

# ON TUESDAY CLOSED

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Crime novel

Action thriller

Fiction

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## PROLOGUE

***E**very day between five o'clock in the afternoon and nine o'clock in the evening, the bar of café-bistro 'Whites' is fully occupied with a motley crew of people.*

People of all ages, young and old, who have the habit of ending their day there. Students, businessmen- and women, workers, but also people without a job, living on benefits, or undeclared work. A mixture of conversations at the bar, and many think they know the other, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The beginning of a book with a unique plot, and a lot of action, mystery, violence, murder, kidnapping, and abuse, but also room for humor, and even an unattainable love.

Of course, there is a police detective team on the case, but in the deepest secrecy the men and women of bistro 'Whites', together with a group of regular bar guests, put together by themselves, are forced to do their own investigation, and eventually take on the, at first, unknown perpetrator and creator of an improbable and deadly game.



# 1.

**H**ey, Abe! Have you heard? Little Peter is dead. Killed on the National Highway while crossing the road, there at the surf lake."

Abe, the bartender, gestured with his eyes and cleared his throat, making a movement backwards with his head. Jan, who had just come in with the announcement, took the hint and saw the man, sitting behind the bartender, on the other side of the U-shaped bar. It was Carl, the boyfriend of the aforementioned Peter. Jan, the postman, who was normally the first customer in the bistro every day, saw Carl hunched over, with his face above his glass. The glass was untouched and Carl did not seem to take in any of his surroundings, did not even seem to have heard Jan's words. Jan was now facing Abe at the bar, Jan in front, and Abe behind the bar. He leaned a little closer to Abe, and whispered now.

"What is he doing here now? How long has he been there? I heard it happened early this morning, just before it got light. A strange time for Peter to be there at that time, don't you think?" Abe interrupted him.

"Yes, I do not know, Carl was already waiting at the door when I opened at ten o'clock. He took a seat at the bar, ordered a beer, and after I had put the glass in front of him, he started staring into it. He has not taken a sip yet and has not said a word. I already knew what had happened. Susan had called me. She had heard it from her neighbor, who had come home after his night shift, and had heard everything when he had to stand still there, until they had cleared the road again. And now we will stop talking about it, Jan. Leave Carl alone. He decides for himself when he wants to say something." Jan shrugged his shoulders, and sighed.

"Ok, you will not hear me anymore. Give me a beer, I need to recover from it myself." And then he took his usual place at the bar, on the far right, close to the entrance to the kitchen.

The bistro was cleverly decorated. When you entered the bistro, the longest side was actually the width, with the bar in width in front of the furthest wall, with the curve on the left and the open side on the right, which was opposite the entrance to the kitchen, and just before that it was possible to go from behind the bar to the right, into the restaurant. If you came from outside, there was only a single row of tables with chairs in front of the windows on the left, and where the bar had its curve, was a larger space with tables and chairs began. The bistro was not large, room for about thirty diners, and at the bar there was room for another twenty bar guests, but at the bar, when it was busy, there were of course also people standing behind the people sitting on a bar stool. All in all, the bistro could serve about fifty people, but on really busy days that could easily increase to about seventy-five people. When the weather was nice, there was also a nice spacious terrace, outside, which pushed the total capacity of the bistro to over a hundred guests. The bistro was owned by two brothers. Abe, who served as a bartender and managed the restaurant staff, and Pier, who ran the kitchen and took care of the administration. They employed one full-time cook and a kitchen assistant, as well as three part-time waitresses, of which Susan could actually be seen as full-time. Susan had just come in. It was eleven o'clock, time to make the preparations for lunch. But of course, she also immediately started talking about Little Peter, although she had noticed Carl immediately and so she stood close to Abe, who was still standing in the same place, in thoughts, where he was now being taken out.

"What is Carl doing here? Terrible, isn't it, what happened to Little Peter. My neighbor has seen him lying there, dead, horrible. Did Carl say anything?" Abe sighed again.



"No, nothing. He just sits there staring into his glass and barely moves. But leave him alone. He will apparently need this, maybe he does not dare to be at home at the moment.

