

**Turkish
Delight
Jan Wolkers**

TRANSLATED BY SAM GARRETT



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For Olga Stabulas

RASTAPOPOULOS: Me? Bad? Of course I'm bad! I'm the devil incarnate! And let's hear any man try to deny it!

CARREIDAS: I beg your pardon! I am the devil incarnate . . . and I'm richer than you are, too!

RASTAPOPOULOS: So what! I ruined my three brothers and two sisters, and dragged my parents into the gutter. What do you say to that, eh?

CARREIDAS: Peanuts! Kid's stuff! My great-aunt was so ashamed of me she lay down and died!

RASTAPOPOULOS: Now let's get this straight! Do you or do you not admit that I am wickeder than you?

CARREIDAS: Never! Never, do you hear! . . . I'd sooner die!

The Adventures of Tintin: Flight 714

Jan Wolkers
Rock 'n' Roll Member Emeritus

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Translator's Note

When *Turks Fruit* (Turkish Delight) was first published in the Netherlands in 1969, it rocked both the literary scene and Dutch popular culture. Jan Wolkers, already a celebrated sculptor and painter, had established himself as an author as well, with more than half a dozen books to his name. This particular novel's graphic frankness, however, had an explosive effect. Older Dutch people have told me that they experienced it as "a liberation"; it was the first time they had the sense of reading a novel in their own language that reflected not only the current mood (Amsterdam in 1969 already bore a solid reputation as a free haven for all things unbridled and psychotropic) but also the way they and their contemporaries thought, spoke, felt and acted. The more straitlaced

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critics condemned the book for those very same reasons, but their disapproval barely made a ripple.

Those readers' reactions, that sense of being taken on a tour of their own world, was an accurate read of Wolkers's intentions. The novel—which was not only a razor-sharp attack on bourgeois respectability and a hymn of praise to “the animal” in all of us but also a lament on the fleeting nature of love and life itself—was a radical departure from the “notary-public style” Wolkers deplored in other Dutch authors of his generation. Almost fifty years later, the novel's ability to shock, delight and offend seems an indication that it is as fresh and contemporary as it was in 1969.

At the same time, Wolkers's desire to write honestly in the idiom of his day is reflected—particularly in the first few chapters—in a highly colloquial and “hip” use of *ands* and *buts* and *because*s at the start of his sentences, as well as in the use of incomplete sentences, digressions and jokes (many very funny, some charmingly corny) and a total disregard for the paragrammatical throughout. In the course of time, some of those stylistic elements have, in turn, gone out of fashion, but I have tried to reflect them in a way that signals the particulars of the late 1960s without destroying the modern-day reader's appreciation of the

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story. The same goes for those elements that might today be considered politically incorrect or sexist.

Interesting to note, perhaps, is that the events described in this novel are at least loosely based on events that took place in the late 1950s, when Wolkers and his second wife, Annemarie Nauta (on whom the fictional character of Olga is based), were still living together “as happy as beasts.” By something like the magic of the writerly imagination, though, it has become the spirit of the late 1960s that infuses *Turkish Delight* and lends it its status as an anthem of those times.

Sam Garrett
Boule d'Amont
August 9, 2016

A Shaving Pan Full of Chicory

I was way down in the dumps after she left me. I stopped working, I stopped eating. I spent all day between my filthy sheets and glued nude photos of her up close to my face at the head of the bed, so after a while I started thinking I could see her thick-mascaraed lashes quiver when I jerked off. And see her lips swell and part, and hear the sounds she made when she came, wild like in the beginning, before she learned to keep the pleasure to herself and to us but just screamed it out for all the world to hear, so that a neighbor lady once asked her: “What’s he do to you, anyway?” And the guy next door said: “It sounds like you two are running a puppy farm in there.” I reread her letters and scribbled sentences from them on the

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wall. *After I left your place I had to run into a pharmacy to buy some styptic cotton, to keep my heart from bleeding dry. And: Last night, even here in town, you could smell the hay. I long for you so. While I'm writing this to you my cunt is making sucking motions, like a baby's mouth.* I racked my brain thinking about what went wrong, why she'd left me for a fuckhead like that, some traveling salesman, some overgrown prick with a hunchback. My scalp hurt from all the thinking and rooting around. How she could let herself be poisoned. By that a filthy bitch of a mother. And then I jerked off to that picture of her, naked, seen from the back. She's just rising to her feet, and her buns have that wanton sag. And I shout, shit, goddamn it, shit for me, I'll lick the shit off your ass. But after two weeks it was enough, and I got out of bed. Thin and foul. In a pan on the gas ring in the kitchen I found the last thing she'd done around the house. Two meatballs. They were lying in a fluffy bed of mold, and when I flushed them I felt like laughing and bawling at the same time, because it reminded me of the meatball she had mailed to the Government Inspection Service when she was still a girl at boarding school. I took a shower and rubbed my skin raw with the sea-cucumber skeleton that still had her red hairs wrapped around it like fishing line.

