

# DELIRIUM ?!

REDUX

*literary thriller*

ERICK OVERVEEN

*For Jiske*

## **CREDITS:**

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The year 2004 is the frame of reference for the added footnotes in this literary thriller.  
The year Arturo Mulder writes down his memoirs.

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# CODE DELIRIUM

*The more despicable his life is, the more man attaches to it; it's then a protest.  
A constant act of revenge.*

Honoré de Balzac

## AUGUST 2004

*The program for this evening is not new  
Youve seen this entertainment through and through  
Youve seen your birth, your life and death*

*You might recall all of the rest  
Did you have a good world when you died?  
Enough to base a movie on?*

Jim Morrison <sup>1</sup> / The Movie / 1978

### Wednesday, 25 August 2004

Mulder! Recreation! A marine with a spiky haircut sticks his head around the corner of the doorway. In a moment you have an intake interview with the department head.

Who are you?

Your worst nightmare, he laughs obliquely. Just kidding. Gus is the name. I have to get out of my cell! But, oh! Cold feet rule!

For days I have been walking around in the same clothes, as if I were a psychiatric patient. There seems to be very little difference between mental patients and prisoners when you look around here. I take big gulps of air like a fish that has been thrown out of its environment and lies burning alive in a pit.

One toe in the water. And... brrr... I'll just...

The dangerous superstition that *luomo delinquente*, the criminal man, was an inferior being had been consistently projected onto the plebs by the church and capital for years. Around 1800, the Amsterdam Rasphuis looked like a kind of living Caravaggio <sup>2</sup> painting, teeming with bird beaks, red beards,

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Morisson (1943-1971) American singer of the band The Doors and poet. The God of rock and cock thought he was the reincarnation of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud.

<sup>2</sup> Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610). Notorious painter whose work is full of drama, dynamism and *bravura*.

Junk heads and one-eyed men. Devils children, in short. Rejected by their own families as if they were spreading a contagious disease. *The programme* regularly included executions, resulting in notorious insanity or prison riots and a public that saw its sadomasochistic desires secretly manifested.

Only after the Second World War did scholars of the calibre of Foucault begin to mention that prolonged isolation could in fact foster mental disorders such as insania neurotica, amentia or paranoia. The idea that the criminal should be thrown into an abyss of solitude to undergo purification was increasingly dismissed as a delusion.

My ward, 24 steel doors on either side of a long corridor, is the same pressure cooker of scattered rapists, junkies, freaks, loverboys, killers, stalkers, *slackers*, invisible paedophiles and terrorists. Germans, Belgians, French, Somalis, Nigerians and remarkably enough, only a handful of original Dutch. Almost everyone has mutilated themselves with colour ink. There is hope and there is stubbornness. Old and young, life pain and lust, mystery and openness. In one word: life.

During my intake interview in the auditorium, Gijs pushes a form into my hands. Even the house rules of the prison seem dictatorial:

*If you do not strictly follow the custody officers instructions at all times, you may be subject to a punishment ranging from the withdrawal of privileges to being sentenced to an isolation cell.*

In some lines, the bankruptcy of my country can be heard: emptiness, hypocrisy and manipulation.

Just sign here that you agree and Ill give you a phone card and a packet of tobacco, Gus coughs. His head seems to be attached directly to his body.

I don't smoke.

Everyone smokes here. I don't.

You will, he says gruffly.

Is this representative of purity trying to get me to smoke?

To conceal his incompetence, this ex-marine with his ridiculous spiky hair has stuffed himself with tear gas, a nightstick and handcuffs.

Oh, and your prisoners ID card, of course. With a deep sigh he slides a plastic card to me with a horrible *mugshot* of myself on it. How long have you been here, Mulder?

A good week now, I think.

His walkie-talkie beeps and creaks. Put your nose outside the door a bit more. Otherwise well think you're trying to hurt yourself or something, he mumbles without giving me a glance.

I won't tell him that, as usual, between early spring and the coming autumn, I suffer from meltdowns. I am afraid of what I have come to call the black monster, which takes possession of me especially at night.

I'm not really a part of the street life, you know?

His angry eyes look at me penetratingly. No, you're off the hook.

How many more palpitations?

I trudge back to my cell. A cubicle of barely seven square metres with a filthy steel pot. This location essentially serves as the last bastion of civilization within the brick prison building, which looms forlornly over a suburb of Maastricht known as PI Overmaze. Situated under the smog of chemical factories and surrounded by a toxic mixture of chemical waste from the Maas River, it is notably just a stone's throw away from my father's former container company office. I will be staying here for the upcoming weeks. I remember when my father and I drove past this prison, he warned me never to end up here. However, what he failed to consider was that imprisoning a writer is essentially confining them to their workspace.

Sometime later, I reluctantly attempt to consume a lukewarm, tasteless microwave meal. The cod feels like a damp sponge in my stomach, and the sauce resembles reheated turpentine. Since being confined to this collective tomb, I've experienced a myriad of ailments and discomforts, such as stabbing liver pain, heart palpitations, and occasional hyperventilation attacks. Perhaps it's due to dehydration or vitamin deficiency. Or could it be Mr. K, the uninvited guest who ravaged my father's insides and ultimately escorted him to his grave?

