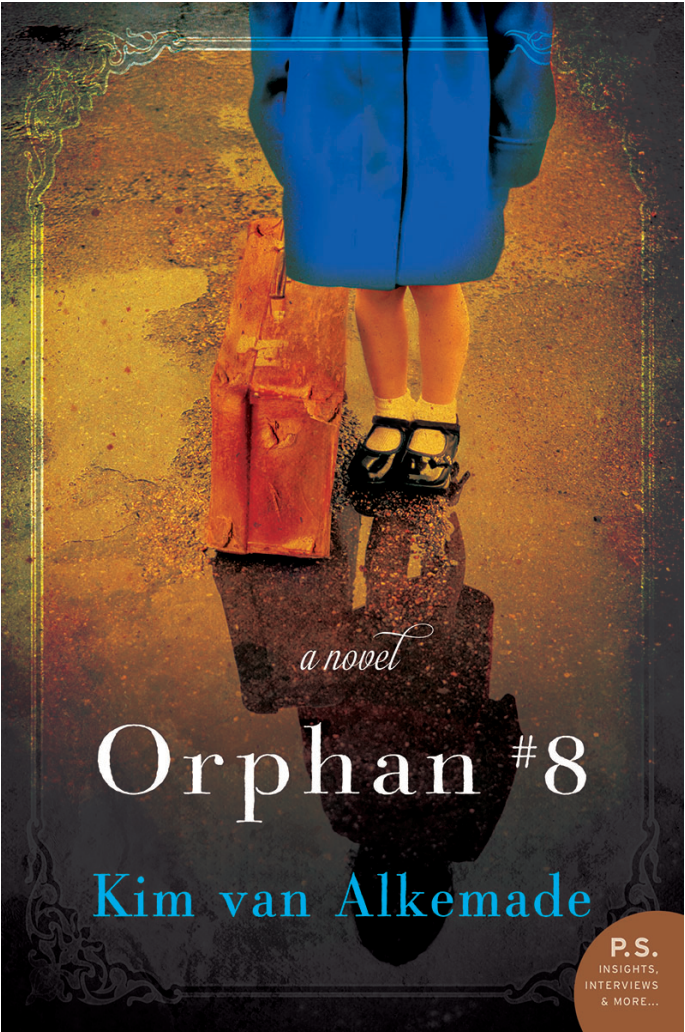


PRESS KIT for *ORPHAN #8* by KIM van ALKEMADE



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Bio



Kim van Alkemade was born in New York City and spent her childhood in suburban New Jersey. Kim's parents met in the iconic Empire State Building. Her late father was a Dutch immigrant from the Netherlands who survived the 1941 bombardment of Rotterdam. Her American-born mother is a descendant of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who got their start in the garment industry and lived in a tenement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Kim attended college in Wisconsin, studying English and History at UW-Parkside and earning a doctorate in English from UW-Milwaukee. She is a professor at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania where she teaches writing. Her creative nonfiction essays have been published in literary journals including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *So To Speak*, and *CutBank*. Her debut novel, *Orphan #8*, about a woman who confronts the doctor who conducted medical experiments on her at a Jewish orphanage in the 1920s, took five years to research and write. Her second novel, *Bachelor Girl*, about a Jazz Age actress in New York City who receives a surprise inheritance from the millionaire owner of the Yankees baseball team, was published in 2018. She is currently at work on a third historical novel, *Cornelia's Machine*, which is inspired in part by her father's experiences in Nazi occupied Holland. Kim makes her home in Saratoga Springs, New York, with her partner, their two rescue dogs, and three feisty backyard chickens.

Product Information

Title: *Orphan #8*

Author: Kim van Alkemade

Publication date: 4 August 2015

Page count: 416

William Morrow Paperback: ISBN: 9780062338303 Retail price \$14.99

E-book: ISBN: 9780062338310 Price \$10.49

Harper Audio: ISBN: 9780062395436 Price \$24.99

Kindle: ISBN: 0062338307 Price \$10.99

Large print edition: ISBN-13: 978-1410489562

Genre/subgenre: Historical Fiction; LGBT Historical Fiction; Jewish Historical Fiction

Available from:

<https://www.harpercollins.com/9780062338303/orphan-8/>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0062338307>

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/orphan-8-kim-van-alkemade/1120380065#/>

<https://www.indiebound.org/book/9780062338303>

<https://www.booksamillion.com/p/9780062338303>

<https://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/orphan-8-a-novel/9780062338303-item.html>

Promotional Information

A stunning debut novel in the vein of Sarah Waters' historical fiction and inspired by true events, *Orphan #8* tells the fascinating story of a woman who must choose between revenge and mercy when she encounters the doctor who subjected her to dangerous medical experiments in a New York City Jewish orphanage.