Let us not disturb him, and just get on with our work. I have the feeling that it could get busy right now.

Mark my words, at four o'clock it is packed here and there is only one topic to talk about." Susan shook her head resignedly and made her way to the kitchen where Pier and his kitchen staff, as usual, were preparing lunch.

Krimpen aan den IJssel, a fairly large village, close to Rotterdam. With twenty churches of twelve denominations, Krimpen aan den IJssel was originally a free ecclesiastical village, but that is now rapidly changing, partly due to imports and the influence of time. Due to the size of the village, there are several shopping centers, spread over the village. There is the Crimpenhof, the largest shopping center in the village, and then there are some smaller ones, such as The Olm, Stad en Landschap, and The Korf.

The Korf is where the bistro is located, on the outside of the shopping center itself.

It is half past eleven, normally half an hour before the first guests arrive for lunch, but today several tables are already occupied at this time. It is clear what the topic of conversation is, even though Carl is still hunched over his glass, not noticing anything of what is going on around him, and no one to speak to him. Time passes in a somewhat stuffy atmosphere, even though there had been more lunch guests than ever on Wednesday. Earlier than usual, the first regular bar guests start to arrive around half past four. The first is Charlie, a somewhat simple young man of about twenty-four years old, always looking for a job. When he finds one, he usually cannot keep it for more than two months.

Charlie thinks differently than most of the guests, and is therefore unaware of any harm when he walks directly up to Carl, taps him on the shoulder and starts talking to him.

Abe, the bartender, looks disapprovingly in the direction of Charlie, but Charlie does not notice.

"Hey Carl, how sorry dude, how are you? Would you like another beer? This one, in which you are peering, is dead. Empty it."

Everyone who heard it, was shocked by the words Charlie used, even though they knew that he meant well and probably did not realize what he was confronting the man next to him with. But the effect of his words was different than expected. Carl looked up, first at Charlie, then at his glass, and then at Charlie again, with a wistful smile.

"Thank you, Charlie, you are right, this beer is dead, just like Peter." Then he bent over the bar with the glass in his hand, and emptied the glass into the sink. "Yes please, this time I will drink it, and toast to Peter with you. You are the first one to say anything to me today, even though I have been sitting here since ten o'clock this morning. I do not feel like being home right now, so that is why I am here. Thank you for keeping me company for a while."

Abe had watched and heard it all, and began to feel ashamed, as he quickly tapped two beers and placed them on the bar in front of the men. By now he understood that Carl had indeed noticed what had taken place around him during the day. Frank, the owner of the shipyard, had also come in, and took the pressure off Abe. He took a seat at the bar, on the side opposite Carl and Charlie.

"Carl, condolences boy. It is horrible, what I have heard. I understand very well that you do not want to be home right now. Abe, when Carl finishes his glass, the next one is on me." Now the spell was broken, and over the next hour, more guests took the initiative to turn to Carl.

Carl let it all happen to himself, and he drank steadily, for free today. Around five o'clock the bar was packed, with two rows of guests, standing behind the guests on the bar stools. Yet it was different than usual.

The mood was still stuffy, even though a few guests tried to break that mood, by noisily giving a round, or by saying or doing something funny. It only worked at times, and this of course had everything to do with the presence of Carl, who was still sitting at the bar and started talking more and more. At those moments, it immediately became quieter at the bar, and everyone listened to what Carl had to say.

"Yes," Carl began, getting up from his stool. "It is time for me to go. I cannot sit here forever, and I do not want to. I have had enough to drink, I can go home, to an empty house, now. The hair salon is closed, and for those of you who call yourselves my customer, find another hairdresser because this business will not open again, not even under a different name or from a different owner." Then he left the bistro, without looking at anyone and without saying another word, only to Charlie, whom he tapped on the shoulder as he passed, and spoke a farewell word, with his eyes.

As soon as Carl had left the bistro, the silence broke and suddenly there was a full sound at the bar of people talking, laughing, and shouting. Abe turned on the music system and within a few minutes the atmosphere was a lot happier, but still not like usual.

