

Daan Goppel

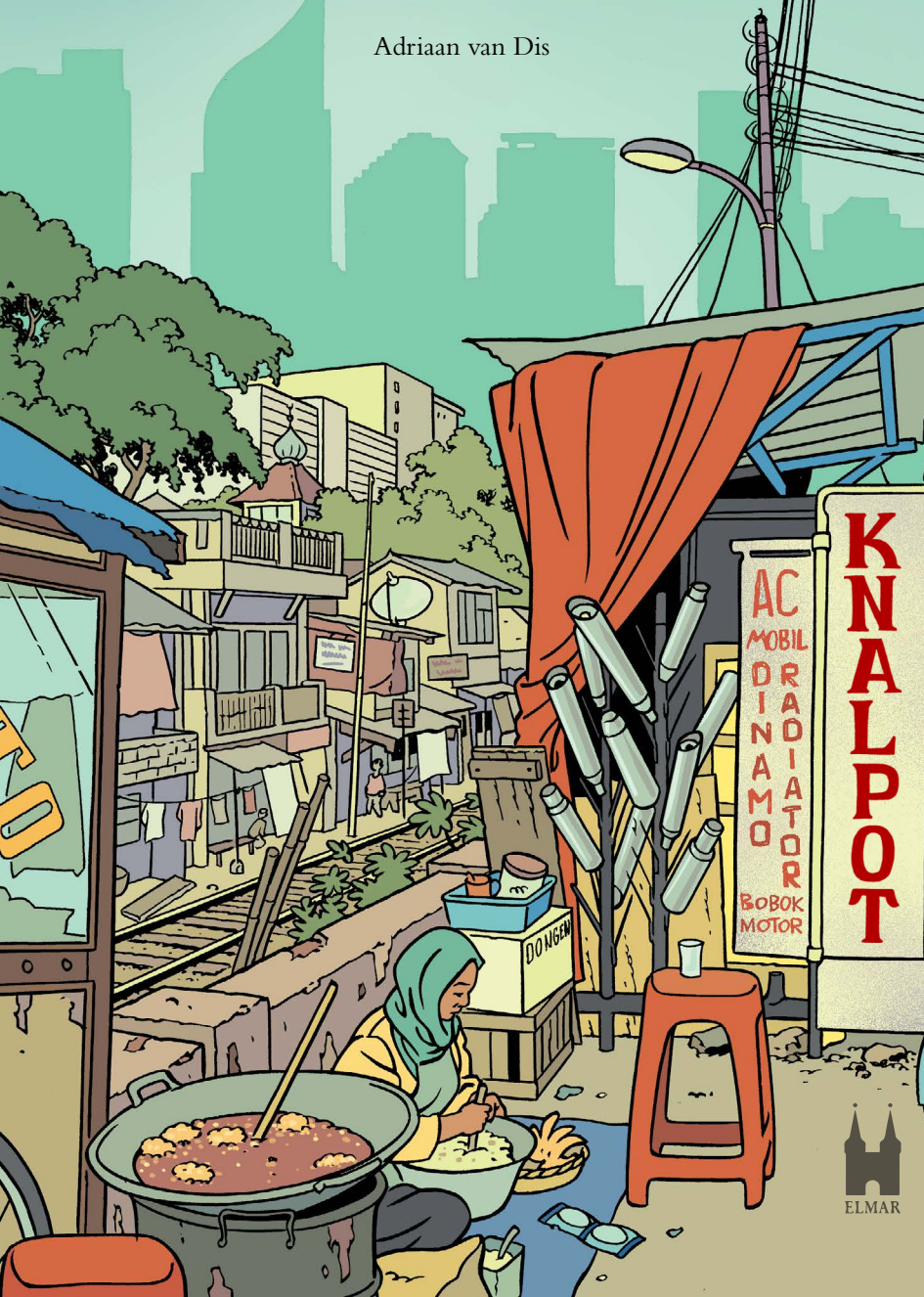
KNALPOT

Verhalen uit Jakarta



'Daan Goppel kijkt zonder te oordelen. Hij leeft mee, leeft zich in en toont ons een Jakarta zoals het werkelijk is: schipperend tussen regels en praktijk. Een heerlijk boek van een humaan reiziger. En leerzaam bovendien!'