In 1919, Rachel Rabinowitz is a vivacious four-year-old living with her family in a crowded tenement on New York City's Lower Eastside. When tragedy strikes, Rachel is separated from her brother Sam and sent to a Jewish orphanage where Dr. Mildred Solomon is conducting medical research. Subjected to X-ray treatments that leave her disfigured, Rachel suffers years of cruel harassment from the other orphans. But when she turns fifteen, she runs away to Colorado hoping to find the brother she lost and discovers a family she never knew she had.

Though Rachel believes she's shut out her painful childhood memories, years later she is confronted with her dark past when she becomes a nurse at Manhattan's Old Hebrews Home and her patient is none other than the elderly, cancer-stricken Dr. Solomon. Rachel becomes obsessed with making Dr. Solomon acknowledge, and pay for, her wrongdoing. But each passing hour she spends with the old doctor reveals to Rachel the complexities of her own nature. She realizes that a person's fate—to be one who inflicts harm or one who heals—is not always set in stone.

Lush in historical detail and rich in atmosphere, *Orphan #8* is a powerful, affecting novel of the unexpected choices we are compelled to make that can shape our destinies.

Reading Group Guide

<https://b0f646cfbd7462424f7a-f9758a43fb7c33cc8adda0fd36101899.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/reading-guides/RG-9780062338303.pdf>

Honors

Orphan #8 has been translated into Czech, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, Turkish, Swedish, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Italian.

In December 2015, *Orphan #8* appeared on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list
<https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/combined-print-and-e-book-fiction/2015/12/06>

In November 2015, *Orphan #8* appeared on the *USA Today* Best Sellers list
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/books/2013/06/21/orphan-8/2444877/isbn/9780062338303/>

Orphan #8 was chosen as the August 2015 Target Club Pick <https://www.target.com/p/target-club-pick-august-2015-orphan-number-eight-paperback-by-kim-van-alkemade/-/A-23965487>

Orphan #8 was chosen by Indie Bound for the August 2015 Indie Next List “This powerful and stunning debut, based on a little-known true story, will remain with readers long after the last page is turned.”
<https://www.indiebound.org/indie-next-list/201508>

Orphan #8 was a Goodreads Best Book of the Month in August 2015
https://www.goodreads.com/featured_lists/215-best-books-of-the-month-august-2015?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=2015-08&utm_content=botm5&fbclid=IwAR2WDr4fWlbexCb2V435P9FohwITC705CTGfqpsWj6d-0gv074Z5kgrihs

Orphan #8 was chosen by the Women’s National Book Association as a 2015 Great Group Read “Beautifully atmospheric, each character provides thought-provoking dilemmas and decisions.”
http://www.nationalreadinggroupmonth.org/ggr_selections_2015.html#orphan

Orphan #8 was a “New Release Spotlight” on *Book Reporter* <https://www.bookreporter.com/features/new-release-spotlight/orphan-8?fbclid=IwAR3D6OfvrafForoxveYJzG8XMQR6o3VTlikQZc8EjyngP5RPnLTOvf5GtFs>

Orphan #8 was featured in *Lambda Literary*’s “New in August 2015”
http://www.lambdaliterary.org/features/08/06/new-in-august-james-sie-david-levithan-casey-mckittrick-and-kim-van-alkemade/?fbclid=IwAR0nl5_Hi0GoQh5okEr4x0zvRIVNCdyfz0pjXsO3PICNuDER1NqTAT78aZ4

Orphan #8 included in America Adopts “10 New Adoption-Themed Books To Add To Your Reading List”
<http://www.americaadopts.com/10-new-adoption-themed-books-to-add-to-your-reading-list/?fbclid=IwAR3a3LDOEeyE8mZL9BaZqXzhGXxWYLJOyV58N3fITNZWKMVksyqgZTy-XJw>

Interview Resources

Q: Could you talk about how this book started – what gave you the idea for it?