Four days later. It was Saturday, the day of Little Peter's funeral. At eleven o'clock in the morning the time had come and Peter was taken to his final resting place, and despite the fact that he and his friend Carl did not exactly have many friends in the bar, probably because of their orientation, now everyone was present. It was busy, very busy. At least a hundred people were present, and all of them walked past the grave, first shook Carl's hand and said some comforting words, and then grabbed the shovel to throw some sand on the coffin. Some (most of them women) had a white rose with them, and threw it on the coffin, others only used the shovel, or nodded their heads in the direction of the coffin, before leaving the cemetery, many of them directly in the direction of Bar-Bistro Whites.

Two hours later, while the bar was packed, Jan the postman came in, and walked straight to the place where Abe was standing behind the bar. He just pushed the people at the bar aside and started talking, almost shouting, so that it immediately became quiet at the bar, because everyone looked up and listened to what Jan had to say, in an excited tone.

"He committed suicide, he jumped from the flat, he is dead now. He jumped after Little Peter, right after he came home from the funeral. Carl is dead, stone dead." And then he had to take time to catch his breath and ordered a beer.

Abe almost let the glass he was finishing, slip out of his hand. He recovered just in time. The noise in the pub became overwhelming, and Abe walked over to the sound system, and turned it off. Not that anyone noticed, because everyone was busy with their conclusions. What was talked about from that moment on that day, was not simply Carl's death or suicide. The conversations were not about him jumping off the flat, but more about those two gay men who had just been a boring couple, and never gave a round.

Except for one person, who was completely lost in thoughts, at the bar, hunched over his face over his glass of beer, that seemed to be untouched.

It was Charlie, simple Charlie. No one noticed. Everyone was way too busy with their hot topic, except Abe. It struck him because he had often thought back to that day, four days ago, when Carl had sat there, in exactly the same way.

## 2.

**A**gain, four days later, just before ten o'clock, on Wednesday morning. Abe is still preparing the cash register, when there is a loud banging on the door.

It is Jan, the postman, who emphatically asks for attention and shouts loudly to Abe, to open the door. Abe rushes to the door to open it, whereupon Jan runs into the bar, and starts talking, shouting, in an excited state.

"It should not get any crazier, haven't you heard it yet? The Zipper was murdered, just shot down when he opened his storage box to load his trailer. I just heard it from Charlie, who lives up there, above that storage. I was delivering the mail when I got stopped by the police because the street is still cordoned off. I then called Charlie. By the way, give me a beer first Abe, I am exhausted. What is going on lately?" Abe starts to get just as nervous as Jan and motions for him to take a seat at the bar, while he quickly taps a beer for both of them.

"The Zipper dead? Murdered? Why the hell? I had actually expected him here, early. I was extra early this morning. I was already here at half past seven, because he had told me that he would be here at eight o'clock, because he had another address nearby. And they even flashed me, there at the Algera Bridge, damn it. He would exchange that slot machine for another one, because it needed to be checked. And now you tell me that he was murdered? Charlie told you that? Are you sure that everything he told you is true? Don't you know that Charlie often exaggerates things, and sometimes fantasizes a lot?"

"No, no," Jan responded immediately. "It is for sure. Later I also heard it from one of the policemen who were keeping the spectators on a distance. I know him, and he confirmed to me that it was the Zipper, and that they were treating it as a murder. They later took Charlie to the hospital. He was totally out of whack. Now I have to come to myself first, Abe." He then emptied his glass of beer in one gulp. "Just give me one more. I gave the mail I had left to do to a colleague on the way. I am not doing anything anymore today." Abe did the same. Also in one gulp, he had his glass empty, and quickly held the glasses under the tap again. With the two glasses in his hand, he made his way to the other side of the bar and sat down next to Jan, on a stool. He held one glass of beer in his hand, and handed the other to Jan, who took another big gulp of beer. But then he took a large envelope from his shoulder bag.

"Here. Another weird thing. I found this envelope in my mailbag. I am sure I did not put it in. Look, only your name on the envelope, and no stamp or sender." Abe also took a big sip of his beer, and took the envelope. His hands trembled with excitement, as he looked at the envelope and indeed saw only his name.

