Cees got up, walked to the secretary, and took a letter opener. He returned to his chair.

Dear Father,

My promised letter is short. I am eager to tell you vis-à-vis about my interview with Albert Heyn, the editor.

Albert was going to interview Joshua Schwartz, the novelist son of Cornelia van Vollenhoven. Joshua was born in 1858 in Amsterdam and took the pseudonym Maarten Maartens. He wrote a detective story in English: The Black Box Murder. Imagine, Father, Albert decided to test me! So now I have the privilege to interview him on Tuesday, the 16th.

This Friday I shall take the afternoon train.

Father, I look forward to being home with you.

Your loving son,

Anton

FRIDAY

When Anton arrived in Arnhem, Poldie was waiting for him. Once inside the carriage, the young men had a serious conversation on how to prepare Father for the imminent transport of Anton's belongings to Amsterdam. Poldie advised Anton to be discreet when packing. He suggested Cook give him a hand. Anton should listen to her because she knew how to soothe Father when his feathers were ruffled. He had employed a moving company he had used in the past and had set the date for Tuesday. He intended to be on the premises to supervise the transaction.

They arrived in Annastraat. Cees stood at the gate. After a warm welcome embrace, they went inside. Poldie went to pay Cook a visit.

Cees sat in his wingchair chatting with Anton who sat across from him, but when Poldie entered, Anton stopped talking. He pointed at the chair next to Father. Poldie rose to the occasion and play 'favorite' son.

"This is wonderful news." Cees waved at the letter on the side table. "Anton will have the honor to interview a famous Dutch novelist on the day he starts working at the newspaper."

Queenie twittered beneath the cloth.

"Lady Luck is with Anton." Poldie took the letter. "Has this detective story," he said as he read, "been translated into Dutch?"

"Good question," Anton replied. "I'll ask the novelist. And if it has not yet been translated, I'll inquire about a super translator."

"Bravo!" Cees clapped. "I like your spirit." He got up. "Let us toast to that. I need help!" He went through the open doors to the buffet in the dining room. He smiled when he saw the table set for three. The 'brothers' joined him; Poldie winked at Anton.

Cees poured the genever. Holding their glasses, the threesome returned to the parlor.

"How about going to the farm tomorrow and say goodbye to Philip?" Poldie suggested.

“How about a picnic in the orchard and Cook,” Anton raised his voice, “will prepare her special orchard hamper. Father, we’ll sip your rum punch.”

“I am game!” Cees beamed. “You two come up with great ideas.”

Queenie cackled softly.

Anton chuckled as he went to the cage. “Queenie, soon no Anton to ruffle you. Have a last look at me.” He removed the cloth. The parrot went to her top perch and faced the street. “Okay.” Anton covered the cage.

Cook announced from the open door, “Fried rice is on the table.”

“More to celebrate!” Cees took his glass and went straight to the buffet for a refill. Anton and Poldie joined him.

While they were eating, Cees suggested, looking at Poldie, that after the picnic on Saturday, he must stay overnight. And he shouldn’t forget to take along his pajamas!

Chapter Four

SATURDAY

The carriage came to a halt in Annastraat. Poldie got off with his duffel bag. Beaming, he told Hans that he was looking forward to the picnic. He opened the gate. Anton got up and Cees waved. Father and son were drinking coffee. Poldie said he had two cups at his lodging. Anton suggested showing him to his room.

As they entered the house, Cook, holding Cees' newspaper, said Hans was on the way to the farm delivering the hamper.

When Anton and Poldie returned, they spoke in low tones about the upcoming event. Folding the newspaper, Cees said it was time to go.

Anton went to the kitchen to tell Hans they were ready. He gave his *Kokkie* a hug, saying he was excited about becoming a journalist. He would miss her very much. She wiped away a teardrop.

Cees, in a jovial mood, linked arms with his sons as they waited for the carriage. When Hans drove up, they cheered. The horses were festooned with ribbons and little bells tinkling announcing a farewell celebration at the farm.

Anton was giving his father a hand descending the carriage when a teenage girl, arms-linking with an old woman holding a basket with eggs, entered the yard; passing them, the girl smiled. They went to the orchard.

“That’s Anneke’s younger sister and their grandmother,” Hans said with a chuckle. “The old woman raises chickens. On holidays she sells capons, making a small fortune.” He took the horses to the barn and shouted, “Anneke takes care of the food.”

Anton shouted after him, “Raising capons is more lucrative than selling eggs?”

“I told you, a small fortune!” Hans guffawed.

Cees shook his head and walked toward the orchard.

Phlip sat at a table sketching Mieke. Johan, at another table, was looking intently at an apple blossom. [PS87] Anneke was posing for Nico under the watchful eyes of Dina.

Cees stopped. “Anton! Poldie,” he shouted. “We have company!” He waved at Nico, who had turned his head upon hearing his voice. With a huge smile of surprise, Nico got up from the bench, shouting, “Cees!”

