

ENGLISCH TRANSCRIPT

TOENDRA

War in the living room

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WAR IN THE LIVING ROOM

Opening tune: Toen-toen-toen.....dra!!!!

Sfx: bike, bike bell

HENNIE: I was walking down Oudegracht on a Saturday night. I was 14.

VO: It is the spring of 1953 when Hennie walks through town, wearing a short skirt and high heels...

HENNIE: And then, all of a sudden, Jan showed up beside me on his bike. And he asked me if I wanted to come with him for a snack or a drink. But I didn't want to. Because I looked at him and I thought: 'That man is way too old.'

But then, when I did go with him after all... I kept going with him and I fell in love with him all the same. He didn't beat me. He was quiet, he was always smiling. Well... kind.

I wasn't used to that. I grew up in Wijk C among the violence. In the bars with the working girls, they used to walk the streets where we lived.

Well, then, at some point, when I was 16, I got pregnant.

VO: In 1957 Hennie marries Jan.

HENNIE: Ha! What did he say to me: "Hennie, we're going to make the best of it.. "

Well, did we ever. Did we ever. Those words, what he said, I'll never forget it.

VO: A hundred kilometres away, in Bergen op Zoom, around the same time, another woman gets married: Ria, to her husband. His name was Jan too.

RIA: I was 20 when I got married. There was no party, you know. There was a bowl of soup,
and that was all. I wore a borrowed two-piece. Cause he didn't have a penny to his name... He
got married in his army uniform.

But we were very much in love. We were glowing. And in his military outfit, he was a real
groover, you know.

When I first met Jan, I never noticed anything strange about him. But he was a heavy
drinker
back then, when I first met him. Because I was a conductor on the bus, and that's
how I met
my husband. And he would always be drunk when he went back to the barracks.

HENNIE: And that's when it started. Once a week he had to get drunk, because all
week long,
he could..., he would sleep for two hours, and then he would walk around
downstairs... He
couldn't sleep, because even at night, he would kick and scream in his sleep.

He scared the living daylights out of me, the first time, when we were just married. I
think to
myself: 'Heavens, what is this?'

Yes, it's from the war in the East Indies. He had told me that he'd been to war, but
that was all.
He never talked about the East Indies. He had told me that once. When I wasn't
pregnant yet.
That's when he told me.

I ignored it. Hell, what did I know about the East Indies? I had never been beyond
Weesp.

VO: Both men had been to the Dutch East Indies, both as tank drivers.
Ria's husband is 17 when he joins the army, against his father's wishes.

RIA: His dad wouldn't sign. 'No way!' his dad said.

'Cannon fodder', was what he called it. Then his neighbour went with him to sign and
said he
was his dad.

VO: Jan Dinkelberg, Ria's husband, was there for nearly five years. Jan Stuivenberg, Hennie's husband, was only there for one year. But it was enough to change him forever.

HENNIE: On a Saturday... Saturday, he would come home drunk again. And then he came into the kitchen. Now, I don't scare easily, because of all the violence in Wijk C that I was used to, and the beatings I got at home.

Sfx: Sound of door closing. Footsteps on the wooden floor.

HENNIE: And then he came into the kitchen. I was standing there, looking like there was a hurricane coming.

MALE VOICE: Well!

HENNIE: He had completely changed. He was kicking down the table, and the chairs.

Sfx: Breathing. Mumbling. Chairs falling on the floor.

MALE VOICE: (*yelling*) God dammit!

HENNIE: Well, it was chaos. I was like: 'I'm calling the cops!'

And then I called the cops. And that copper says to me: 'You can't stay here with that baby.

Much too dangerous. Look at his eyes.'

He was back in that world! Not here, but in the East Indies!

Sfx: Sound of crickets.

RIA: I remember it well, that Jan told me, when I was pregnant... And he said to me: 'You

watch out, you hear, if you're pregnant, because I've seen it,' he said... In Indonesia... When

they were in kampong. And they had to check for enemies. And there was this woman

standing there, and she was pregnant, and there was another one, a mate. I'll just call him a

mate. And he just stabbed that woman in the belly with a bayonet.

Sfx: Door slamming.

MALE VOICE: *(yelling)* God dammit. God dammit!

RIA: We were in bed, it was almost morning.. And then he got up and he started swearing and yelling and slamming doors. And he said: 'I'm burning the whole place down!'

MALE VOICE: *(yelling)* I'm burning the whole place down!

RIA: I'm thinking: 'What's going on?' So I got up. And then he went into the barn and he got one of those jerry cans of paraffin... We had those paraffin sets for making soup, you know? And he just poured that out on my carpet. So, I woke the kids as fast as I could. And I dressed them and helped them, and I took the kids outside, of course, to make sure that they were safe. And all the while he was walking around with this jerry can of paraffin.

MALE VOICE: *(yelling)* Get out!

RIA: I had tapizon floor covering, I remember it well... Now, that didn't burn easily, but some of the tiles were still burnt. Well, and then he dragged me outside.

MALE VOICE: Come on, hurry.

RIA: In my nightie. Into the bushes, you know. 'Head down.' There were the Japanese.

MALE VOICE: *(whispering)* They want the women... They want the women...

HENNIE: Twice a night I would run downstairs, and of course the kids were in bed upstairs, and I would hold him. And I would say: 'Jan, calm down!'

His eyes were like... like an animal's. That fear in his eyes... And Piet on that side and Klaas on that side, and fire!

MALE VOICE: *(yelling)* Fire!

Sfx: Shooting.

HENNIE: And he would just sit there. For he was always on that side, in that chair.
And I
would hold him. For half an hour. And he would cry, this big man, crying like a baby.
And then
he would calm down, and I could catch a little sleep. Because I had to get up again at
6. For I
have had to bring in the bacon for 33 years. And this was, say, once, twice,
sometimes three
times a week.