"What is that again? This is a thick envelope, that is not just one piece of paper that is in here. That must be quite a stack. And you do not know how it got into your bag? Do you think this can be trusted? I am almost starting to believe it has something to do with that murder. Jan, what is going on here?" Jan shrugged his shoulders, and sighed loudly.

"Abe, I do not know either, open it, or call the police, what do I care. This does not make me feel good at all. Give me another beer first. By the way, is Pier already there? I will take a look in the kitchen, you can tap a few beers again, Abe."

A few minutes later, Pier came rushing out of the kitchen, and immediately ran to his brother, who was back at the bar, where he had already prepared three fresh beers.

The envelope was still closed in front of him on the bar. Some guests were already coming in, and Abe was getting even more nervous, because there was quite a lot to discuss. Fortunately, Susan walked into the bar and Abe immediately got up, and walked towards her, while he called out to his brother to wait a moment.

"You take a beer first Pier, you will need it, I will be with you in a minute. Susan, call Petra to see if she can come and help, and tell Bob, in the kitchen, that he has to arrange everything himself. Pier and I have something to discuss. Ask Petra for the service, and do the bar yourself until we get back." He did not wait for an answer and turned around again. As he took his place behind the tap again, he told Pier and Jan to sit down at a table in the corner. He would tap three more beers and come too.

After pouring the beers, he grabbed the envelope from the bar and took everything to the table, where Pier and Jan were impatiently waiting. When Abe finally sat down again, his brother immediately started talking.

"First of all, tell me what is going on. I cannot follow it all anymore. What is that about the Zipper? Is this some morbid joke or something? And what is with that envelope?" Abe came back to his senses a bit, and took the floor.

"No Pier, not a morbid joke, if only it were so. First of all, the Zipper seems to have actually been murdered, I think while he was about to load the slot machine that was destined for us, into his trailer. He appears to have been shot. God knows what story is behind that, I cannot think of anything. They took Charlie, who lives upstairs, to the hospital. He seems to have gone completely crazy." Pier interrupted him.

"Now open that envelope first. We need to know what that means."

Abe looked at the envelope in front of him and hesitated for a moment at first, but then he picked it up and opened it.



He took a stack of A-4 sheets out of the envelope and saw that the top one was a letter addressed to him, Abe de Wit. He began to read silently first, but soon began to read the letter to the others.

*'To Abe de Wit.*

*By now you have heard that the Zipper is dead. The police will visit you soon and ask questions. My message to you is; You are going to find me, and that will bring fame to one of you. Only one real murder has been committed so far, but if you make mistakes, more will happen. In this envelope you will find personal letters for all participants in this game. The assignment is to find me, and, only then, report me to the police. There is only one way to escape participation, and that is with death. This envelope and its contents should never be shared with the police. If this does happen, it means death for all participants. Now put that envelope somewhere where it cannot be found, the police will come soon. Find a time and place where you can meet and work together on a regular basis. Other messages will follow. Please note! He or she who sins or talks, dies or suffers a personal tragedy!"*

Pier was the first to speak, looking quickly at the names on the letters.

"What did he mean with the first *real* murder? The people addressed, are all regulars, and us, and our staff. Put those letters back in the envelope and take it away, quickly. We need to make a plan first to get together with everyone." Abe put everything back in the envelope and walked to the bar, where he hid it under a hatch in the floor. Then he came back to the table where Jan immediately had an announcement.

"Well, right on time. Take a look at the door. If they are not detectives, I will eat my hat."

Two men in suits and long coats stood at the bar and chatted with Susan, after which she pointed in the direction of their table. The men were at the table within a minute.

"Abe and Pier de Wit? My name is Plat, Detective Plat, and this is my colleague Detective Berkhout. We have a few questions for you concerning the murder of Mister Cor Ritskes, which took place this morning. Have you heard of this incident?" As always, Pier was the spokesperson for the two brothers, when they were together.

