

The Amsterdam Deception

**The David Knight Series
Book 1**

By Tony Ollivier

The Amsterdam Deception

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Reviews

"International intrigue at the highest level, and with grave stakes. The Amsterdam Deception is technologically savvy and brilliantly unique. Wildly entertaining."

— **Robert Dugoni, Internationally Best-Selling Author of *The Eighth Sister***

"The Amsterdam Deception is an explosive start to a new thriller series. Olliver's characters, European settings, and twists will keep readers turning pages late into the night."

— **Eileen Cook author of *You Owe Me a Murder***

"Fascinating, fast-paced and wildly inventive, Tony Ollivier's THE AMSTERDAM DECEPTION is a treat for fans of Robert Ludlum and Dan Brown, or anyone who likes high-stakes, action-packed spy games. If Jason Bourne did ballet, he'd be David Knight, the protagonist in this the first book in what's sure to be a spectacular series."

— **Owen Laukkanen author of *Deception Cove***

Chapter One

Amsterdam—February 28

David Knight felt in his bones someone was watching him. Walking along the icy cobblestones and narrow bridges, he couldn't shake the feeling. Maybe it was the jetlag or the grueling rehearsals.

Or it might be the cold.

Canada was cold, but the wind blowing off the North Sea chilled him faster than getting rejected from one of the troupe's female dancers. He wished he'd brought a hat to cover his long blond hair, but his friend Razor said they didn't need one. He'd never listen to him again.

A shiver went up his back and he spun around trying to catch whoever was looking at him. But no luck. Lots of people walked the streets. Some pulled suitcases. Some wore backpacks. A few darker-skinned men stood with their backs to the corners with their hands in their pockets. Maybe drug dealers, but none gave him or Razor a second glance.

He and his friend, Frederic Razour faced a skinny alleyway, rough brick on both sides. This one looked newish, as in less than a hundred years old. Other alleys appeared plucked from the eighteenth-century and inserted into the streets like Lego blocks.

But the fact remained that he and Razor were lost in a city that was lost in time. Hard to determine what direction they were going and the crappy tourist map Razor snatched from the hotel didn't help.

"Nice of you to charge your phone before we left," David said. Razor sneered at him and stared at the map.

"You have a phone too, smart-ass."

"Didn't think I'd be making any calls tonight, bright boy. Look, we've been out here for an hour," David said. He zipped up his leather jacket and tightened the scarf around his neck. "Let's grab a cab and head back to the hotel." He wanted to crawl into bed and drift off. The show opened tomorrow, and every muscle ached from the ballet class in the morning and the grueling rehearsals all afternoon.

"Don't be a pussy. We're virtually there," Razor said. "Do you want me to tweet you were too tired to go out tonight? And besides, what did your Dad say in his final breath?"

David turned and said. "It wasn't his final breath. He told me several weeks before he died."

Razor cupped his hand to his ear. "Okay, what were his words of wisdom?"

David grunted. "Life is here to be lived."

"And what else?"

David regretted confiding to Razor about this Dad. "Don't waste it like I did."

"My point exactly!"

Razor's coat hung open. Cold didn't seem to affect him. Back in Canada, he wore shorts most days. Maybe he was some kind of android or alien.

"All right. But let's get to it. I'm freezing my ass off."

Razor pulled out the tourist map again, checked a street sign and pointed. "It's this way," he said.

David touched the bump side of his head and grimaced. Before leaving for Europe, he told Sophia he might want to see other people. In a wordless response, she'd thrown the copy of Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* he gave and caught him on the temple. Her anger didn't make the process any easier and since the split, he didn't realize how much he missed the scent of the desert rose perfume she dabbed behind her ears. Or how much he missed the clean smell of her auburn hair and her soft and yielding lips.

Tonight, in Amsterdam, all he smelled was incense, weed, and dog shit, and all he felt was cold.

They turned a corner and above a narrow opening in the wall, David saw the word *Trompettersteeg* engraved on a brass plaque above the passage. A skinny guy would fit through the archway, but a fat one might not. As they stood in front, a steady stream of men disappeared through it like a gate into Hades.

"This is the place!" Razor pumped his fist.

"Yeah. Imagine my excitement," David deadpanned and tightened the scarf around his neck to ward off the icy wind the archway pulled off the harbor. Razor, however had a goofy look on his face as if his brain had left on vacation. David felt like he was taking a puppy to his first dog park.

"You okay?" David asked.

"The tab I dropped is kicking in."

David stared at him and said, "That's just what I needed tonight. I'm a wingman to someone who's high. What did you take?"

"Ecstasy."

David rolled his eyes and said, "Are you nuts? We have ballet class in the morning."

Razor said, "Don't be such a grandma. I have another hit if you want it."

"No."

"No? Just no? Not, thanks Razor for thinking of me?"

"Just no," David said. He was tired of being the only adult in the room. "I said I'd watch your back tonight, but couldn't you hook up with one of the women in the company instead?"

"How did that work out for you, lover boy?" Razor raised an eyebrow said, "Plus, what kind of fun would that be?"

