

# Ferry

By Ernst Coppenjans



88 years

1931 Kota Raja, Indonesia / lawyer

'Just say it, it's a big relief'

'My first sexual experience was with the love of my life, Kees. We were 18 and were going to go to university in Amsterdam together. It came as a great shock when something happened between us. We were friends from primary school. Then we already discovered we were both gay. Kees lived in Utrecht and I lived in Zeist, where we later went to secondary school. He came every day by train, I just cycled in. Before we went to university I was in Indonesia for a while, and we always wrote each other letters. When I came back, I of course immediately looked him up. That's what we had agreed. Although I could tell he was hesitating.'

## **Murdered by his mother**

'When I arrived at his house, I found out that something terrible had happened. He had been murdered by his mother. Because we were what we were. I could not believe my ears. That you can do that, as a mother of two children. We wanted to move in together and to protect each other, and we were going to announce that. After Kees died, I decided not to tell my parents what I was. I didn't want to hurt them. The family asked me to marry a great-niece of mine, that's what our mothers had planned. That girl didn't want to and neither did I. It didn't happen, luckily.'

### **Another great love**

'After Kees, I had another great love. Gan was a Thai boy I met in the sauna. I was with him for 25 years. After my retirement I lived in Thailand for 14 years with him. We lived like kings. Around 40 people visited us on birthdays. Gan was a really good cook. We returned to the Netherlands because he became ill. Here I took care of him. He died of that 'gay disease' at the age of 45. I have a table full of pictures of him. After Gan, another Thai boy came into my life, and we fell in love. That boy now lives in Germany. He's come to see me here at my home five times already.'

### **Respect**

'I want to say to the younger generation of homosexuals that they should respect the oldies. I myself look back on a happy life. I cherish my best memory of a day with Kees. We rented a car and spent the whole day touring. And no one saw that we were gay! After that homicide, during my studies and work, I was a member of all kinds of clubs. I was just admitted. Not that I told them about my sexuality. But I was gay. And we had sex. Later, I did have relationships that were public. Therefore, my advice to others is: just say it. It's a huge relief.'