

Battle of Amsterdam



a novel

Rob Hackney

Prologue

last train out of Iceland

Otis Wilmington is being followed.

They were there with him in Prague, two days ago.

In London and Monaco, they were there.

Now they're with Otis on the platform of a seventieth floor light rail terminal, waiting amongst the crowd.

For three days and nights they've shadowed his movements.

Soon these men, ambiguous in number, will close in on Otis, taking the key that he conceals in the pocket nearest his heart.

It won't happen aboard the train, or on the shuttle, but it will happen today.

Somewhere quiet, with privacy, if not anonymity.

That was all decided long ago, by people higher on the food chain than the strangers who follow him now.

Otis knows for certain that he is in no danger—that his entourage will do anything necessary to ensure the integrity of data he carries.

Despite the time and cost involved, Otis isn't anxious, because he has done all of this before.



far from home

Ennis Pryce dreams only of Amsterdam—a utopian island city surrounded by thirty-three bridges, a kilometer-wide moat, and two colossal dividing walls.

While his reasons for wanting to go back may have changed, the desire never dampened.

Last holdout territory of an all-encompassing new world order, Amsterdam is the place to which he can't return, under penalty of death.

Ennis left home six years ago to the day. Every day since, he's been trying to go back.

It's only now that he sees a way.



jumping ship

Imogen Harper feels tired all the time.

She wonders if being asleep more often than awake is a fated preparation to leave the physical body. The notion of what those first few moments may be like, the sensations experienced, is never far from her mind.

Try as she might, Imogen can't imagine how an afterlife would look.

The thing she would miss most about this particular life, really the one and only thing she can nail down, is curling up under a duvet on cold mornings.

If nothing else, she hopes it will be cold there. But how would they ship in the blankets.



intervention

Umberto Daily has no idea how much shit he's in.

He eases back on the thrust as his medevac helo hits Mars atmosphere, deploying avionics. The cabin begins to shake here, a violent mix of turbulence and age.

While this trip to the Gusev desert is one of hundreds, it will easily be his most memorable.

Coming in low between floating highway markers, still a thousand clicks from any city, Umberto can see smoke on the horizon.



dormant

Apple Zenith longs for purpose.

The daughter of an insurance CFO and a World Gallery artist, she will be taken care of for life. Nothing that she could ever want or need on this world or any must be sought out.

Insulated from humanity at large by her penthouse home in the sky, the hardest thing in the world for Apple is to be alone.