Mieke jumped from the table. “Father!” She rushed up.

Phlip and Johan also came to greet Cees. Anneke went to the table on which stood the hamper. Dina followed her. “Why didn’t you tell us the family was coming?” She frowned.

“Misses, I thought the food was for your family,” Anneke replied. “Hans said he wants to learn sketching. That’s why I take care of the hamper.”

Dina turned around, and with outstretched arms greeted Cees.

They all went to Nico’s table and sat on the benches. Cees asked Poldie to get him an armchair.

Anton joined Anneke. They served lemonade and rum punch.

Poldie came with the chair. Cees held up his punch glass, and said, “Anton is leaving Monday for Amsterdam. He will be a journalist at *Het Laatste Nieuws*.” He looked at Phlip. “Anton wants to say goodbye.”

“Let’s drink to Anton’s success as a journalist.” Poldie raised his glass. “And that Phlip becomes a famous artist.”

Mieke went to Phlip and, raising her glass of lemonade, said, “If you are famous, will I also be famous?”

Gales of laughter resounded.

When Anneke saw her sister and grandmother approaching, as well as Hans who was holding a cage, she rushed up to meet them. Hans went to the table near the hamper.

“I want to talk to granny,” Cees said to Poldie.

Poldie escorted Anneke and family.

“So, you are the egg provider at my farm,” Cees stated with a nod at granny. “Excellent eggs.” He turned to Anneke. “Your sister. What is her name?”

“Teuntje, Mister Jonkheer.”

Cees smiled. “Short for Antonia?”

“Yes, Mister Jonkheer. Teuntje is fifteen.”

Cees pointed at the table. “Anton, invite them”—he smiled at the three women—“for lemonade.”

“Yes?” Cees put his arm around Mieke. “You want to tell me something?”

The girl’s eyelashes fluttered like butterflies. She pointed at the hamper. “I’m hungry.”

“Is that so?” Cees raised an eyebrow. “You want to see what is in the hamper?” Mieke bobbed her head. “I am curious too.” Cees gave her a wink. “Ask Anneke if you can help. And if Cook has made her famous curry eggs, bring me two, right away.” He gave her a push, saying, “I am also hungry.”

When Mieke asked Anneke to open the hamper, because Father wanted to eat eggs, Anneke asked Teuntje to help her. She looked toward Cees’ table as she unfastened the lid. “*Aba, abe, abi, abo, abu,*” she recited softly, opening the hamper.

Mieke laughed. She looked at the containers, wondering aloud, “Where are the curry eggs?” as she gave the top box to Anneke, who, upon opening it, announced, “Ham sandwiches.” The next boxes contained cheese- and liverwurst sandwiches. At the bottom was a flat box labelled ‘Father’. Mieke opened it. “Curry eggs and chicken pieces!” She dipped a finger in the brown sauce and made a face.

Teuntje gave Mieke a plate and, on the girl’s order, Anneke put two eggs on it as well as some chicken with brown sauce. Anneke gave her sister a napkin, a fork, and a knife. “Mieke, you take Mister Jonkheer his curry eggs,” she said with a big smile. “And Teuntje, you ask the adults to come here and get their sandwich. I don’t know what they prefer.”

When Mieke put his plate on the table, Cees exclaimed, “Chicken Bahbie! A treat I have not had for a long time.”

Mieke made a face. “I don’t like that sauce.”

“I like soy sauce.” Cees took the napkin and utensils from Teuntje.

“Anneke wants you,” Teuntje announced, “to come and choose your sandwich.”

Laughing, Nico, Dina, Poldie, Anton, Johan, Mieke and Phlip joined Anneke. After some jostling, they returned with their sandwiches.

“Poldie, are there any sandwiches left?” Cees looked at the table where granny, Teuntje, Anneke and Hans were enjoying lemonade.

Poldie smiled. “The liverwurst sandwiches were not a favorite.”

Cees clucked his tongue. “Cook once told me that Hans likes liverwurst sandwiches. Poldie, invite them to eat.”

The guests waved toward Cees when they went to the hamper.

Poldie took the punch bottle and put it next to Cees. “How did Cook know to make four?”

“Ask Hans, our oracle of Dieren,” Cees replied, chuckling softly.

Anneke came over. “Come with me, Mieke.” She held out her hand. The girl jumped up. They went to granny’s table. Teuntje took cherries from the basket and put them in the empty sandwich box. “Can you take these to Mister Jonkheer?” Mieke bobbed her head. “And please thank him for the delicious treat enjoying a sandwich here.”

Mieke, holding the box as if it contained delicacies, went on her mission. “Cherries from granny to say thanks.” She put the box on the table.

“Well . . . thank you, Mieke.” Cees waved in the direction of granny.

Anton stood up and blew granny kisses.