Mulder, Arturo? That's you, isn't it? A tall, scrawny guard looks down at me stoically.

I nod.

Your counsellor is here.

A little later, Wiersma and I tense up in a small consulting room of no more than eight square metres of linoleum with a rickety table, bordered by walls and a thick, steel door.

My picket lawyer lets my criminal file flap disdainfully between his fingers. I've done a lot of fraud cases in my life, Mulder, but this one is pretty sharp. He leafs through his paperwork and nods without looking up. When you were hiding in a Parisian banlieue with your friend Laura, the investigators in the Netherlands were busy closing down the network around you, he continues, shaking his head. I see from the report that they even searched your flat in Scheveningen several times.

I put my hands before my eyes. I haven't lived there for ages! That may be, but in your old attic they still have a lot of

found: laptops, computers, USB sticks, rubbish bags full of mail, bank statements and notes. Everything was confiscated, he continues. Everything, everything, everything. What particularly concerns me is the evidence of corporate and mortgage fraud. And by the way, there were statements from the summer of 2000 on which you appeared to own more than three tons of options. A relatively high amount for someone of... How old were you? 25, 26?

I am nodding visibly.

From millionaire to paper boy, sighs Wiersma, shaking his head. While I lean my face on my hand, he shoves *De Telegraph* under my nose.

Monday 23 August 2004

## INTERNATIONAL WANTED MASTER CROOK ARRESTED

From our reporter

In the night of Sunday to Monday 16 August 2004, the Amstelland police arrested a 31-year old man who was wanted for millions in tax evasion, money laundering, computer hacking and petty theft. According to a spokesperson for the Public Prosecutors Office, the man had previously come to the attention of the judicial authorities in connection with the disappearance of 18-year-old theatre student Luna van Bohemen in September 2001.

The man, with whom the woman had a relationship at the time, was briefly suspected of having played a role in her disappearance. However, this was never proven. The student was last seen in her hometown Amsterdam on Sunday evening 2 September 2001. Since then there has been no trace of her.

Despite the fact that the man had become the focus of a large number of police investigations in connection with international fraud and money laundering, he could not be traced for years. Last night, however, he was caught during a regular alcohol check on the A2 near Stein (South Limburg).

(Source: Reuters)

Wiersma stares at the floor. Did you really do everything on your own? Did you lead? Were you led perhaps?

I don't want to lead and I don't want to be led, I reply.

Your megalomaniac delusions are, in any case, good enough for the front page of *De Telegraaf*. Court reporter Saskia Belleman claimed on television that you have embezzled more than two million euro.

And you believe that? I sit back insulted. Listen - and I will never repeat this, Wiersma. What is being said about me is half-truths, fabrications by self-esteem-deprived creatures, supported by editors bent on revenge, talentless wannabes reviving the Middle Ages. Crucify him! In the old days, as a villain, you were tied to a pillory with a sign around your neck with the word donkey on it, as if you were an animal. Or pamphlets were distributed to blacken you. This happened to Alexander Pope, for example. After writing his masterful, ever-evolving *The Dunciad*, he became a target of the authorities. Pope! One of our greatest *minds*. He was dismissed as a heretic. Nowadays it happens all over the place.

But aren't you asking for it? You are declaring war on society, says Wiersma.

I shake my head. She declared war on me, Wiersma. That's logical. I am a writer. About the greatest danger for any self-respecting dictatorship, as long as we don't count an outbreak of the bird flu virus.

Wiersma starts laughing sheepishly, bends towards me and then asks, whispering: Just between you and me, Arturo. You are being prosecuted because you looted two million euros. Not because you are an author. So... where have the millions gone?

I cover my face with both hands. Well, good. I'll summarize it for you succinctly.

Wiersma let out a deep sigh as he awkwardly took a pen from his inside pocket fist. You're sure we're not being bugged here? He nods.

I take a deep breath. Okay. After receiving my father's share of the estate, which was half a million dollars—a lot, I calculated that I needed at least two million euros to become financially independent. So, I arranged a job as a quoter on the Damrak in Amsterdam. At the end of 1999, the *open outcry system* still existed there. Live traders in colorful jackets.. Noise. A lot of commotion. Until then, I had been - in chronological order - a producer, deejay and freelance journalist and now, because of the unexpected death of my father and the resulting inheritance, I had become a full-time day trader.

Without any experience, did you end up in the hub of power? asks Wiersma, taking small sips of water to wash away his surprise.

I nod, Just through an employment agency. Very banal. At Adecco opposite the Damrak they were looking for quoters and traders who wanted to follow a training course with the possibility of eventually becoming a day trader.

What was it like? That stock market world?

I let out a deep sigh. The stock market was a strange planet of high-speed transactions where a trillion dollars changed hands every day on the foreign exchange market alone. On days when there was a price explosion, you could hear cheering everywhere. It was like a sports match. Then a bell would ring and the cocaine would spill out. Then the limousines would pull up and the prostitutes would be inspected like cattle.