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And I put on my best clothes and looked at myself critically in the mirror. With my skinny face and wild curls, my tight black pants and black leather jacket, I figured I looked undyingly pretty. And because it wasn't something I could laugh about, I whispered to myself in all earnestness: "A blessing in disguise." I was just like the Jewish guy in the joke who says, when his friend catches him coming out of a brothel the day after his wife's funeral: "How should I know what I'm doing in my sorrow?" I screwed one girl after the other. I dragged them to my lair and tore the clothes off them and rammed myself silly. Then I hustled them out the door after a quick drink. Sometimes three a day. Big tits, sagging like sacks of porridge with rubber teats to suck on. Little wrinkly tits, too pitiful to pet. Better, in that case, to leave the sweater on. Clumps of pubic hair rough as sea grass, soft as fur. Dry cunts with warts inside. Nasty to the touch but nice on the dick. Cunts you didn't get to see because a hand was held in front of them. Cunts soft and moist as pudding bread. Sturdy girls with hips like great wheels of cheese and a Rotterdam accent, full of aggression, who clamped onto your cock like a drill handle. Who, as soon as you were finished fucking, wanted to get up and do the dishes and mop the floor

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and scrub the pot. Girls who buried their snotty noses in the hair on your chest and wept because they'd been raped by their father at the age of fifteen. The Indonesian one who wanted to play virgin and shouted daftly in that round intonation of hers: "Oh, what are you doing to me?" "I'm spreading your legs and jamming my schlong in you, that's what, and I'm going to fuck you till I can't smell that sweet breath of yours anymore. Come on with those sticky lips. Let that tongue hang out of your mouth, I'll gobble it up." The shitty headache I woke up with when yet another tampon had been stuffed under the mattress at the head end. The blood black-brown as apple butter. The crabs they gave you like gray dandruff with best wishes from a host of faraway friends. And I noted all those fleeting encounters in my diary. Often with a lock of hair stuck to the page, sometimes pubic hair if I could talk them into it. And how I had picked them up and sometimes how they had picked me up. And what they said, and what I'd said. Because nothing attracts a woman like a man suffering from lost love. But after a couple of months it started making me puke. I settled down again and rented out the front room to two American co-eds whom I never laid a finger on. They were studying art history and, in between a reproduction of Memling's

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Lamb of God and the obligatory self-portrait of the madman of Arles with his head in a bandage, they had tacked proverbs to the wall. THERE'S NOTHING SADDER THAN ASSOCIATIONS HELD TOGETHER BY NOTHING BUT THE GLUE OF POSTAGE STAMPS. And: ONE WHO PUTS SALT IN THE SUGAR BOWL IS A MISANTHROPE. Every Friday, even though they weren't Catholic, they brought back a slimy newspaper full of measly little flounders from the market. When they salted them they put them right in the sink, which was still slippery from all the hawking and pissing I'd done in it and stank of rotten lettuce. They were too dumb to realize they should use a plate. That's also why I didn't say anything the time they filled my shaving pan with chicory and put it on the stove and I saw the brim of crusty soap with little black stubbles in it melt right into the vegetables. It wouldn't have helped anyway. In America, like they said, everything tasted like soap. That must have been why they also took showers at least four times a day. The shower was right above the toilet in my studio, so I could hear them giggling and pissing while I took my time reading the newspaper on the pot. All that squatting over the drain forced the water down through the cracks. At first the walls only got a little moist, but after a couple of months I counted seven

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different types of mold. And then chalky growths started coming out of the walls and ceiling, as though their vaginal flora had begun metastasizing through the floor like dingy coral. I didn't say anything about that either; after all, I used the shower too sometimes. Every other day, like we'd agreed. I came into their room in my underwear. They would be sitting on the couch with their snubby little American noses in their books. Spelling the Dutch words out loud. From the Catacombs to Greco, that kind of thing. Then I took off my shorts and T-shirt and left them in a pile on the floor. I suspected them of trying to catch a glimpse of my buttock as my hairy frame disappeared into the shower. And then quickly going back to reading to each other about Giotto and Cimabue or one of those other old farts. When I was in a good mood, I would put my head around the shower door and shout: "Rembrandt was the biggest hack of the seventeenth century." They would go all stiff and not dare to look in my direction, because they didn't know what else might be sticking out through the crack. Then, singing "The Stars and Stripes Forever" at the top of my lungs, I would turn on the shower. Under the lukewarm spray I held my rigid dick in my hand and imagined walking into their room like that, lying down between