Hans came. “These cherries, Mister Jonkheer, are the last from a special tree near our kitchen. Granny likes making cherry wine.” He looked at Anton. “Don’t worry, we have more. I’ll drop off a basket tomorrow.”

Poldie joined Hans. He said in a low tone, “How did Cook know to make four?”

Hans grinned, and took off his cap to scratch his head. “Cook always makes me four. I’ve a big appetite.” He put his cap back and turned to Cees. “Mister Jonkheer, are you going to watch us getting lessons from Phlip or shall I take you home?”

Cees looked bewildered at Phlip. Then he turned to Hans and said, “Of course we stay and watch. But first, we eat the cherries.”

Flanked by Anton and Poldie, Cees settled in his armchair.

“Do you want to sketch your daughter or Teuntje?” Phlip asked. Nico resolutely said, “Teuntje”.

Johan wanted to sketch Anneke.

“I’m going to draw a chicken.” Hans winked.

“And I’m going to immortalize granny. She’s such a kind soul,” Phlip said.

Holding sketchbooks and pencils, the artists went to their tables.

Mieke strolled over to Phlip sketching granny; straight as a rod, looking intently at the artist, she eagerly sat for her portrait. **[PS13]**

“Why not sketch me?” Mieke asked. “I thought I’m your favorite.” **[PS65]**

Phlip replied, “I’ve done your portrait many times. I want to please granny, so she has a souvenir of this happy day.”

Mieke pursed her lips and left to pay Johan a visit. Anneke looked very pleased; the artist was drawing her standing. She lifted her skirt to show her shoes.

“Why not sketch me?” Mieke demanded.

“I did the other day,” Johan stated, “and it was better than Phlip’s portrait.”

“I also liked it better,” Mieke acknowledged. She went to watch her father sketch Teuntje. Her mother stood behind him talking. She interrupted their conversation. “Faty, why don’t you sketch Moeke?”

“I sketch Teuntje”—Nico pointed at his sketchbook—“because your mother I can sketch any day.”

Mieke took her mother’s hand, and they went to look at Hans drawing his chicken model inside the cage. Dina said, “It’s very plump. What kind of chicken is that, Hans?”

“A capon.” Hans chuckled.

“What’s a capon?” Mieke wanted to know.

“A lazy chicken. Look”—Hans pointed at granny—“how happy she is getting all his attention.”

Dina stared at the chicken, then at granny. With a nod at Hans, she took Mieke’s hand and went straight for the table where Cees was talking to Anton and Poldie.

Cees clapped to get attention. “I want to see your sketches. And Anton wants to say *au revoir* and then we go home.”

Mieke made a beeline for Phlip. She told granny that “Father” was leaving, and that Phlip should come and wave. She took his sketchbook and went to summon Johan. Meanwhile, Dina ordered Teuntje to get the hamper ready; the family was returning to Villa Amourette.

Cees looked at Johan's sketch of Anneke. Nodding, he approved; the milkmaid showed more than her wooden shoes.

Nico hesitantly showed his portrait of Teuntje. "It's not up to your expectations, I know," he said. "I'm not good at drawing people."

"I recognize her," Cees said, "and that is what counts."

Mieke gave Cees Phlip's sketchbook; the artist stood next to Anton.

"Granny!" Cees was all smiles. "This is an excellent portrait!"

Hans approached and announced that the carriage was ready.

Anton shook hands with Phlip and wished him all the best in the world.

Shouting *au revoir*, they waved when the Landau with Cees, Poldie, and Anton left.

Upon arrival at Villa Amourette, Cees said, walking to the gate, that he was tired, and would meet them in the parlor for a drink, and after dinner for a talk.

Anton and Poldie went to see Cook.

"Thank you, Cook, for the delicious ham sandwiches," Poldie said as he winked at Anton. "What are you making for dinner?"

Anton put his arm around his *Kokkie*. "Father liked the chicken in soy sauce. He needs something very special to cheer him up because I'm leaving on Monday." He gave her a squeeze. "Father mentioned that he would talk after dinner. Do you know what that means?"

"He'll give a speech." Cook nodded. "He's a military man. They like routine. I know his habits." She went to a small crate near the exit door of the kitchen. "In the old country he liked fish in ginger sauce. Hans knows a fisherman, and I asked him to get me a large fish. This one"—she opened the crate—"is from Zuiderzee." On a lump of ice, grey eyes wide open, sprawled a very large fish.

Shaking with laughter, Anton and Poldie embraced Cook. "Don't worry,"—she giggled—"Father will be in a good mood after dinner."

Anton and Poldie entered the parlor. Cees sat in his chair, sipping genever. Two glasses were on the coffee table. He waved at them to take a glass, saying, "Cheers!"

"Cheers, Father!"

"Sons, I have a problem. Where do I put painting *Boerenplezier*?"