"More fun than I'm having right now."

Razor laughed and entered the doorway. David held back for a second. Alone on the street, a shiver raced up his back.

The narrow portal widened into an alleyway with door-sized windows on both sides. Behind each pane of glass stood a blonde or brunette or redhead. Some looked Dutch, but many looked eastern European or maybe Russian. All were gorgeous.

Inside, the rooms resembled large walk-in closets, with a single bed in the center and mirrors on the ceiling and walls. A small sink, shower stall, and a tiny table with iPhone and speakers completed the decor.

Mood music with clean-up on aisle three.

Some rooms were plain, but others sported beaded or translucent curtains enclosing around the beds. David shivered, but couldn't tell if it was from the cold or the spectacle.

Razor seemed not bothered by either.

A bespectacled girl with long auburn hair and black lingerie cracked her door open. A grinning Asian man talked with her for a minute before waving goodbye and moving to the next window. She smiled at David and said, "It's warm inside. Want to come in and play?"

David was curious but not enough to do more than ask a question. "What does this cost?"

"Seventy-five euros for a suck and fuck. Come in, I give you a good time."

Jeez, David thought, it's like a Starbucks drive-thru, if Starbucks sold blow jobs. "Thanks." But no thanks. He kept walking.

Razor called to him from twenty feet away. His friend was speaking to a bottle blonde in a red bustier. After several minutes, Razor gave David the thumbs up and disappeared behind the door.

Wow. He didn't think Razor would go through with it.

A red curtain slid across the window to signal the start of the most unromantic fifteen minutes of Razor's life. Probably closer to ten.

The alley and the stream of men emptied into another set of streets. As David leaned against a wall near the end, a busty brunette behind a door waved to him. David just smiled and stamped his feet.

The cold had climbed from his toes into his legs. The men streaming through the alley didn't stop. Black, White, Asian. Large, thin, short, tall.

But David noticed two men out of place. They weren't browsing and looked like they were on a mission. Both looked familiar and he realized he noticed them at the hotel when he and Razor left on this adventure. David remembered both men standing across the road from the hotel talking to each other. One sported a shaved head and a spidery black tattoo rising from under his shirt to his face, his body refrigerator-wide. The other man was thin with olive skin and wore a wool skullcap. The thin man stopped at a door covered by a red curtain. Both men glanced at David before the refrigerator yanked the door open and both men entered.

It couldn't be.

The guy opened the same door Razor had. Why would they be going in there? Had he misplaced Razor's choice? David shivered again, and he pulled away from the wall. Two seconds later, the blonde hooker jumped out of the door and ran against the stream of men with her red housecoat wrapped around her. What the hell? David pushed against the flow of men, scrambling to get to his friend. He jerked the door open and stepped inside as a large pair of hands grabbed him and hauled him inside.

The door slammed behind him.

A fist hit him hard in the stomach. He doubled over and gasped for breath. Something cold and metallic jammed against his temple. A gun.

He tried yelling, but nothing came out. Instead, the gun barrel pushed harder against his head and a voice said, "Keep quiet!"

David saw a nearly naked Razor kneeling on the threadbare carpet while skullcap held a knife under his chin. "My mate asked you nicely. Did you take drugs tonight?"

Tears rolled down Razor's cheeks as skullcap pushed the blade into his neck. A spot of bright red blood bloomed. "Stop yer blubbering. We've been following you both all friggin night. Did you do any drugs?"

"Leave him alone," David yelled out.

The gun barrel pushed hard into his temple and forced his head to the floor.

"Shut yer yap."

"Ecstasy!" Razor screamed out. "One tab. That's all. I swear!"

"Shit. That's just great. We were told you dancers were a clean livin bunch!" Skullcap stood up and pulled the knife away from Razor's neck.

David realized that instant he and Razor were targeted. Watched from the time they'd left the hotel. He hadn't been paranoid, but that didn't matter now.

But why them?

"What about this one?" the refrigerator asked. He pulled David's head back. The sharp tug on his hair made David wince.

Skullcap asked, "Did you do drugs like your idiot friend?"

"My partner just asked you a question, you little shit." The refrigerator jabbed the barrel into David's face.

David struggled to fight the fear that coursed through his body. One part of his brain wanted to reason with the attackers and find out what they wanted, but instead his fathers' voice came through and said, "Fuck you."

The refrigerator pulled his other arm back and balled his fist. "Wait. Slow down." Skullcap gestured with a staying hand. "Let's give these boys a chance."

"He didn't take anything," Razor cried. "I was the only one!"

"Are you sure? No hash, weed, crack or smack?"

"I didn't take anything," David said.

A smile spread across Skullcap's face, like the Grinch. "Well then. Maybe tonight isn't a total loss after all."

Skullcap flipped the knife in the air. He caught it by the hilt and swung it at Razor's head, catching him hard in the temple with a fleshy thunk. Razor collapsed in a heap on the floor.

David gasped. "Razor—"

Something bit him on the back of his neck. The room spun. Just before everything went black, he heard Skullcap say, "Hopefully they can use this one."