A: My grandpa grew up in the Hebrew Orphan Asylum in Manhattan and I was interested in learning more about his childhood so I went to the Center for Jewish History in New York to look at the orphanage’s archives. That’s where I read about a group of children who’d had X-ray treatments at another orphanage from a female doctor. I was really intrigued by this and I began to imagine a situation in which one of the children who’d had these treatments could confront the doctor who had experimented

on her.

Q: What was the most surprising thing that came out of the research for *Orphan #8* – what was it that you hadn't expected?

A: The fact that so many women were involved in medical research on children. Dr. Alfred Hess worked with two different women in his research on scurvy and pertussis at the Hebrew Infant Asylum, and the doctor who actually gave the X-ray treatments I read about was named Elsie Fox, a 1911 graduate of Cornell Medical College. Dr. Fox went on to run a school for training X-ray technicians in the Bronx and she was a member of the New York Academy of Medicine.

From "Q and A with author John Searles"

https://www.bookclubgirl.com/book_club_girl/2015/09/ga-with-kim-van-alkemade-author-of-orphan-8.html?fbclid=IwAR10dxt3wma5dQ2uy2SKxOVBLCkObZTRxJsqr93uWfUN1WGts-iOQnoKazU

Q: The term "orphanage" seems quaint now; indeed, most of today's "orphans" are placed in foster homes, with the goal being family reunification. What is your opinion of how contemporary social service agencies handle children who have no parents or whose parents are unwilling or unable to care for them, compared with the institutional care provided 100 years ago?

A: In the novel, Rachel considers this very question. Even during the years in which *Orphan #8* is set, the large institutional orphanages were falling out of fashion as foster care and group homes were on the rise. The philosophy behind the huge orphanages was that children of poor immigrants were probably better off away from their parents and relatives (if they had them) because the institution could provide a clean, healthy environment that promoted Americanization. In many ways, the actual Hebrew Orphan Asylum really saved my family. It gave my grandpa and his brothers a stable, predictable home and because my great-grandma worked there, it kept my family together. I'm not sure what alternative my great-grandma had at that time.

Q: For you, what is the line between fact and fiction? How much liberty do you think a writer of historical fiction can take with historical fact?

A: *Orphan #8* is inspired by true events, but it is not a true story. I made up every character, the settings, the situations, all the dialogue (except for some of the things Dr. Hess says). Even the characters based on my family members are fictional creations. Yes, I incorporated a lot of research, and the main situation of a female orphanage doctor giving X-ray treatments to eight children did happen—but this novel is absolutely fiction. I include as much fact as possible, however, because I want readers to have an authentic experience. The great thing about historical fiction is that it's not a dissertation. I can take liberties. I can invent some things. I'm not sure what it's like for the reader, but I suspect some things that seem very factual I actually made up!

From interview with book blog "Books on the Table"

https://booksonthetable.com/2015/08/06/orphan-8-author-interview/?fbclid=IwAR1XuEo_8Eh4TvBU7yMI6P9CoETOVPfm04UJJHhOKML2kM43IMGSSqTGrVE

Q: As I'm reading, I can't help but think of the PBS/BBC show, "Call the Midwife." What books, movies, shows inspired your time-period and medical research, which is all done very well, by the way.

A: I love "Call the Midwife" and I can see that connection. I've been watching "The Knick" on Cinemax which is set in 1910 in New York at a hospital where doctors are very experimental (and addicted to cocaine, but that's another story). For the medical research, I read as much as I could in the time period. For example, I read Alfred Hess's 1921 book *Scurvy: Past and Present* and I have a copy of the 1920 nursing manual Rachel uses in the book. I often order used old books so I can see how things were written about at the time.

From interview with book blogger Leslie Lindsay <https://leslielindsay.com/2015/09/09/write-on-wednesday-kim-van-alkemade-on-the-truth-behind-the-fiction-of-orphan-8/?fbclid=IwAR3t3sVZSYhcU7yEtMQvSJ6WSxl75dxv3lfbmYDjAz99crdj-iYaw2yZbUg>

Q: Do you feel the need to define yourself as either a historical fiction or LGBTQ writer? How has your identity influenced your writing?