Poldie pointed at the wall above the secretary that stood between the doors to the hall and the kitchen. “How about putting the family photograph”—he pointed at the fireplace to the right of Cees—“on the mantel?”

Anton went to the secretary. He took the framed photograph and put it on the mantel. “Mother can now see her family close up.” He sat in her chair.

Cees looked at the wall above the secretary. “Excellent proposal, Poldie. My problem is solved.”

Cook entered and went to Cees. She whispered in his ear; it was a magic word because his face lit up. “Un-shoong-hee!” he shouted.

Cackling like Queenie, Cook left.

“Isn’t that fish in ginger sauce with vermicelli noodles, Father?” Anton helped him out of his chair. Linking arms, they went into the dining room. Snickering, Poldie followed, cracking his knuckles.

On the table to the left of Cees’ seat were on a large platter crisply fried chunks of fish on a mountain of noodles. Beside the stack of plates was a large sauceboat with ginger sauce. Anton pulled out the armchair for Cees. Then he sat across from him; Poldie in his designated chair.

“Awesome.” Poldie inhaled the aroma.

Cees put a chunk of fried fish and a large portion of noodles on a plate. He handed it to Poldie, saying, “The sauce is spicy, so be careful.” He pushed the saucer toward him. Then he served Anton. His face aglow, Cees put the choicest piece of fish on his own plate, adding plenty of noodles, and then drenched it with sauce. He smiled at his sons, saying, “Bon appétit!” And he tucked into his Un-shoong-hee.

When Cook came to clear the table, she saw fish bones for the cat and a clean sauceboat; as if the cat had licked it. She breathed “Ahdoo” in Anton’s ear. He gave her a wink.

“Coconut cookies for dessert,” Cook announced. “Shall I serve the coffee here, Father?”

“You are spoiling us, *Kokkie*,” Cees said. “I am unable to move. We are staying here. Anton, how about rummy? The cards are in the bottom drawer of the buffet.”

Anton looked at Poldie—who, mouth open and eyes bulging, stared at Father.

“We used to play rummy with my brothers when they were still living here,” Anton said in a low voice. He got the playing cards.

“I deal.” Cees shuffled the cards. “Seven cards each.”

When Cook brought the coffee and cookies, Cees was smiling, shouting, and dealing the cards. She nodded at Anton, whispering in his ear, “I told you so.” She left, saying to the ceiling, “Ahdoo.”

The hall clock struck eight . . . Cees got to his feet. “I am going to bed. Anton, Poldie . . . tomorrow we shall talk about money matters.”

Chapter Five

SUNDAY

Anton opened his eyes. Bird-chatter floated in the air through the open window. A smile hugged his lips, listening to their chirping. Then, with a jolt, he sat up. “Money matters,” he whispered. “Will Father interrogate me?” He put his feet in red velvet slippers, Nel’s birthday present, and went to the window. He drew the curtain aside and leaned out, inhaling the fresh air. At a nearby branch: two finches eyed him.

“Anton,” a low voice called; Poldie spoke from the guest bedroom window.

Startled, Anton said. “Oh! Good morning, Poldie. We’ll start packing after breakfast?”

“How about discussing the important issue?” Poldie rubbed his thumb and index finger.

Anton’s face lit up; and then, he, too, rubbed his thumb and index finger. Now smiling broadly, he said, “Come on over! Two heads are better than one for planning.” He put on his dressing gown and left his door ajar. Softly whistling, he arranged a stool and chair near the window. When he

opened a drawer of his nightstand to get a tin with biscuits, Poldie entered wearing pajamas and shoes, excusing himself for not having packed a gown; Anton took his off. He invited Poldie to sit in the chair as he took the stool. He held out the tin; in silence they munched biscuits.

The door opened. “Coffee,” Cook whispered. Poldie went to get the tray with two steaming mugs. He blew her a kiss; then closed the door firmly. “I went to the lavatory,” he explained as he gave Anton a mug, “and saw Cook in the kitchen. I asked if she could make us coffee.”

“Poldie, you always have wonderful ideas. This coffee hits the spot.” Anton dunked a biscuit.

“Father will ask about your salary.” Poldie came to the point. “You don’t have to tell me, but he’ll want to know. In case you must struggle, I’m sure he’ll supplement funds until you can manage.”

Anton leaned on the windowsill. “I don’t have a salary,” he said, looking at the finches eavesdropping. “But I have free lodging.” He turned to face Poldie. “Albert pays me well for every article.”

Poldie stared at Anton, dunking biscuits. “Well,”—he broke the silence—“in the beginning it will be a struggle. But Albert hired you, so he must have high hopes. You mentioned he was impressed with your article on French authors?”