Wiersma bursts out laughing. Jesus. From the way you talk, I can indeed hear that you are a writer. With some difficulty he takes off his jacket. I'm going to sit down and think.

Before twelve o'clock we have to leave for an hour because of the lunch of our civilised oppressors.

He looks at his Rolex in a hurry. Then we still have three quarters of an hour. Come on, tell me about Kay. You met him there, right? On the exhibition floor? I read that in the interrogation, at least?

I nod in agreement. The controversial Kay van der Heijden, nicknamed the Gold Seeker, was almost 40 years old when we met. He looked, with his picturesque nose and invincible gaze, almost like a young version of Willem Holleeder, the kidnapper of the Heineken beer magnate. This aristocrat with his investment office in the Amsterdamse Zuidas district lived the life I knew. He had a private doctor, a sports trainer, a cook, and he presented himself as a flash trader on the Japanese Nikkei who guided the purchase and sale of companies on behalf of private clients. And yet he was no snob. Nevertheless, the smell of fraud always hung around him. Almost everyone on the



Damrak knew that the FIOD had investigated his investment company De Goudzoeker on suspicion of illegal money flows.

Wiersmas eyes opened wide. I heard that, yes.

Despite the fact that the judge acquitted him, our colleagues continued to see him as an arch-deceiver. I got the feeling that he was among sharks, surrounded by invisible enemies, like a modern Julius Caesar, or a Kennedy. Newspapers tried to find out about his past. Was he an American German? Had he become fabulously wealthy by selling shady little dotcom companies? Or was there more to it than that? Did he secretly have a foot in the underworld? Was he really the war veteran he claimed to be? Or had he made it up to give his image more allure?

Wiersma makes hasty notes without looking up.

When he showed up unexpectedly at the UPC booth, where I was filling in for a sick colleague, and he regarded the Netherlands as an Orwellian state, I understood that we were *kindred spirits*. The same evening we ate Indonesian in an *executive dining room* and he started introducing me to the circles of the Amsterdam jet set: a world of limousines and hotel suites, of expensive champagne and evenings of superficial chatter, of red-yellow cocktails and jazz music. My life improved. He turned out to be high up in the trees. He knew everyone: from Job Cohen to Pim Fortuyn <sup>3</sup> and from Wouter Bos to lawyers like Gerard Spong. He was held in high esteem by footballers, real estate boys and project designers. Moreover, he still sponsored the great artists of our time, such as Boudewijn Büch <sup>4</sup> and Theo van Gogh <sup>5</sup>.

You too?

Kay was a kind of patron. Even now that I'm here, he still helps me. And of course the artist is sensitive to money, fame, and women. Style became more and more important to me. On his advice, I started wearing suits by Ermenegildo Zegna, Louis Vuitton and Francisco van Benthum. Three-piece suits with white shirts and double cuffs underneath. Burberry Prorsum. Gucci ties and round Persol 714 glasses on my nose à la Steve McQueen. He thought it would be better for my career.

How could you take such a risk? I mean, going into investment without much experience... with your fathers money.

Listen, Wiersma, if Kay had not had so much knowledge of technical stock market analysis, I would never have dared to take that risk. During a Christmas drink in the Rode Hoed in Amsterdam, he revealed the seven spiritual laws of day trading to me. You have to look at the stock market as a river, he explained to me. *You just go with the flow*. If you want to invest with your old man's capital, you have to know everything, Art. Yes, he called me that right away. Art. Very amicable actually. A bit too friendly now that I think about it.

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<sup>3</sup> Pim Fortuyn (1948 - 2002) was a Dutch politician, sociologist and author. He was murdered nine days before the 2002 elections by environmental activist Volkert van der Graaf at the Mediapark in Hilversum after having been a guest of DJ Ruud de Wild on Radio 3 for two hours.

<sup>4</sup> Boudewijn Maria Ignatius Büch (1948 - 2002) was a very productive author, a full-time hermit and fabulist.

<sup>5</sup> Theo van Gogh (1957 -) Dutch director, actor, screenwriter, columnist, television program maker.

I put on a heavy voice to imitate Kay: And more importantly, Art, you have to be able to lie. St. Nicholas no longer exists. Depressing self-reproaches are for losers. For every guilder you earn, you will have to work very hard. Then Kay stood up and tapped his glass solemnly. The only really rich writers are the options writers. In that sense, you have more to gain from Kondratiev <sup>6</sup> than from Dostoevsky <sup>7</sup>.

Kondra... who? I asked him.

...Kondratiev. Kid! Unless you want to be one of the 99% of the rabble who lie off the crumbs left for them by the powers that be. Kondratiev saw that our world is the plaything of a force field that holds the ignorant mob in its grip, he continued excitedly. Kondratiev understood that the stock market is nothing but a reflection, a kind of mass hypnometer of that force field.

I remember laughing because he was so convinced of himself. You're not going to tell me you're a determinist, are you?

Of course. So do you. Otherwise we would not be engaged in predicting the stock market, he determined.

A waitress refilled our glasses.

But that would mean that everything is predetermined, I sputtered. I decide my life myself.