"Yes, that is why the three of us are sitting here together. Jan here, told us. Jan is a postman. By the way, I am Pier and that is Abe, my brother. So, Jan ran into the roadblock this morning when he was delivering the mail. Then he learned what had happened. Cor was a good friend of ours, from whom we took over this bistro two years ago. Now he was doing the slot machines for us. He was supposed to come and exchange one of the machines, just this morning." The detective interrupted him. "Yes, we know that, and that knowledge has brought us here. We simply have to check every detail, hence our visit. So, was there a specific time agreed, and did you have any contact with Mister Ritskes before eight o'clock this morning? This also applies to yesterday." Pier thought for a moment and looked at Abe.

"The last time I spoke to Cor was last Sunday, here at the bar. He was here, as he often is, on Sundays between five and seven o'clock in the evening. Have you spoken to him any further, Abe?" Abe jumped out of his thoughts when he heard his name.

"Uh, yes, I spoke to him on the phone, yesterday, about that slot machine. We talked for maybe two minutes, that is all." The detective took over the conversation again. "Do you have any idea of any of Mister Ritskes' problems? Did his business go well, do you think? How did he sound on the phone yesterday? I would like an answer from you, Mister Abe. By the way, why are you so nervous?" Abe emptied his glass down his throat once more, and before he answered the detective, he called out to Susan to bring him another one.

"Why am I so nervous? That seems pretty logical to me, and you cannot guess? A friend of ours was murdered.

A friend, whom I spoke to on the phone yesterday, and no, nothing special. He sounded like any other day, cheerful, just like he was. And his business? I do not know. One never knows with Cor, because even when his business is not going well, he remains the same cheerful, always smiling Zipper. The Zipper is, was his nickname here. And now you just have to go and do your job and find the bastard who killed our friend. You will not find that slog here at this table." The detective was not fazed by Abe's words, and did put an end to the conversation.

"All right, gentlemen. I understand that this must all be emotional for you. We will leave it at that, but if there is reason to do so, we will return. I wish you a good day." Immediately, the two detectives turned around, and left the bistro. At that moment, Susan had just brought three fresh beers to the table. Pier had a message for her.

"Susan, I can see that it is starting to get busier. Call Hannie to help serve. In the kitchen it is fine. Bob and Johnny can do the lunch together. This evening, I will be there again. Abe, Jan, and I need some time. We will have to leave it with this beer for the time being." Susan reacted as expected, not causing any problems.

"Yes, we have heard it by now, about the Zipper, terrible! Do not worry, take your time. We will cope." Then the three men were back together, and Pier took the first word again.

"Well, here we are. What should we do with this? Can anyone tell me? Should we tell the police about that envelope? I am afraid of the consequences if we do that. Anyone have any ideas?" Abe and Jan both wanted to answer at the same time, but Jan kept his mouth shut to hear what Abe had to say.

"No, we are not telling them anything, for now. That copper was not so smart anyway. "Why are you so nervous?" What an ass.

We have to look at who the letter is addressed to and then we have to come together, but how do we do that? And where?" Now it was Jan who spoke.

"I do not know if we can wait that long, but on Tuesdays it is empty here and no one expects people to be inside, which is also hard to see from the outside." Pier responded immediately.

"Well, stupid postmen do not seem to exist anymore either. Smart, Jan, but indeed, what do we do until next Tuesday? It is only Wednesday, and we have to come up with something to inform those people in advance. If I understand that letter correctly, it is also about the daily behavior of everyone who is mentioned." Abe joined in.

"Leave that to me. Susan will have to work behind the bar this afternoon, when our regular guests start trickling in. I will then take aside, those to whom it applies, one by one. Not everyone comes in one day, so that will work. I will also call some people. We agree with everyone to be here on Tuesday morning at eight o'clock. At that time, it is still quiet in the street and I will tell everyone to park their car on the large parking lot and those who can walk should do so. And then let us hope that nothing happens until Tuesday. And one more thing, we and all the guests who have a letter in their name, cannot and should not talk about it with anyone else, with no one, do you hear?" The other two men nodded, and Jan had something to say again.

"There, look. There is the first one already. It is Frank. He probably heard about the murder as well." Frank, the shipyard owner, did indeed come up to them. With a deep sigh, he plopped down on a chair at their table.