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Aad van den Heuvel

A Sunny Island

Original title: *Een zonnig eiland*

NOVEL

A satirical novel about the development aid industry

Hilarious, but deadly serious

Written by a renowned journalist and television presenter

In their pursuit of a happier, more prosperous life, a group of enterprising islanders are in danger of being tripped up by their own success.

About the author

Aad van den Heuvel (Rotterdam, 1935) is a journalist, television presenter and author. His prior crime novels have been published by De Arbeiderspers: *The Vanishing* (1987), *The Stone Age* (1992), *A Distant Killer* (1998), *The Monet Mystery* (2002) and *The Sahara Riddle* (2004), which was nominated for the Diamond Bullet Award 2005. In 2008 he was again nominated for *The War Correspondent*. His crime novels are distinguished by their consummate intermingling of politics and social evils.

As a television journalist, Van den Heuvel has reported from Africa, Latin America and Asia. The programmes he made for Dutch television made him a household name. He wrote *Dit was Brandpunt, goedenavond* (Aspekt, 2005) about his years with the current affairs programme, *Brandpunt*. He also writes travel stories and columns.



About the book

Somewhere in the Pacific lies the sunny island of Jarubo. Its inhabitants have it good. More than good. And they can thank that prosperity to many years of misleading generous, but naïve development aid organisations. But then one of them, CoconutMorris, makes the mistake of submitting a blatantly fraudulent application for project funding. When the local law enforcer is instructed to arrest him, he finds he has disappeared without a trace. It gradually becomes clear that this seemingly tranquil little island is actually the plaything of several competing parties with incompatible interests.

[Aad van den Heuvel, *Een zonnig eiland*](#)

[ISBN 978 90 445 1485 8](#)

[Hardcover, 320 pages](#)

Bibliography

De oorlogsverslaggever (The War Correspondent) (thriller, 2008)

Een zonnig eiland (A sunny Island) (novel, 2009)

The press about *The War Correspondent*

‘Aad van den Heuvel’s writing has documentary style, is evocative, and involved.’

– *Crimezone*

‘With *The War Correspondent* Van den Heuvel has again written a very readable book. It is well put together, has a credible plot and well-rounded characters. He knows the world of journalism and demonstrates that he knows what he is writing about.’ – *Algemeen Dagblad*

‘This is a particularly exciting book.’ – *Paul Witteman*

‘Van den Heuvel can tell a story.’ – *Crimezone.nl*

‘A more than entertaining book of many talents. (...) Well-structured story that reads smoothly.’ – *VN Detective & Thrillergids*

‘Plot, personages en verhaal overtuigen, en de auteur is erin geslaagd aardig wat informatie in het verhaal te verwerken, zonder dat het de vaart of spanning uit het verhaal haalt.’ – *NBD Biblion*

Excerpt from the novel

Although, despite frequent insistence at the Council of Elders, I had still not been instructed to call Coconut to order, I decided one sultry Wednesday evening to call on him nevertheless. I was clearly unwelcome. He didn’t shake my hand and he glared at me malevolently with his bulbous eyes that bulged out like little lamps above his hooknose. What did I want, he was busy.

I gazed around his living room, where even the proverbial blind dog couldn’t have found much more to damage, and carefully chose the only chair that looked more or less reliable. I sat down and explained to him calmly and coolly that any individual who tried to acquire money, goods or raw materials under false pretences was a thief. This in contrast to an agreement between governments, which was something completely different.

‘So you’re saying I’m a thief?’ Coconut exclaimed indignantly.

‘No. Because you are stupid, your plan has fallen through and we can only talk of attempted theft.’

Coconut, who had also sat down, jumped angrily to his feet. ‘Stupid? I don’t see why people on this island aren’t even allowed to show a tiny little bit of personal initiative.’

‘Because this is a senseless and stupid act and because the Dutch may very well think that our Council is behind it. It could even lead to them cutting off the flow of money.’

‘And so? There are plenty of rich countries,’ said Coconut.

‘Oh really? And what if those cheeseheads report your idiotic blunder to the official agencies in Paris and Brussels?’

Now over the years we had come to realise that all those countries and organisations worked encouragingly parallel to each other and hated each others guts. But I didn’t have to tell that to that bug-eyed swindler.

‘What do you actually need the money for?’ I asked him. ‘You earn enough.’

‘It’s none of your business.’

‘It’s only a matter of time before we put you away for a while.’

‘We’ll see about that,’ said Coconut. ‘You can’t scare me with your empty threats. Lots of people on Jarubo agree with me. And they also think that you’re getting too big for your boots.’

I stared at him dumbfounded. About which people was that idiot talking?

‘You realise the Council can grab you by the scruff of your neck at any moment?’

‘There are also other opinions on Jarubo,’ said Coconut, already sounding less self-confident.

‘So who are those people?’

Coconut remained silent.

‘You could start by telling me what you were planning to do with that money.’

Coconut declined to answer; his attitude was becoming increasingly hostile. Now, I am by no means the timid type, but I didn’t like the way he was looking at me. There was a distant look in his eyes, as if his mind was somewhere far away in a completely different world. Further talk was pointless, so I got up, walked to the door, and said he would be hearing from me.

The following day I talked to a couple of members of the Council of Elders, including Bigboss and FatherMaron. The latter wished to point out that our island was actually in dire need of individualists, because, if you thought about it carefully, they were often the motor of our progress. I answered curtly that a fraudulent application was just the sort of thing to throw sand in that motor. We had a principle to uphold and something had to be done. Although Bigboss was not in disagreement with me, he still didn’t want to tackle Coconut. The problem with that damp and chilly country had priority.

‘And that is going to be troublesome enough,’ he said.

According to me, we could do the one without abandoning the other. Why shouldn’t we separate Coconut from the others for a while? I could observe him and question him about his motives. Bigboss commended my commitment, but wasn’t swayed by my arguments.

FatherMaron went along with him: ‘Let’s first evaluate the consequences of his act.’

As I still didn’t agree with their attitude and found it my duty to pursue the matter all the way, I said: ‘HeadstrongGeorge and the people who have protested against the possible punishment of Coconut can never be a reason to let him off.’

Bigboss looked at me as if he had spotted a snake underneath his bed. ‘First things first. First we are going to resolve that matter with the Dutch.’

They say impending doom is always lurking in trivial, everyday events. Little omens nobody notices, that may not even be there, but in which I firmly believed. That morning my girlfriend Agnes had torn into me because I’d woken her too early, Casanova, our dog, was missing without a trace again and I’d cut myself badly when shaving. While I was trying to stanch the blood with some tissues and was staring miserably into the mirror, I saw an average Jarubo man looking back at me, with a skin as brown and gleaming as a burnished chestnut, thick, straight black hair and eyes like kola nuts. Perhaps with features slightly less

cheerful than those of the other islanders, but anyone who is constantly having to mediate in petty island feuds inevitably looks a little more sombre. I felt the Council of Elders had sidelined me. My intuition told me there had to be more behind this. I'd instructed my assistants to be extra vigilant; they had to report anything suspicious immediately. Standing in front of the mirror, I suddenly had a hunch.

Translated by Steven Smith
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