You wish! he shouted, lighting a Havana. *We're unwitting puppets on a stage*, kid. Just like Shakespeare once said.

I remember him accidentally blowing a cloud of nicotine in my face. Everything is in the service of higher powers. A closed, self-regulating ecosystem with its own cycle in which we humans are used like ants to keep it going. A natural phenomenon that you see in everything. Even in storms or electromagnetic outbursts like the northern and southern lights, even in periodic epidemics like the plague or AIDS or in a remarkable political career of the caliber of Kennedy.

Yes, I remember exactly how Kay told me that at the time, so decidedly. So excited.

So detailed? asks Wiersma. Wonderful.

Do you want to know what we ate? Homemade fettuccine with wild boar sauce and red house wine from a cafe. Kay had hired his own cook.

You're a writer, of course, so you have to have an eye for detail, laughs Wiersma. Well, man, go on. Maybe it's useful in my defence, because whether you like it or not, you were manipulated by that guy Kay too.

Manipulated? No. I was seldom so fascinated. Kay pulled a dish of half-cooked bitter balls towards him and tapped me on the finger when I wanted to grab one too.

The Kondratieff wave moves in the so-called sinusoidal cycle, he continued. So to predict your future, you basically only need to study the zeitgeist of your grandparents. In other words, it's the wave that causes the events. Not the other way around. According to my calculations, a phase will soon begin where our golden calves will shake on their pedestals.

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<sup>6</sup>Nikolai Dmitrievich Kondratyev (1892 - 1938) was an influential Russian economist.

<sup>7</sup>Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821 - 1881) Great Russian literary genius who observed the world and explored its deepest souls; he masterfully forged what he found into a novel.

I protested. It seems to me that in addition to causal links, new links are constantly emerging and disappearing?

The stock market does not need a trigger. It's deterministically determined. *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt!*<sup>8</sup> Never mind. Nobody understands anyway.

Exactly at that moment, a young girl unexpectedly appeared in front of us. Kay pointed a fork in her direction.

Wiersma looks up, startled.

Here we have Luna, I heard Kay say, the daughter of my assistant. Hi, so I am Luna, said the girl with the bright red lips before she placed a kiss on.

Kays lips were sticky.

I swear, Wiersma. Luna looked at me and kept on looking at me, as if she was hypnotised.

Wiersma let out a deep sigh. Arturo, let's talk about this some time...

With her milky white skin, her pink cheekbones, and sad eyes Luna was almost a Pre-Raphaelite beauty. I've come to be humiliated by Kay, she said, her head bowed shyly to the ground. She said exactly that.

Wiersma shakes his head and sighs deeply again. He stares at his notes for a while. Luna? he asks me, shaking his head.

Luna van Bohemen, yes.

That disappeared girl?

Yes, that one, exactly.

Wiersma takes a few sips of water and shakes his head. She was just a kid then, I guess. Fifteen? Sixteen?

So what? When Dante<sup>9</sup> ran into Beatrice, she was nine years old. Nine! From that moment on, she was everything to him. His whole universe. It's that Greek word *anagnorisis*, the shock of recognition.

Wiersma slaps his hands in front of his face. I don't know if I want to know this kind of thing, he groans. Again he casts a hasty glance at his watch. We're wasting precious seconds. Come, tell me how you lost your fathers inheritance. That may be in the interest of my plea - because of the psychological consequences, I mean.

Her eyes were described as dreamy in the police report on her disappearance and...

We were talking about your fathers inheritance.

No. Okay. How about another time about Luna?

Wiersma taps his watch.

Ok. Well. Following in the footsteps of the great Dostoyevsky, this plaything of the winds bet on the game of chance to increase the power over his own life.

He looks up in irritation. Poet. And now in plain English so that I can understand it too.

Sorry, Wiersma. Yes, it's cut-and-dried. Look, because of the recent economic crisis in the Far East and Latin America, by the end of 1999 shares were

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<sup>8</sup> Fate leads the willing. The unwilling are dragged along. A quote from Dante.

<sup>9</sup> Dante (Durante) di Alighiero Degli Alighieri (1265 - 1321) was an Italian poet, writer, moral philosopher and short-lived politician. His *Divine Comedy* must have been a delightful and therapeutic work to compose. The eminent scholar, poet and politician Dante Alighieri, exiled from his beloved Florence, where decay had taken a serious hold at the hands of his political enemies, granted himself the privilege in the early 14th century of going to see how things were in the afterlife.

become more attractive than, say, bonds. Every farmer's daughter with an internet idea was embraced by the Boerenleenbank as a potential futurologist or guru, and without a business plan or demonstrable experience could just have enormous starting capital at her disposal, which led to a proliferation of dotcom companies. A wind trade in illusions. The Nasdaq Composite, the wealth meter of the Wild West in New York, broke record after record. Shares of technology giants such as Yahoo, Nokia, Softbank and Amazon.com had risen by 1300 to 1500 per cent that year!

Wiersma continues to listen attentively. *The fear of missing out?*

I nod and say: Exactly. It was *the fear of missing out* that drove everyone to the brink. Well, almost everyone. Kay, for example, is still in good shape. But some dotcom millionaires gambled away their entire fortune.

