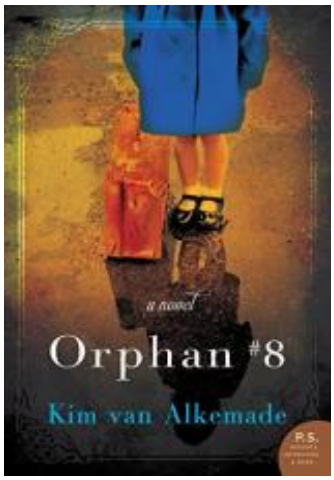
Orphan #8

by Kim van Alkemade



About the Book

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 15, 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 has 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 Rachel spends with the old doctor reveal 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, rich in atmosphere and based on true events, ORPHAN #8 is a powerful, affecting novel of the unexpected choices we are compelled to make that can shape our destinies.

Discussion Guide

1. Was Harry Berger wrong to run away? What might have been different had he stayed?

2. What might have been different if Rachel could have told her friend Flo the truth about her relationship with Naomi?

3. Was Dr. Solomon wrong to use Rachel in her experimental study of the X-ray tonsillectomy?

4. In what ways did the Orphaned Hebrews Home benefit the children who grew up there? How were the children affected by that experience?

5. Was it selfish of Sam to leave Rachel in Leadville with their Uncle Max? Why do you think Sam keeps leaving his sister behind?

6. If Dr. and Mrs. Abrams had known that Rachel was ?unnatural,? do you think they would have still been kind to her?

7. What do you think of the way Mrs. Hong treats Sparrow and Jade?

8. Is Dr. Solomon to blame for causing Rachel?s tumor, or should she be thanked for spurring Rachel?s discovery of it in time for treatment?

9. How have the medical attitudes about treating women with breast cancer changed since Dr. Feldman?s time?

10. Would Rachel have been justified in giving Dr. Solomon an overdose of morphine in revenge?

11. How do you think Naomi will react when Rachel tells her about the cancer and her upcoming surgery?

12. What other walls have people built around one another, or themselves, in the novel?

Author Bio

Kim van Alkemade is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose work has been translated into 11 languages. After a career teaching writing at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania, she now works at an independent bookstore in Saratoga Springs, New York, where she lives with her partner, their rescue dog and two feisty backyard chickens. UPSTATE is her fourth novel.

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