A: I am a historical fiction writer whose characters are gay or lesbian. It's what I wanted to read growing up, it's what I want to read today, and it's my project as a writer to situate queer people in the historical past because it is true and because we are underrepresented. I don't think a writer needs to identify as LGBTQ to write convincing queer characters, and I don't think queer writers should feel compelled to focus on queer characters in their writing, but for me, my writing and my identity do intersect.

From interview with AWP LGBTQ Writers Caucus
https://lgbtqwriterscaucus.wordpress.com/2017/02/06/lgbtq-writers-caucus-interview-with-kim-van-alkemade/?fbclid=IwAR35uWPWuIgoO35pwVDeI_HxpMZkGEa3hr0xLptGwo2SL9fPFwrVHqiMdrQ

Video interview with Jeff Wood, owner of independent bookstore Whistlestop Bookshop, where Kim discusses her research and writing process for *Orphan #8*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=18&v=LbwhXlhycXA

Topics for Discussion and/or Lecture

Medical Research on Children <https://nyamcenterforhistory.org/2015/08/12/x-raying-orphans-fictionalizing-medical-history-in-orphan-8/>

Writing and Researching Historical Fiction <https://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/8-rules-of-writing-historical-fiction-research>

Diversity and LGBTQ Representation in Historical Fiction <https://www.kimvanalkemade.com/backstory>

Early 20th Century Jewish Orphanages
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Orphan_Asymum_of_New_York

Media Reactions

"Readers will learn a great deal about American Jewish history while reading this book. In addition to experiencing life at the orphanage, they will visit Coney Island, Chicago, and Leadville Colorado. They will also learn about medical research, cancer treatments, and the sexism and discrimination against Jews and homosexuals in the early part of the twentieth century. The history and the ethical issues raised in the story make this an excellent choice for book groups as well as individual readers."

Review in *Jewish Book Council*
<https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/book/orphan-number-eight-a-novel>

"A sure book club pick and a strong debut, this title functions well on multiple levels and will appeal to a broad readership."

Review in *Lambda Literary*
<http://www.lambdaliterary.org/reviews/08/03/orphan-8-by-kim-van-alkemade/>

"This book is utterly unputdownable. At once atmospheric, disturbing and absolutely engrossing, it poses a host of moral questions; I fully anticipate that it will become popular with book clubs."

Review in *Historical Novels Society* https://historicalnovelsociety.org/reviews/orphan-8/?fbclid=IwAR3SB3PsoFdQqt1lgdfjkdok1ST2gmR0_Hc2u4xEOrOPvw72Mw4fCEbvkg4

"*Orphan #8* is a remarkable work, well rooted in some little-known history: the author also includes an essay describing the "true stories" that inspired her book. This novel is especially recommended for historical fiction readers, along with those interested in Jewish cultural history, and societal views of early 20th-century lesbianism and medical research—in short, a broad landscape of issues, superbly rendered."

Review by American Library Association's Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Round Table
<https://www.glbtrt.ala.org/reviews/book-review-orphan-8-by-kim-van-alkemade/>

"Revenge and forgiveness vie within Rachel, and the two genuine emotions will provide robust fare for book clubs that appreciate wise historical fiction."

Review by American Library Association Book Club Central
<http://www.bookclubcentral.org/2018/05/03/book-club-choices-orphan-8-kim-van-alkemade/>

"van Alkemade succeeds in bringing to light a fascinating and little-known chapter of history...and she vividly chronicles her heroine's pain, resilience and capacity to be honest with those who loved her, with those who betrayed her, and ultimately with herself."

Review in *Lilith* <http://www.lilith.org/articles/three-new-novels-on-family-on-betrayal-on-mystery/>

"ORPHAN #8 packs a very powerful punch and I just loved it. The novel is highly readable, which is a testament to the author, but also very thought-provoking; and I think readers are going to love the complexities of the story and Rachel's character."

Review from book blogger *Booking Mama* http://www.bookingmama.net/2015/08/review-orphan-8.html?fbclid=IwAR1SPB1-5_XLEZZuXFvfrBHZ6a7W4leo6ZpeLnijho41h6vWtlQPDGJo-m8

"This is undoubtedly one of the best books I have ever read and an exceptional debut novel."

