



## The Rise of Dirck Becker

**Judith K. White**

iUniverse (Jul 22, 2016)

Softcover \$22.95 (414pp)

978-1-4917-9853-9

*This is serious and appealing historical fiction, both vivid and fresh.*

Amsterdam and colonial New Amsterdam come alive in Judith K. White's vivid historical novel, *The Rise of Dirck Becker*.

In the final volume of White's Amsterdam trilogy, young Dirck Becker becomes head of the household following the deaths of his parents. His aptitude for business eventually takes him to Amsterdam, along with his desire to find a young orphan girl he met as a child and has never been able to forget. His story, intertwined with that of Nelleke, the orphan girl he seeks, drives the book from Amsterdam to New Amsterdam in its final years of Dutch rule.

Characters are the gem of the work: distinctive, fully imagined, and compelling. Dirck's "gift" for recalling everything he's heard is a double-edged sword, causing him to confront and examine his own morality, especially after he uses his strange talent to win a lucrative chess match that brings unintended—and tragic—consequences.

Running parallel to Dirck's history is Nelleke's. White avoids stereotypes, making Nelleke a budding, self-taught entomologist whose fascination with insects baffles her loving but very traditional adoptive family. Depth is added to the story through the diary passages of Nelleke's younger sister, whose writings not only bring her character to life but, by contrast, emphasize Nelleke's differences.

Even minor characters, a few of whom appeared earlier in the trilogy, are well drawn and fully rounded, while cameo appearances by Rembrandt van Rijn and Pieter Hals are believable and realistic additions to the text.

The pace of the book is even but never slow, and tension is sustained by alternating between Dirck's narrative and Nelleke's. Their parallel stories are skillfully managed, giving ample time to both characters and revealing them through their interests and actions rather than mere description. After several near misses, they finally encounter each other aboard a ship bound for New Amsterdam—Dirck sailing to advance his career, Nelleke driven by restlessness and an innate thirst for adventure and discovery.

Having finally found the young orphan who absorbed his thoughts for so many years, Dirck's maturity and self-awareness are shown in his realization that he and Nelleke have developed into adults with divergent goals. Instead of romance, a slow, solid friendship develops. The one awkward note is struck when Dirck's romantic interests land too passionately and too quickly on someone else—a plot twist that should—and easily could—have been foreshadowed.

*The Rise of Dirck Becker* avoids genre clichés to deliver a fresh, original, and appealing work of historical fiction.

SUSAN WAGGONER (November 3, 2016)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a*

*positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*