But they did crazy things too, right? A colleague of mine was also in that business at the time, and he threw one crazy party after another.

When I realised this... In January 2000, I resigned again from the employment agency and, together with Kay and his idol, Dr Kondratiev, henceforth sought financial security in ever-increasing risks. Day in, day out, we were independent day traders, sitting at our laptops watching the idyllic rise of Japan's Nikkei.

Look, Art. On the Nikkei, the bottom is coming into view. *Stochastics* at the zero band. Nice, but tad suspicious still, Goldfinder. Moderate volume. Don't dare yet.

You? Well. Green bars and green lines everywhere in the *position manager*.

Now get in,

Art! Now or never.

Really? Did you talk to each other like that? asks Wiersma in amazement. Yep. It was like that every night. From my army-green Chesterfield chair in his office I bought and sold phantom money with Cyber Trader software, as if I had done nothing else all my life. The crackling danger attracted us like a moth to the lamp, Wiersma. We smoked away the tension with exotic cigars, and we washed away the disappointments - if any - with Il Pino di Biserno, a delicious blend wine of Merlot. Completely in balance with itself.

From time to time, my counsellor scribbles something on his notepad. Tired, he looks up. *Skip the details*, Turo. Please. Do you want to hear it or not?

The short version, please. We are running out of time.

Okay. Well. When the Nasdaq started ticking me rich, I was able to trade in my Renault for a brand new Jaguar S-type, and I was finally able to move into a decent flat behind the beach in Scheveningen with a view of the sea, so that after an exhausting day I could disappear into the Jacuzzi with Nabokov and a snort, or practice the blissful art of doing nothing like a prince or a crook.

However, Kay believed that the party atmosphere would soon be spoiled as patterns emerged in the Nasdaq Composite that paralleled the tulip bulb boom of the 17th century. According to him, investor's expectations were downright irrational and Internet companies were barely making a profit. He mockingly called it The Super Soap Bubble Cycle Part. 6.0. And although he regularly carefully mouthed, weighed up and served up the term since then, I refused to listen to him. Instead, I pumped Dad's entire inheritance into tech stocks to the last penny. I wanted it fast! I wanted it now! I wanted to live big, compelling lives so that I could write big, compelling books about them later.

My lawyer leans on his left hand while drawing circles around the notes on his notepad. By the sound of it, you might as well have squandered it all in the casino, he sighs.

Simple: I stood and stand by my principles, Wiersma. I wanted revenge. My scamming escapades are essentially a long-term act of revenge.

He stares at me with his mouth open. That really is completely bizarre... Lets not include it in my plea.

In my mind I hear you, Luna.

*You lie.*

*You*

*threaten.*

*You are twisting situations.*

I fillet you. I  
hate you.

Listen, Arthur, the way you describe your experiences in the stock market world sounds more like the discourse of an adrenaline junkie than a tactical investor. But anyway, it might be important. I mean, it laid the foundation for your con career. Maybe there is a personality disorder.

Perhaps we should have that investigated... His voice trembles with cynicism. Your victims want to see blood, he says agitatedly, blood and revenge. And revenge, boy, that is the explosive nature of humanity.

Words, words, words. Nothing but breath, I sigh, secretly honoring David Hume.

They're not being kind to swindlers these days, he roars, picking his nose. Don't count on being released for the time being. They'll just leave you in jail for three times thirty days. And that missing girlfriend of yours... He takes a quick sip of water. That doesn't exactly help either.

When he says goodbye, he gives me a big hug.

**Friday, 27 August 2004**

*Beautiful scarlet  
Summers really gonna hurt you.*

Diplo / Summers Gonna Hurt you / 2004

It's 5.48 pm.

My cell offers a view of the Maastricht skyline. The Sint-Pietersberg and the ENCI factories dissolve in the evening mist. East of the horizon, the never-ending stream of traffic on the A2 can be seen, almost like a trance.

Here in Overmaze, the days pass so slowly and meaninglessly that you become completely spiritualized. But that is no penance for a literary provocateur.

Nothing has changed in my city and yet tonight everything exists in a different way. A cloud blanket has enveloped Limmel, a district on the outskirts of Maastricht, in a biblical darkness. My cell is as warm as a reptiles house. The dark blue curtain feels like a coal stove.

It's 5.48 pm.

Through my air vent, the smell of the summer evenings of my youth pours in: of ditches and lakes, and of forests where rabies sometimes reigned in spring. It mixes with cannabis and tart instant coffee. The thought of an end to the duty to live or over live, of a life of permanent flight, of that lonely journey past bars, criminals and empty hotel rooms - that thought is comforting. My outer life has suddenly become very small. There is much more to tell about my inner world, for only there is something still flourishing.

When I look at my clock radio, it's still 17:48. Time seems to have collapsed. My thoughts wander to my conversation with Wiersma this morning and to our early days in particular. The moment has come for self-confrontation.

My hands tremble as I pull your *judicium capitale* out of an archive folder.