Review from British book blog *For Reading Addicts* <http://forreadingaddicts.co.uk/book-reviews/kim-van-alkemade-orphan-8?fbclid=IwAR0nx-7L1diQ8kJQNzySxF18xMUXnFDJ7UV8hzyfnNmcpJuTdyd8vQzEdLo>

"Van Alkemade also contributes to the body of Jewish novels that focus on lesbian characters, as the development of Rachel's sexual identity assumes a prominent dimension over the course of the book."

Review in *The Jewish News of Northern California* https://www.jweekly.com/2015/09/04/off-the-shelf-historical-fiction-pulls-off-an-artful-feat-keeping-it-real/?fbclid=IwAR2DykJ_2D49BIHry7blbv6wd2i4DGkdzO9oYjAfXlu93d_1IFq0XnxOO9g

"This multi-faceted novel tackles broad issues such as Jewish spirituality, family conflict, and even institutional discrimination against female professionals, but in its essence, it is the story of two people brought together under extraordinary conditions early in their lives, then later forced to confront their respective demons while dealing with the here and now. *Orphan #8* is simply superb."

Review in Dallas Public Library's newsletter *Booked Solid*
http://dallaslibrary2.org/blogs/bookedSolid/2015/12/my-best-to-you-from-2015/?fbclid=IwAR1155728xA_LFCzrJCgO-140LzFkOoTejOwRYvXa2Z7764SGuGGjZP_FV4

"Van Alkemade has written a stirring, beautifully detailed novel."

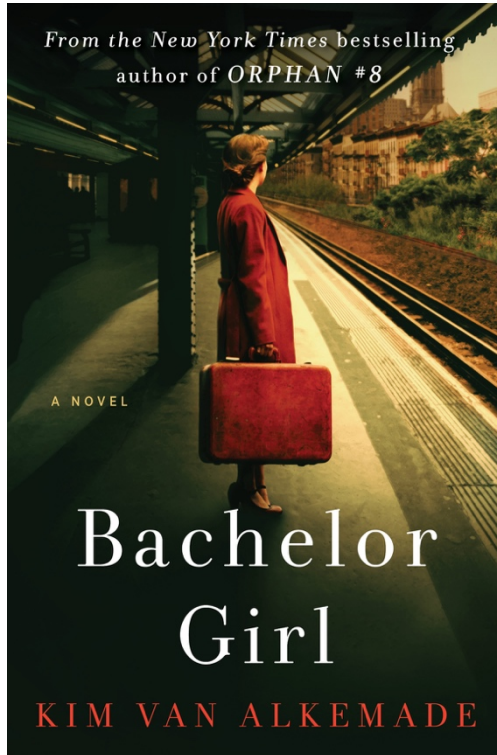
Review in book blog *Curled Up with a Good Book*
http://www.curledup.com/orphan_8.htm?fbclid=IwAR33TeqsLankH12ts17EztAxDado-XCUtovkXZv5JqzJrHKH9AjSr-zCsFA

Book Excerpt

Chapter One of *Orphan #8*

https://aerbook.com/books/Orphan_8-12921.html?social=1&retail=1&emailcap=0

Also by Kim van Alkemade



An actress in Jazz Age New York City finds the courage to pursue her professional ambitions, and her heart's desire, after an unexpected inheritance from the millionaire owner of the Yankees baseball team.

Literary agent for *Bachelor Girl*:

Mitchel Waters at Brandt & Hochman Literary Agents 212-840-5760 MWaters@bromasite.com

Publicist for *Bachelor Girl* at Gallery Books:

Sydney Morris sydney.morris@simonandschuster.com

Press kit including excerpt available at

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Bachelor-Girl/Kim-Van-Alkemade/9781501173349#reading-group-guide>

Television appearances for *Bachelor Girl*

In United States <https://www.abc27.com/good-day-pa/author-spotlight/author-spotlight-kim-van-alkemades-bachelor-girl/>

In Canada <https://globalnews.ca/video/4176340/author-kim-van-alkemade-talks-the-inspiration-behind-her-new-book-bachelor-girl>

Public reading from *Bachelor Girl* at Susquehanna University

<https://www.facebook.com/1413185932323716/videos/1079441985567907/>

Video trailer for *Bachelor Girl* https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=4r05MxXWX4c