Adriaan van Dis



Daan Goppel decides to move to Jakarta, for an undetermined time. He wants to find out what it is like to live in this densely populated capital. He starts to study Indonesian and moves into a working-class neighbourhood.

Jakarta is a hectic place to live. It's a city of extremes. With major cultural differences amongst its inhabitants, and a huge social-economical gap. Religious devotion appears to exist alongside debauchery. His Indonesian friends help him to get to know the city. They share their dreams and views with him and in this way he gets some insight into the reality of their lives and the sexual morality of Jakarta. In truth it is a place where nothing is allowed, but everything is possible. As long as you pay for it.

Knalpot takes the reader on a journey through the bustle and chaos of Jakarta's streets. The stories in the book are about religion, prostitution and cultural differences. They offer a cheerful image of life and survival in the city. They thrill, entertain and surprise you till the end.

Daan Goppel (1987) regularly seeks adventure. A few years ago he hitchhiked from the Netherlands to Suriname, after which he wrote the book *Liften naar Suriname* (Hitchhiking to Suriname).

About **Liften naar Suriname**:

*'This young man really gets into adventure.
And what a writer!'*

FHM ★★★★★

'Beautiful story!'
DOLF JANSEN, VARA

KNALPOT

Verhalen uit Jakarta

Daan Goppel

Van Daan Goppel verscheen eerder:
Liften naar Suriname (2011)

www.daangoppel.nl

Colofon

Knalpot, Verhalen uit Jakarta

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Daddy is home

Dressed in flip-flops and shorts I sit on the back of the motorbike. As a formality; I wear a toy like helmet. Hot humid air blows in my face and I half shut my eyes. Jakarta's nightlife shoots past. In front of us, the streets are broad and empty. At this hour, they transform into a racetrack.

Ato takes me home. We've known each other for some weeks. During this time, I've called him on several occasions when I couldn't catch a minibus home and needed transport. During the day he works in a steel factory, but because the money isn't enough to sustain his young family, he tries to earn what he can during the night as a tukang ojek. He turns his head and speaks to me over his shoulder.

'Sudah capek. Dani?' he asks if I'm tired. Ato is quite ugly, but he can't do anything about it. He has a big forehead, a skew nose, and a scar on his upper lip. When he was two years old, his dad drove into a truck and Ato slid over the asphalt. This was the result- a misshaped face but with friendly eyes.

'Belum!' I answer.

'Ayoh Dani, let's get coffee,' he suggests. We drive to a parking lot in front of a 24/7 Indomaret and we sit down at a terrace table in front of the

supermarket. It's nice to talk to Ato. He's way too clever to be a motorbike driver, but when you are born poor in Jakarta it's difficult to move up in life. It's sad that his livelihood depends on the one thing that scarred him for life: the motorbike. 'What did you do tonight?' asks Ato. He leans back and takes a drag from his Indonesian clove cigarette. I tell him that I went to a nightclub somewhere in the basement of a hotel with classmates from university. I can't remember the name of the place. We had a blast drinking- no thanks to the nightclub.

What a seedy, pretentious Playboy Mansion. 'There were only prostitutes,' I say frustrated. Ato starts to laugh, he takes the Indonesian clove cigarette out of his mouth and asks, 'How much?'

A girl in high heels and a mini skirt stands at the end of the bar. She eyes me up and down. I check her out. She acts like a good old Dutch flirt, but in this nightclub, her signals mean something completely different. I place my beer on the table where my Korean classmates are sitting, and I start to size up the room. Something is amiss. There are not enough men and too many women, all of whom are behaving strangely. No one is dancing. The girls stand around, disinterested, playing on their smartphones. When they aren't looking at their screens, they're giving the men around them unashamed, flirtatious looks.

I convey my surprise to my classmates, whereupon they seem astonished by my naivety. Hadn't I realised it by now? Of course, all the women here

are prostitutes. In Korea it's perfectly normal to use prostitutes; there they also just hang out at bars. One of my classmates beckons a bored girl, who is leaning on the counter, to come over. Reluctantly she moves over to our table. She tells him something inaudible, because of the loud music, and then labours back to the counter.