*Art,*

*The time has come for me to finally make clear to you - from a distance - what has gone wrong and is still going wrong. You will never change. Don't fool yourself and others. You wallow in continuous self-pity and let yourself be led by your truth. Accept that there are people who do not accept that. You cannot always live with thoughts whose every sentence begins with I. Mind you, it's your reality. You make yourself important. Not me. Not others.*

*Before I was admitted, I already had no life, no friends, no future, no ideals. Now I know that for one and a half years I had no life.*

*You have no idea what I went through during our relationship. Even though you will never admit it, you use, abuse and suck people dry for your own benefit. When our relationship started, I was barely sixteen. How did you get it into your head to start a serious relationship with someone at sixteen? I thought I was extremely mature at the time. Now I know better.*

*We are now further in time. I have grown. I have learned the hard way. We have not grown apart as you think. I just chose for myself at a certain moment, when I wasn't afraid of you anymore. But I can/could bullshit all I want. You will never understand.*

*You lie.*

*You*

*threaten.*

*You are distorting situations.*

*You are suffering from pseudologia*

*fantastica. You are ill.*

*You have always felt that I had become the boss while for a year and a half I have done nothing but conform to your totally crazy behavior. The consequences are still visible: I don't value sex, I don't dare trust anyone and I don't know how to build a dignified relationship with someone.*

*You will never know what it's like to be on your guard all the time. Always afraid of someone's reaction. Afraid to speak up. Afraid to be yourself. Scared. Frightened. Scared. Only now I realise I have always been afraid of you. All your threats: I will kill myself if you leave me, I will call your mother, I will destroy you, I will destroy your life. Not to mention your physical abuse!*

*I will never get rid of you (in the most negatI've sense of the word). You have left more scratches on my soul than my father. I gave everything I had: I listened to your insecurities, heard your story, showed up every week. I gave up my life for you. For a year and a half, I have had the illusion - in vain - that I could change someone like you. I apologize for that. I take full responsibility for that.*

*The reason for my farewell letter is my liberation. I am not writing to you because I miss you or love you (on the contrary), but because I am afraid that history will repeat itself.*

*Luna*

As you can see, I make grateful use of the archives; the dummies, the diaries, the letters and the tapes: the only evidence that our relationship ever existed. It's material that has been in the possession of the judiciary for years because of your disappearance, and ironically has only now been returned to me. And so here I am - in the lions den - finally going to begin my farewell letter to you.

*How did you get it into your head to start a serious relationship with someone of sixteen?*

It was really your fingers that began to explore me that night, Luna. Your fingers. Not mine. In retrospect, of course, that should have made me suspicious. Normally I had to beg for sex like a tramp for money.

The evening after our flash meeting in the Rode Hoed Kay suddenly asked me to pick you up at home. As I didn't feel like driving myself after two lines of coke, I ordered a taxi.

We sat down together in the back.

*Still D.R.E.* by Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg was blaring from the car radio. I remember details like that exactly.

You inspected your profile in the rear-view mirror, fixed your blonde hair in a ponytail, and painted your lips. By the time we got to the ring road, you suddenly put your cool tongue in my mouth. I did not know what was happening to me. It was as if your love poured through me like an electric current, Luna. Everything in me began to tremble with poetry.

The driver looked on jealously.

Where do you want to go? he snarled. Your gazes locked for a moment.

To the Amsterdam Damrak, you replied just as coldly. With a devilish look in your eyes, you put my hand under your skirt: Feel....

Shocked, I found the wet between your legs. You had cut a hole in your panties. I coughed and you laughed obscenely. The driver couldn't take his eyes off us.

We exchanged a lot of fisticuffs during that ride.

Not long after, we stormed into the AEX arena. With your lipstick on my face, we made our way past stockbrokers in brightly colored jackets, the UPC stand where Kay and your mother were, and locked ourselves in a women's toilet. As the battle of the economy raged on in the background, you performed your specialty, fellatio, on me. Then we had *the fuck of the century*. When you came, tears streamed down your cheeks.

It was Friday afternoon, 17 December 1999, 5.29 pm. My life had begun.

*You're completely insane, Art!*

A few days later, the gold digger unexpectedly confessed that our liaison took place under his auspices, the plodder.

What the fuck! And I still felt guilty towards him, I heard myself say to you. You pressed a kiss to my lips that was so mean and wet I can still feel it, sweetheart.

Cuffs. I wanted it too, you admitted, and you let your hand intertwine powerfully with mine. When I first saw you in the flesh, I started shaking... I couldn't breathe... You are so much more beautiful in reality than in the picture.

Photo?

Kay showed me a picture of you once. I think you are beautiful, Turo. That's more than pretty... I think you're beautiful for life. So I don't care if he manipulates us. And besides...I haven't been fucked that good in a long time.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

Hand in hand, we walked into town and let the dusk of December 1999 envelop us. You were wearing your cobalt blue bat skirt with black nylon stockings and black and white Nikes underneath. Me in my Hugo Boss (tailored) suit.

You pointed to the clock above the Palace on the Dam. Look, in less than thirty hours we will be plunging into the arms of the new millennium, you remarked. It's beginning to tickle, isn't it?