“My first assignment”—Anton smiled—“is on the 16th with that Dutch author. Albert told me that he wants me to also interview German authors. He was in awe that I have not only a Dutch literary degree but also a German degree from the University of Utrecht, a top university for languages. Father thought it was a good investment of his money, because I’m qualified to teach at a Gymnasium in Arnhem, Den Haag, or Den Bosch.” Anton popped the last biscuit in his mouth and pointed at a pile of papers on his nightstand. “As a challenge, I have been doing book reviews in bed when I can’t fall asleep. As a matter of fact, reviewing books is what I like doing most.”

“In that case,” Poldie said, his eyes lighting up, “you can do book reviews and submit them to Albert, or”—he chuckled—“to a rival newspaper.”

“Poldie, my dear brother,”—laughing, Anton shook his head—“you always have great ideas.” He looked at the clock on the dresser. “We better get ready and join Father for breakfast.”

When Anton and Poldie entered the dining room, Cees was talking to Cook. He rose, put his napkin on the table, and said he had a busy day ahead. On the way to the hall, he told Poldie to stay until Monday morning, and that they would get together for a talk *before* dinner. The two stared at each other: Cook said they now had the house to themselves; they could start packing. Poldie put an arm around her when tears were dripping down her cheeks. He wanted to know if she knew what Father meant by a ‘busy day’. Cook wiped her eyes. She pointed to Annastraat where the Landau was waiting, mentioning Hans telling her about driving Father ‘*to pay visits*’. Sniffing, she announced that she’d make them cinnamon toast.

Putting a finger to his lips, Anton motioned to the open door. They talked about what Anton would need to take along to Amsterdam. Hans had taken old valises from the attic to the spare room. The two spent all morning packing.

After a lunch of chicken vegetable soup and rolls, they sat in the orchard making plans. When Dina's baby was due, late November, Poldie would visit her and also Anton. And of course, Anton would celebrate his birthday at home.

Cook came with a carafe, glasses, and a platter with peanut fritters, saying it was too hot for drinking tea, and that Father's rum punch was perfect for this Sunday afternoon.

Anton got up, put his arms around her, holding her tight, and said he would dearly miss his *kokkie-mummy*. She kissed him, saying that, like the birds in the orchards, he was flying the coop. She wished him happiness, and that he would remember that Villa Amourette was his nest.

When the Landau came to a halt in Annastraat, Anton and Poldie got up fast. They took the carafe, glasses and platter to the kitchen and asked Cook to let Anton know when Father was in the parlor, ready for the talk. They rushed upstairs.

Their faces flushed, they leaned out of Anton's bedroom window. Cees was closing the front gate and as he walked toward the front door, he looked up. Anton waved—Poldie laughed. All smiles, Cees returned the wave, in his hand an envelope. He disappeared. Poldie sat in the chair, hugging himself, laughing, saying Father seemed to be in a jolly good mood. Anton frowned, saying Father always had an ace up his sleeve. He, Anton, always had to be on the alert: it was like a ping-pong game.

Half an hour later, Cook knocked on the door. The two looked at each other, nodded, and went downstairs. Anton entered the parlor and stopped in his tracks; Poldie bumped into him. On the coffee table were a bottle of champagne and three fluted goblets. Poldie whispered, "Adhoo,"—poking Anton in his ribcage—"celebrating leaving the nest?" He gave him a shove.

"Father, celebrating me leaving . . . instead of crying out your eyes like *Kokkie*?" Anton made clucking noises as he approached; he put his hand on Father's shoulder.

Cees pointed at the bottle. "Anton, we are here to celebrate success with a capital S!" He squeezed Anton's hand. "Son, from the moment you were born, I knew you were special. Not only because you were born on your mother's birthday, but because you were the only baby who gave us a big smile when entering this world. Smile, son! Keep on smiling!" Cees pointed at the bottle. "Poldie, you are the cupbearer."

Poldie took Anton by the elbow and whispered, "Talk to Queenie while I pop the cork."

Anton went to the cage. Queenie sat at the bottom perch near her water dish. A smile hugged his lips as he went to the window. With his back to the street, he faced the cage and began to chirp.

The parrot jumped to the top perch. Anton put a nut between his lips and offered it: they were eye-to-eye. He put his mouth closer—the bird took the peace offering. When the cork popped, Queenie began screeching “*Happy Birthday To You! Happy Birthday To You! Happy Birthday*”

Father belly-laughed and waved to stop the bird. Anton gave it one more nut; then put the cloth over the cage.

Cupbearer Poldie handed them goblets. “Happy Birthday, and keep on smiling, Anton!”

Laughter filled the parlor.

“Now, Anton,”—Cees leaned back in his chair—“when your mother passed away, she wanted me to split her inheritance from her parents between her sons . . . when they would fly the coop. Tomorrow, I shall give you a bankbook with your share and the interest accrued all those years.”

Lost for words, Anton slowly put his goblet on the coffee table. Teary-eyed, he looked at Father.

Poldie said, enthusiastically waving the bottle, “A toast to Anton’s mother!”