RIA: On average, this was some... maybe fifteen minutes, and then I would say:
'Yes, Jan, I'm
going inside.' And he wouldn't let me... 'No, no, no!'

And then I would say: 'Come on, let's grab a nice cup of coffee.' And I would try to
calm him
down. And he would still come with me.

'Let's go around the back, so they won't see us.'

So, I just played along.

'Be careful, okay?'

But when I saw that he was feeling a little better, I would say: 'Alright, Jan, what are
we still
doing here? There is nothing left here. They're all gone.'

And he would sit down for a minute, and I would say: 'Here, Jan, here's your coffee.'
And he
would calm down again. And then he would completely forget all about it. And just
start
laughing.

MALE VOICE: (*chuckling*) You're crazy. (*Scoffing*) That never happened.

HENNIE: And then at night, he would say: 'Hen! Hennie!'
And I would say: 'Yes.'

'Shall we go for a drive?'

And that would be around ten or so.

'Yes, but tired this and that...'

'No!'

And then he would drive to Hilversum, Bilthoven, Hollandsche Rading and Zeist...
You name it.

Till 4 in the morning. And I would just fall asleep. In the car. You can imagine how
tired I was.

And then we would come home again. And he would just sit down there. And I would
say:

'Well, I'm going up to bed for a while now, Jan. Because I have to get up at 6 a.m.

But come to think about it... Now that I have the time to think about it... What could
he have
been thinking, driving me around at night?'

RIA: At some point, someone saw something... And I know, that was my mum and
dad's
neighbour... He saw something once and he said: 'Ria, what were you doing by the
seaside? Do
you really have to go to the seaside to make out?'

And I would say: 'Well, no... no, no, no.'

So, I kept it to myself, that he had these, these episodes.

HENNIE: When Jan was still around, we couldn't talk about it. He couldn't tell, but he
didn't want to... to
talk about it either.

So I would say: 'Jan, tell me.'

And I would sit down on my knees and say: 'Jan, tell me. Tell me everything that
happened
back there, in the East Indies.'

And er... I would get mad at times, of course. I wanted to know the truth.

RIA: Once the kids had moved out, he would sometimes... to me... I would go
upstairs and say:

'Come on down, it's much nicer downstairs.'

'No, just leave me be.'

Sfx: Typing on keyboard.

RIA: And I would see all these old pictures... on the screen...

And then he would start telling stories. 'And that one is dead... And that one is dead.'

And there was this one boy, his name was Wessels... And they had been playing cards, in a tent. In a pop tent. And er... this boy went to his own... tent. And then they heard screaming.

And this Japanese guy had just cut off his head with a knife.

HENNIE: And then, after he died, I told the kids: 'Now I'm going to get to the bottom of everything that your dad went through!'

VO: In 2008 Hennie places an ad in a veterans' magazine. She is looking for people who knew Jan back in Indonesia.

HENNIE: And I got all these calls from soldiers. And one of them, a soldier from Soest, he said to me:

'Mrs Stuivenberg, are you sitting down?'

And I said: 'I am.'

He said: 'Jan drove a tank that day into a fight, and Jan killed three people.' Because the brakes of that tank didn't work. For it was all old war equipment that they gave them. And they never gave those boys any training either. And that, I think, is what drove my husband crazy.

VO: Ria's husband withdraws to his room. She has no idea what he is doing there.

RIA: So, every now and then I had to bring up dinner... 'Yes, just bring it up here.'

And then he would even have his dinner upstairs. Yes, he would be there... *(pausing)* for days on end.

I think he did that for about 37 years. Making all those crazy DVDs. I must have watched some twenty DVDs by now. All of them showing that ship on which he left. And then there's

music in
the background.

And then I also see those boys again... That they... Passport photos, dead people,
all with their
names in the captions. And then all photographs of the cemetery.

Er... er... it was like he made those films for those boys!

And I could not disturb him. If I disturbed him, if I accidentally opened the door too
loudly, I'd
better get out as fast as I could. Cause he would start swearing at me like there was
no
tomorrow.

HENNIE: Last Whit Sunday I painted and cleaned the whole room here. First I
cleaned the whole room
and the ceiling with ammonia... No, I'm not done yet. I still have to do that cabinet
and that

clock. I do all of that myself.

It's my way of dealing with things. So I don't have to think. About everything that...
that he

went through. I find that hard to... to process.

And my daughter wants me... about those chairs... She wants me to buy new chairs
as soon as
possible. She wants me to get rid of those chairs! But I don't have any dough, so er...
it'll have
to wait.

RIA: I miss him terribly. Yes, that big mouth of his all the time, you just miss it. I was
completely
smitten with that man. I could even.. I would do anything for him. I would have
chewed his
medicines for him to shove them into his mouth... So to speak. Yes.

It'll be four years come December. But, well, crying, crying, every day. Yes...

HENNIE: I loved him so much. Loved him so very, very much. So, that's why I... I cry
at least once every

day. And I can't let it go. I've lived through this all those years, and he will stand next to the

bed upstairs and say: 'Hennie, stop crying. Hennie, stop crying.'

Or he'll be in this room. Or he'll be in the kitchen. And he'll call me all the time:

'Hennie!

Hennie!'

Even in the middle of the night... I don't think that will ever go away.

RIA: I do this every night. Before I go upstairs, and turn in, I pick up his photo. And I kiss him.

(kissing) And I'll say: 'Goodnight Jakke. See you tomorrow.'

And then I'll tap his urn...

Sfx: Rhythmical tapping on the urn.

RIA: And then I'll go to the door and I wave a little, and then I go upstairs. *(Tears in her voice.)* Yes.

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