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them and letting those money-grubbing little hands jerk me off, cold and hard. That they would rub the sperm all over my stomach and plaster it with postage stamps they'd steamed off their letters from America (from "Grace Anderson, alias Miss Lonely Hearts" or "Babe Sherman"), with pictures of the Statue of Liberty on them and IN GOD WE TRUST in an arch at the top and LIBERTY down at the bottom. Or pictures of one of their famous historical fogies, a toothless old troll in light green or light purple who'd played a key role in their glorious tradition of Indian, buffalo, Negro and fratricidal killers. But it never happened. At first they made a few remarks about my going into and coming out of the shower in the nude, but I wouldn't even dignify that with a response. Instead I went downstairs, laid my cock on a sheet of paper on the edge of the table, drew a line around it, wrote "my penis" above that and slid it under their door. I never found it back amid their reproductions and proverbs on the wall, not even in the trash can. To this day, therefore, I suspect that one of them still carries it like a precious bijou, tucked up against the skin inside her grubby little panties. But they did sic an American boy on me, someone they'd met downtown. A chubby guy with a crew cut and the looks of a teddy bear, but with

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light-colored, evil eyes. He showed up in his capacity as elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They'd probably showed him my drawing and he wanted to start the conversion process by reducing that boner to normal proportions, under the motto: My Savior on the Cross Is Hung. In any case, he kicked off by showing me a color photograph of a creepy building that enclosed the dome of a temple that looked like a botched egg. The Latter Day Saints' tabernacle at Salt Lake City, Utah. When he started to give me a sermon about the Book of Mormon, I told him that Americans weren't religious at all. That the only thing they worshiped was the almighty dollar. That he knew as well as I did that Mormon was an abbreviation for "More Money." He shook his head and stayed calm. After all, you can't start tossing around napalm right away. But when he pulled those three little figurines out of his pocket and put them on the table like pawns in a game of Parcheesi, then explained that these were the holy apostles Peter, John and James, I couldn't resist pulling down my zipper, whipping out my wang and saying: "And this is the holy Habakkuk." He left, shaking his head a bit sadly at having missed such an acquisition. Before he went, though, he grabbed the three holy apostles off the

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table and pocketed them like small change. And he never came back again. But their other friends sure as hell did. Pale, wayward American college boys with too little cash to live on and too much to starve on. Which left them wandering through a demilitarized zone of girls' rooms, the deep pockets of their raggedy army jackets stuffed with popcorn, chewing gum and rye bread. From Stavanger all the way to Naples. One morning, when I went up to shower, I counted fifteen of them. They lay scattered on the floor, wrapped in gray horse blankets or Indian ponchos, asleep or else ruminating on a breakfast of moldy bread and strawberry jam. I picked my way through them like they were a colony of seals. Careful not to tread on tails or flippers. Whenever one of them brought a guitar along, they would spend all afternoon singing folk songs. American schmaltz like "Michael Row the Boat" and "Kumbaya." Sometimes so loudly that the neighbors called to ask me to turn down the radio. Whenever I asked the girls if there wasn't one of them they might like to start something with, because I hoped that the rest would then beat a hasty retreat, they looked finicky. It always turned out that the one was "too hot to trot" and the other "chewed his gum too loudly." They never got beyond being sleepers on

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the hard floor, eaters and showerers. And the stalactites on my toilet ceiling grew ominously, fed as they were by bacteria, earwax and grunge from all corners of all fifty states. But when they went on to adopt a dozen parakeets and let them fly freely around the room, so that the shit and pinfeathers stuck between my toes when I came out of the shower and I had to walk hunched over in pain from the birdseed digging into the soles of my feet, that was the last straw. I kicked Uncle Sam's lonesome hobos out the door, tossed open the sashes and used the carpet-beater as a badminton racket to knock the parakeets out onto the street. I shouted at the girls, who were running around all pale and weepy, fishing the parakeets out of the bushes in the front yard with their kaftans, that they could piss off to where they came from and take their popcorn and sweet potatoes with them. That I was evicting them on the spot, before those fucking birds with their crooked beaks picked all four walls back to the joists. That same afternoon they caused a scene out on the street when they loaded all their things onto a carrier bike and left with about ten of their little boys flocked around them, each carrying a couple of parakeets in nets they'd bought at the local aquarium store. Before they left, though, they actually came up and shook my

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hand. A bit pitiful, really; it would have made more sense to me if they'd asked reprovngly whether this was the thanks they got for Marshall aid. Or tossed that proverb back in my face, the one they'd left behind amid the rest of the effete garbage still stuck to the walls: ONE WHO PUTS SALT IN THE SUGAR BOWL IS A MISANTHROPE.