“Yes!” Cees smiled broadly. “Anton, your mother would be delighted to know that you are going to be a successful literary journalist.” He held up his goblet. “Here is to Pauline, your mother!”

The threesome toasted several times, blessing inheritance, until Poldie put the bottle upside down . . .

“Anton’s flying-the-coop meal is ready,” Cook announced from the dining room. “And in honor of his mother, I’ve made her famous coconut pudding with rum sauce.”

Exclaiming “Ahdoo” the three went to their chairs.

Cook pointed at the bottle of champagne and the vase with roses in the center of the table. “Father, there’s for a toast to Pauline, mother of my Anton!” Whispering “Ahdoo” she left for the kitchen, shouting, “We will celebrate again at Christmas!”

MONDAY

Sunday night Anton had drawn the curtains in his bedroom. He had put breadcrumbs on the windowsill as he used to do when he was a teenager. At dawn, he watched the birds.

He whispered to the finches, “Fifteen minutes to remember this once more before flying the coop.” He took a framed photograph from his nightstand. “George Bernard Shaw, you wrote that

life isn't about finding yourself; that life is about creating yourself. I shall live up to your wisdom."

Anton watched the birds battling for the crumbs. He said with a nod, "Albert told me that to sell newspapers one must write what the readers want to know. If they do not want the truth, then one has to write lies to make them happy." He sighed. "Illusion, Albert said, is the first of all pleasures."

He went to the window. The finches perched on the apple tree branches. "Flying the coop . . . what will I be: a peacock; a nightingale; a hawk?" He laughed. "How about a sly cuckoo . . ."

A knock on the door; Cook held out a mug with early morning coffee as in the old student days. He gave her a kiss and a pat on her behind. She giggled.

Entering the kitchen holding his mug, Anton sat at the table. Cook filled up the mug and sat across from him. She took from her apron pocket an envelope and pushed it toward him. "I want you to buy a beautiful red velvet chair, just like Father's chair. So you can relax and think."

Anton took the well-padded envelope. "My dear, dear, *Kokkie*," he said as he counted ten, ten-guilder banknotes, "you spoil me."

"Son, so you don't forget me," she blurted out.

Anton got up and went to his *Kokkie*. He pulled her up and put his arms around her. "And pretend that, like a little boy . . . I'll sit in your lap?"

Laughing and clapping, Cees and Poldie stood at the hall door.

"*Kokkie*," Poldie said, still clapping, "remembering Father as well as yourself with this gift, I call that hitting two birds with one stone. Bravo!"

Still laughing, Cees pulled up a chair. "*Kokkie* . . . how about having breakfast here, as in the old days?"

Kokkie's smile lit up the kitchen. She gave Anton a nudge. "Sit down, Poldie and Anton. I'll make bacon and eggs." She turned to Cees. "As in the old days, you slice the bread." She pointed. "Over there are the bread box and bread knife." She winked.

The family was enjoying their last cup of coffee when Hans entered, cap in hand. Cees told him that Anton's valise and Poldie's duffel bag were in the hall. They would be ready within fifteen minutes for the short drive to the station.

Cees nodded at Cook, who went to a cupboard. She took four fluted goblets and put them on the sideboard. She got a bottle of champagne. Cees popped the cork and poured the nectar. "Let us toast Anton bon voyage outside." He led the procession to the waiting Landau festooned with red

ribbons. As they were clinking their goblets, Anton and Poldie shouted, “Bottoms-up!” Cook took their goblets.

From his jacket pocket, Cees took a large envelope and handed it to Anton. “Son, here is your bankbook, and a letter from your mother.” Teary-eyed, but smiling, Anton embraced Father. He held his *Kokkie* and kissed her on her head, as in the old days. Poldie took his elbow, and they got into the Landau.

When the horses started, Hans waved his whip . . . Anton shouted, “At Christmas!”

Cees linked arms with Cook, who bobbed her head; the goblets in her hands tinkling their farewell . . .

Anton and Poldie were standing on the Arnhem station platform when the train to Amsterdam pulled up.

“Anton,”—Poldie looked him straight in the eyes—“the letter from your mother is private. But I’m curious about your inheritance. Is it a secret?”

“For you, brother Poldie, I have no secrets.” Anton opened the envelope and took the bankbook, giving it to him. “Keep it a secret. Understood?”

Poldie grinned, opening the bankbook. His lips parted and his eyes became glassy. “Holy Mother,” he whispered, “it’s a small fortune.” He returned the book to Anton who, without saying a word, put it back in the envelope.

“Tomorrow, I’ll contact a real estate agent in Amsterdam,” Poldie said. “He’ll get you swanky lodgings on the Herengracht, and *Kokkie’s* red chair will get a place of honor.”

Anton laughed. “You have looked into the same crystal ball as I, Poldie. That’s what I have been dreaming up last night: A swanky bachelor’s place of my own.” He put his mouth close to Poldie’s ear. “How much?”