Excitedly, you explained that you made all your bizarre-looking clothes yourself and that the Rococo was a source of inspiration for you. I'm sure I lived like an Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun or an ultimately seductive muse of



the Pre-Raphaelites. You should see my Alaïa corset. I think that's my sexiest item in my wardrobe. It makes everything hot.

Amsterdam held its breath. Thick purple-black clouds loomed threateningly above Magna Plaza and the Albert Heijn supermarket. Blocked aisles and immensely long queues for the cash registers - the Netherlands seemed to have gone on a shopping spree for fear of the millennium bug. On our coats fell precipitation somewhere between rain and sleet. To complete the picture, you smoked Davidoff Menthol Light cigarettes, which made that arrogant, precocious, gum-chewing, cunning Lolita well up in my mind. Faint echoes of Nabokov. But you were not fiction.

Like a couple of love-struck teenagers, we ran hand in hand over Dam Square, through the narrow streets and over bridges between the canals, with cyclists whizzing past us, until we ended up in café De Zwart, that notorious writers den on the Spui where the Dutch *elite* of literature and journalism sat. De Zwart was a grand café full of *tables*. A fancy club with a fireplace, stylish cigar-smoking men and *brands*, and above all, *the place to be* to meet like-minded people.

We ordered Baileys with ice and a straw from which we drank together - both from our own side of the table - and looked at each other in admiration for minutes. After half an hour we realised that it would take us fifty years to catch up. Another hour later, it would have been at least a hundred. Our conversation danced to the beats of deejay Roelofsma's Supperclub 1. *La salle neige*, the song Honey by Tosca in particular.

At school - Atheneum, Sweelinck in Amsterdam - I am alternately competent and absent, you confided. I am a media child. Always have been. For years, my mother worked for the Amsterdam TV channel AT5, so she always took me along everywhere. Red carpets. Cameras. BNers. Studio in, studio out. Of course, as a starting actress, that made me very blasé. My whole life is on Kodak Super 8.

Isn't that hard? Acting? At your age? I wanted to know.

You balanced your Davidoff Menthol cigarette between your thumb and forefinger and said, Acting is only fat when people don't realise you're acting. You laughed obliquely.

The clanking of a yellow-lit tram disrupted the uneasy silence between us, for I was speechless.

Like me, you dreamed of an artistic life, but from time to time you fell into the grip of depression. To avoid disaster, you wanted to indulge in your deepest desires: acting and fashion. Like Andy Warhol's muse, Edie Sedgwick, you posed naked for artists and went to fashion shows all over the Benelux. You yearned to take your acting skills to the next level and put aside money for a university education at the New York Film School, where Lee Strasberg had developed his famous method acting <sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> The famous *Stanislavsky method* or so-called method acting was developed in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century by Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863 - 1938), who worked at The Moscow Art Theatre. In the 1940s, the acting technique made its appearance in the United States. The American director Lee Strasberg (1901 - 1982) was the great promoter of method acting and is regarded worldwide as its founder, although he borrowed his ideas from Stanislavski.

You don't play someone, you become someone, you emphasized. But emotionally it's exhausting. Juggling identities is very dangerous. You can start to doubt the image you have of yourself. I read a lot about Zen. I don't practice it, but I find it intriguing that the ego, the self, could be an illusion. So I feel that strongly about method acting. But hey, I'm not under any illusions, the method of acting is not very common here.

Dutch film is dying anyway. It really drives me fucking crazy, boy. Experimental films are hardly ever made here. Film companies think mainly in terms of target groups and formats. Like Hollywood, Dutch cinema is constantly trying to reduce the world to comprehensible proportions. For every idea or scenario, you have to humbly go through the funds here. No matter how many masterpieces you have made. Just look at Theo van Gogh. He didn't deserve that. Really not nice. As soon as I turn eighteen, I'm out of here.

At the time, that still sounded light years away! But with high-born souls like you, bravery did not wait for the number of years.

A window offered a view of the Heisteeg, barely two arms lengths wide. In the meantime, darkness had crept in. One of the waiters started lighting candles. Outside, billboards announced the year 2000 in flashing neon lights. This was the perfect moment to explain to you why I was recording our conversation with a memo recorder.

Ah, so you're just using me for your book? I nodded. Among other things.

You made a throwaway gesture and said, Cuffs. I am using you too.

At the bar, Harry Mulisch and A.F.Th. van der Heijden raised a toast to the literary hour. You confirmed that your mother, despite her left-wing fanaticism, was part of Kays royal household as a personal assistant and that she also worked as a freelance assistant for Column Film, the production company that Theo van Gogh had recently founded together with Gijs van de Westelaken. Her ambitions, however, cast a shadow over your *private life*, for not a shred of affection had been shown to you in ages. And your father, whom you described as a psychotic, had suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth a few years ago. Nobody would deny, dearest darling, that your childhood had been a crash course in growing up.

We left De Zwart and walked straight through the drizzling rain via the Kalverstraat to the Supperclub. There we ordered two Breezers. Young students, one more attractive than the other, were standing around with Bacardi Colas in their hands, smoking cigarettes and dancing seductively to the song Da Sambafrique by Nick Holder pumping through the speakers.