'Perhaps I'll take her home tonight,' he says with a smile on his face.

After a few beers, I find myself alone at the bar. Both my friends left with night butterflies. The girl that has been scoping me out all evening, talks to me. 'Halo misterrr. You buy me drink, ya?' I stare at her. 'O, ja?' I answer surprised.

She pulls a disappointed face. On her small body hangs a boisterous handbag, bangles, and a necklace. In her hand, she holds a big, expensive smartphone.

'Are you a prostitute?' I ask.

She shakes her head fiercely. Of course not. 'I need money to study,' she says, and pouts her lips.

'And?' shouts Ato with a grin, 'how much money does she need for her "studies"? Haha!' He cynically leans back in his aluminium chair with the grin still playing on his lips. A group of Indonesian youngsters is looking at us as they enter the supermarket. I take another sip of my ice tea.

'Two million,' I answer.

Ato stares at me. 'Whahaha! That's a high-end prostitute!' he calls out cheerfully. 'But did you do it?'

I'm not a fan of prostitution and I don't want anything to do with it. That's what I politely say to the girl.

'Aduuuh..' she moans, '... but it isn't for me, but for my studies-ies-ies', she pulls whiningly on my T-shirt.

We have a 'kind of conversation' where I ask her questions to try and find out more about her life. Why does she do this kind of work? Does she earn a lot? Does she like it? But most of her answers are nonsensical other than, she really needs two million Rupiahs to finish her studies. What she studies isn't exactly clear.

The music stops, the party is over. Outside, I notice the girl is following me. She grabs my hand and says: 'Will Mister take me home in a taxi? Please.'

I mumble negatively, but then again, I also have to go home and I've nothing against sharing a taxi. I ask her if she's heading in the same direction, determined she nods her head, yes. As we get into the taxi she says something to the driver and then swiftly we head in completely the opposite direction.

'Where are we going?' I ask bewildered.

The girl sits firmly next to me, her small hands clamped around my wrist, gazing at me like a love-struck teenager. 'We go to hotel ya?' she says with big brown eyes.

'To a hotel? I'll have none of this, you're going home,' I say irritated.

'No, no...' she protests '... not home. There we can't go, because daddy is home.'

I look at her surprised. 'You live with your dad?'

Guilty she looks away. I order the taxi driver to take us to her house, she whispers an address and not long after that, the taxi turns into the parking lot of a high-rise building with luxurious apartments.

'Thank you!' she says and quickly gets out.

The taxi driver asks if I want to go somewhere else, but as I check my wallet and count my cash, it seems that I only have enough money to pay for this trip. I pay and get out.

The girl stands at the big glass door leading into the marble entrance hall. She rummages for something in her handbag and calls out: 'If my dad wasn't home you could've stayed.' She conjures up an electronic keycard and with a beep, the grand door swings open.

'Dah dah!' she says and waves goodbye to me with her petite right hand. Then she disappears into the lift.

'She still lived with her dad! Trying to make extra pocket money, the greedy materialistic girl. The dad should know what his darling daughter does during the night,' I call out.

Ato takes a sip of coffee and pulls a face. Not enough sugar. He opens another sachet and empties it into his plastic cup. 'Dani, Dani, Dani...' he says while shaking his head, '... you don't really think she lives with her father?'

Taken aback, I stare at him.

'Here in Jakarta there is a saying,' Ato con-

tinues in a serious tone. “A rich man buys his wife a villa and an apartment for his whore.’The ‘daddy’ is thus most probably not her father at all, but a man with a lot of money, that doesn’t have enough interest in only his wife. Believe me, I know these kinds of stories,’ Ato says, and he taps his temple with the fingers holding his cigarette.

I sit, astonished in my chair, at a loss for words.

*This story was translated from Dutch to English
by Amori Stols.*

*I hope you enjoyed reading this translated preview.
The book Knalpot is available in Dutch,
and can be obtained both online and in bookstores
in The Netherlands and Belgium.*

*Further information:
daangoppel.nl/knalpot*



metro mini