Poldie cupped his hand and breathed, “Five thousand.”

TUESDAY

Poldie arrived to supervise the moving company, making sure all of Anton’s belongings were counted for. When he saw the Landau horses tethered in the kitchen yard, he entered the kitchen. Hans and Cook were having coffee, chatting; he joined them. Cook informed him that Father was still in his bedroom. The front doorbell rang. Hans got up; he returned, saying the movers had

arrived. Poldie said to Cook that he would return during his lunch hour to inquire how Father was holding up. After Poldie had signed the movers' bill for lading, Cook said she would make veal croquettes. They embraced. Poldie said he had a client on his list looking for lodgings. With a smile on his lips, he walked to the omnibus stop.

When Poldie returned for his luncheon date, Cook said, "Father left. I had to prepare a picnic hamper for the family at Vergeet mij niet. He wanted to talk to Nico." She took a carafe from the sideboard. "Let's eat in the garden. You take the croquette platter." She pointed to the kitchen table.

Two chairs were placed side by side at the table that had a green-and-white checked cloth. On it were two light green ceramic plates, two pale green crystal goblets, two snow-white napkins, knives, and forks. In front of each plate, Cook had arranged in apple-green ceramic vases red roses.

"*Kokkie*, you always set the table as if you expect important people!"

"Father" she said—as she pulled out her chair, waving at him to sit—"wants to keep family traditions. His mother, Antoinette, had French roots. Anton was named after her." She held up her goblet. "I need a sip of rum punch, so my tongue gets loose."

"I like hearing confessions." He chuckled as he poured. "Anton told me that he can't remember much of the family past."

She took a sip and stared into the apple branches. "Anton was four years old when Pauline died. She asked me to look after him as if he were my son." Wiping away a tear running down her cheek, she looked at him. "The family story?" She nodded. "Antoinette spent her time with needle work. Do you remember your first meal?"

"It's engraved in my heart." He took her hand. "My white carnations were in a beautiful crystal vase."

"And do you remember what Father said about the tablecloth?"

He took his snow-white napkin, and unfolding it he mumbled, "Something about it was his mother's favorite?"

"It was for special occasions. Antoinette spent three years embroidering that tablecloth." She put the napkin on her lap. "And Father said you are special. Remember?"

"Yes!" He clapped, saying gleefully, "Now I remember! Father said"—he smiled—"that this is something to remember *forever*."

"That tablecloth was a sign. Father got the message." A smile hovered on her lips. "Anton is leaving. You are staying." She put a croquette on her plate. "Anton told me that he had a wonderful

time talking with you on the train, as if he had known you all his life. Poldie, Anton would never have invited you”—she snapped her fingers—“just like that! He was going to Amsterdam. His brothers are married and live in Den Haag.” She gave him an elbow. “Eat your croquette!” She cackled as she dug her fork into hers, saying, “Then I’ll do some more confessing.”

Poldie had a feast; he ate three croquettes. “The best I’ve ever eaten.” He winked at her. “I’ll remember *forever*.”

She pointed at the carafe. He filled her glass to the top. She elbowed him and said, “Let’s toast to cottage Vergeet mij niet and that Father’s talk with Nico will be a success.” She snorted. “Success with a capital S.”

“How’s that?”

“Without Anton here, Father will be bored to death. So, let’s toast to Father and Nico about the future of Phlip.”

They clinked, all smiles.

She continued. “Anton got his mother’s way of cheerful thinking. Father adored her. And Pauline got her cheerfulness from her Italian mother. Eugenia Maffioli del Castagna was born into a fancy family. They were educated engineers.”

He pushed his chair back so he could see her better. “Was Father’s father also a military man?”

“Johan was a military physician. My mother was cook for Antoinette, his wife.” She took a sip. “I was born when Father was two years old. I grew up with him because my mother was allowed to take me with her when she worked at the house.” She sighed as she put her goblet on the table. “Poldie, no wonder Father and I are that close. When he married Pauline, she asked me to cook for them. I asked my mother, and she gave me her blessings, even though I left her to join the family in Holland.

“Do you miss your life in Java?”

She shook her head. “I have become a Jonkheer. They are my family.” She took her goblet. “Anton showed his bankbook?” She sipped, looking at him intently.

“A small fortune,” he replied, sipping.

“Make sure he’ll not spend it recklessly.” She kept sipping.

“Anton wants a swanky lodging. Hans told me that he mailed a letter to Hendrick DeBron at Keizersgracht 25A. Nico and Hendrick are friends.” He winked. “I’ll get Anton a swanky place for your red chair. A swanky place”—he nodded—“at a good price from a reliable realtor. Don’t you worry, *Kokkie*. I’ll watch his wallet.”

“That makes my heart happy to hear.” She rose. “Poldie, son, come any time you feel like. Father and I welcome you with open arms.”