Of course, your affair with our Lolita-shredder couldn't go unmentioned. Kay is trying to make me sex addicted.

What do you mean?

He is overweight.

True to that, you laughed. But it's not easy to detach myself from him.

Next to us, a boy was wildly kissing a girl. He pressed her against the wall and clasped her hands above her head while his other hand was under her

skirt. You looked at me with delight, put your mouth to my ear and whispered: That turns you on, doesn't it?

I felt the tension in my body increase. I am a bit of a dirty peeping tom, yes.

You nodded and smiled obliquely, blowing out smoke. I thought so. And I think it's hot that they're so into each other.

The girl closed her eyes in ecstasy. We tongued with our eyes open, continuing to look at them.

He dominates her, you said, audibly excited. Did you know Kay also treats me in a *9½ Weeks-like*<sup>11</sup> way? That's a fetish of mine - letting myself be abused. Kay doesn't take no for an answer. His will is forged from an iron law.

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Meanwhile, Kelis' Caught out there brought the dance floor to ecstasy.

Twisting a blonde lock around your finger, you added disappointedly, Anyway, you're not a Dom like him. I've seen that for a long time.

Sigh! The metroman of today was damned well obliged to push his machismo to unnatural heights: too sweet, too caring, too soft. Around the new millennium, that suddenly meant nerdy, in other words: downright suspicious.

You looked at me penetratingly: Maybe I should subject you to me.

I immediately felt an intense excitement coming on. That's how you gained ground, Luna. Step by step. When I thought about how you would humiliate me, my heart raced.

We drank Baileys, which made me long for the exotic languid places I sometimes dream about as the song Sparks by Scandinavian band Röyksopp intoxicated us.

Are you serious, or is this just another one of your methodological games?

Without answering my question, you turned your face towards me. Your long, blonde hair smelling of shampoo fell between us like a curtain. With our heads turned a quarter turn, we started kissing wet and hot.

You know a lot, you whispered, running your tongue teasingly over my ear.

You just don't know that you know yet.

O? And how do you know that? For a second I looked into your telling eyes. Your genes spoke to me.

You were a girl who got under your skin unnoticed, but I didn't realise that at the time.

**Sunday, 29 August 2004**

It's 10.29 pm.

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<sup>11</sup> *9½ Weeks-like* refers to the famous 1986 American erotic BDSM film, directed by Adrian Lyne and starring Kim Basinger and Mickey Rourke. The film is based on the obscure, autobiographical novel by Ingeborg Day from 1978. The film was very poorly received in cinemas but eventually became a cult film due to the rise of the video store.

The Healthy Smoker balances a cigarette between his fingers while a guilty look creeps across his face. When his mouth moves without making a sound, I understand that I am in a kind of half-sleep, staring at a TV screen. Irritated, I grab the remote control.

The only noble thing left to do is to build a broad coalition against religious racism, but that will probably not happen. I still have the idea that I have to leave here as soon as my son is on his own. To America, for example. Nowhere are there such beautiful bookstores as in New York. Nowhere such lively debate as in the good American newspapers. It's the epicenter of the world when it comes to thinking.

Theo van Gogh's answer, taken from the documentary *Wonderland*, turns out to be the prelude to the premiere of *Submission* - the short film with which summer guest Ayaan Hirsi Ali <sup>12</sup> wants to question the subordinate position of Muslim women. From time to time, I make loose notes in a dummy.

TV presenter Joost Zwagerman appears on the screen, who casts Ayaan Hirsi Ali a critical glance over his John Lennon-like glasses.

She beams and says: My aim is not to turn Muslims into atheists, but to show the ugly moles, such as the poor treatment of women.

The silences between her words are filled by the screams of miscreants desperately trying to communicate through their air vents with their loved ones thirty metres down the aisle between the football pitches. Their cries are dissipated in the wind. So I turn up the volume on my TV.

Many people think you sound rather dogged when it comes to Islam, murmurs a voice off-screen.

Van Gogh, lighting up a cigarette: I see Islam as the greatest threat to the free West, so to speak.

I vaguely remember Van Gogh's insults in a column in the *Metro*, in which he called the Prophet a dirty uncle, after which a cacophony of kettle-music erupted. On the world wide web death threats poured in:

*Dear Mr Van Gogh,*

*I HOPE that soon some half-witted goat fucker from West will visit your address in Pythagorasstraat and drain the life out of your saggy body with his knife. I HOPE you won't mind if I circulate your address details within this group of third-class citizens.*

*M.s.g.*

*Bashir Bagdoun*

A few days before I was arrested, I found this threat on an internet site. Oh, how impressed I was by that threat. I even put it in.

<sup>12</sup> Ayaan Hirsi Ali (1969 - ) is a member of parliament for the VVD and very controversial because of her criticism of Islam. This summer she and Theo van Gogh made the short low-key film Budget film *Submission*. A film pamphlet that deals with the position of women in Islam (one of the meanings of Islam is *submission to God*).