He got to his feet and wrapped his arms around her. “Anton and I love you dearly.” He kissed her cheeks. “And . . . as you know,”—he chuckled—“your curried potatoes, fried rice, and croquettes are a way to a man’s heart and stomach.”

Hans parked the Landau in front of cottage *Vergeet mij niet*. As Cees got out with the help of Hans, Mieke showed up at the front door. Shouting that Father arrived, she hurried to welcome him, Dina on her heels. Mother and daughter were visibly thrilled to see him.

Hans was taking down the hamper when Dina informed Cees that Nico had gone to pay Johan a visit. Cees told Mieke to show Hans where to take the hamper for their lunch. Then he asked Dina to give him directions to Johan’s place in the village; he would return with Nico and Johan for a family picnic. Mieke wanted to come along, but Dina said she was needed at home looking after her brothers and helping her with unpacking the hamper.

While driving toward the village, Cees told Hans to look for a house with a pond. He pulled up at a large house at the edge of Laren that had a sign: ‘Rooms for rent’. Hans blew the horn. A housemaid came to inquire if they needed lodging. Cees said he wanted to talk with Johan, the artist. She replied that he should follow her; Johan and his guest were in the garden pavilion at the pond.

When Cees showed up, Nico and Johan welcomed him with cheers. The three chatted, sitting on benches with a spectacular view of the pond with many species of plant-life. Nico pointed at a magnificent golden chain tree in full flower nearby, saying he had asked Phlip to paint this tree for him. [PS45] Cees said they had to support this talented artist and that he, also, would commission paintings so Phlip could be self-supporting. Johan was listening attentively; he interrupted their conversation saying that he wanted to sell his painting *Farmhouse* he had finished two weeks previously. He wanted to know if Cees was interested in buying it. Nico nudged Johan, saying not to worry, that he would talk to Antonia, and she would exhibit *Farmhouse* at her gallery.

Cees invited them for lunch at the cottage. During the trip Johan mentioned that soon he and Phlip would be painting wheat fields; they both liked yellow.

The Landau pulled into the entrance to *Vergeet mij niet*. Mieke waved, shouting she was hungry.

Cook's picnic hamper treats were spread out on the wood table where Dina and the boys were waiting when the party joined them. Cees, Nico and Johan sat across from Dina. Mieke wanted to sit next to Father; she made faces when Nico ordered her to sit with her mother.

As they were eating, Cees proposed that Nico invite Phlip to stay with the family in Laren 't Gooi, once they had moved. Mieke clapped; she threw her arms around her Moeke, begging her to agree. She turned to her Faty, saying Phlip could help her watch the boys because, she pointed at her mother's belly, baby would arrive on Sinterklaas day.

Johan, who sat across from Mieke, held out his hand for a shake, saying he'd love to stay in contact with Phlip and his Mieke. She burst out laughing. Wagging her finger at Father, Mieke reminded him that he preferred Johan's sketch of her.

Dina spoke up: she was eager to have two young artists entertaining her. Nico was often absent due to his work schedule: selling insurance policies around the country. Nico acknowledged it would be a good idea.

Cees asked Mieke to come; he whispered in her ear to ask Hans for the bottle of punch beneath the coach seat. Eager to please him, she trotted to the front of the cottage. Hans winked at her when he handed her the bottle, whispering that this was not for little girls. On her return, she opened the bottle, sniffed, and took a sip. She grimaced.

Cees poured the punch in their mugs and toasted, "To Phlip and Johan, our future artists. That their paintings will adorn the walls of our Rijksmuseum!"

"Why not?" Dina smiled, raising her mug.

On the way home, Cees told Hans that he wanted to make a quick stop at the farm. Phlip was in the orchard reading a newspaper when Cees joined him. Hans followed with a cushion, a bottle, and two mugs. Chuckling, he left, saying his horses also needed a drink.

"Phlip," Cees said as he poured the punch, "I have come with a request." He gave him a mug. "I had a talk with Nico and Dina, and they agreed to a proposition I made. In September they are moving to het Gooi, so I suggested that you stay with them and paint. Mieke loves you and cannot wait to see you again. Dina said that you two bonded."

"True," Phlip said, "we have a special relationship."

"You like children, I know. My daughter Nel has a parrot she dearly loves." Cees took a sip. "I want to surprise my daughter for her birthday in November with a painting of a cow." [PS53]

"A cow?" Phlip raised his eyebrows.

"Nel liked patting our calves when visiting the farm. We have plenty of cows you can choose from. About your fee . . . how about fifty guilders?"

“I’ll do my best”—Philip smiled—“so your daughter will remember patting baby cows.”

“By the way,” Cees said, “Nico told me you are doing the finishing touches on *Boerenplezier*. He will come with you when you deliver the painting to my house.” He stood up. “Cook will prepare a delicious lunch, served under the apple trees . . . for the three of us.”

TO BE CONTINUED.....