



CHOSEN DAUGHTERS

19th-Century Netherlands



Johanna and Henriette Kuyper

DARING TO CHANGE THEIR WORLD

ABIGAIL VAN DER VELDE

Johanna and
Henriette Kuyper



Wings Like a Dove
by Christine Farenhorst

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by Ethel Herr

Against the Tide
by Hope Irvin Marston

A Cup of Cold Water
by Christine Farenhorst

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by Simonetta Carr

Johanna and Henriette Kuyper
by Abigail van der Velde

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P U B L I S H I N G

P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

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Maps by Tom Carroll

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Velde, Abigail van der, author.

Title: Johanna and Henriette Kuyper : daring to change their world / Abigail van der Velde.

Description: Phillipsburg : P&R Publishing, 2017. | Series: Chosen daughters | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016058210 | ISBN 9781629952765 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781629952772 (epub) | ISBN 9781629952789 (mobi)

Subjects: LCSH: Kuyper, Johanna--Juvenile literature. | Kuyper, Henriette--Juvenile literature. | Reformed

Church--Netherlands--Biography--Juvenile literature. | Social action--Netherlands--History--19th century--Juvenile literature. | Social action--Netherlands--History--20th century--Juvenile literature.

Classification: LCC BX9479.A1 V45 2017 | DDC 284/.20922 [B] --dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016058210>

To my husband, Cornelius,
and our son, Adrian—

both born in the Netherlands,
both students of history

Then Jesus arrived from Nazareth, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, ready for action. He went through the country helping people.

—Acts 10:38 MSG

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

More people than I can name here helped me to write *Johanna and Henriette Kuypers: Daring to Change Their World*, and I am grateful to each one. The following people stand out:

Editor Melissa Craig suggested that I submit a proposal for the Chosen Daughters series and worked with me through the development of the story in bringing it to publication.

Peggy Hanna, friend and author, critiqued drafts, modeled perseverance, and reminded me why I write.

Sharon Dreskler, mother of six and homeschooler, read my work with enthusiasm and gave me wise comments on its content and appeal.

My sister Bonnie, my daughter-in-law Elizabeth, and her mother Darlene supported me over the long haul. My brother-in-law Jan invested in my work by sending me obscure books from the Netherlands for my research, reading drafts of the manuscript, and getting me in touch with Dr. George Harinck.

Dr. George Harinck, director of the historical documentation center at VU University Amsterdam, read the manuscript and suggested changes, connected me with members of Johanna's family, and encouraged me with his interest in the project.

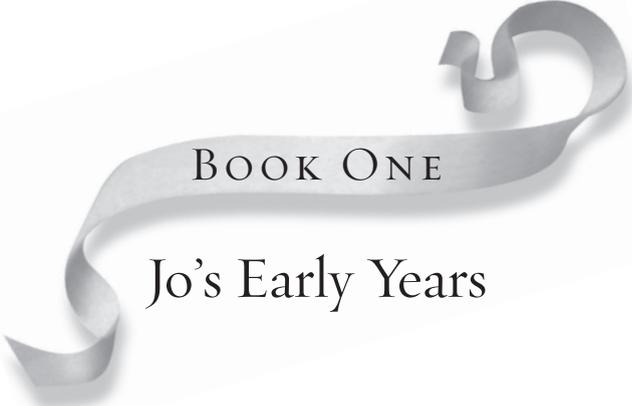
Mr. Hein Schaaïj, Johanna's great-nephew, opened his home and heart to me and the book.

Reverend Jitse Scheffer and his wife and daughter invited

me into their home for tea—the house where Johanna and Abraham Kuyper lived while he was the pastor in Beesd. Reverend Scheffer gave me a tour of the church where Abraham Kuyper preached and led me to the pew where Johanna sat every Sunday morning.

Friends at Grace Community Church, my Holland-America Club, and my neighbors brightened my days when they expressed eagerness to read my book.

The Lord guided and sustained me, giving me joy.



BOOK ONE

Jo's Early Years

I

TELL ME ABOUT DAVID AND GOLIATH

Jo pressed a hand to the windowpane. The dawn layered the sky in purple, yellow, and blue-smearred red, chasing the gray over masts and furled ship rigging in Rotterdam harbor. In the hushed back gardens of the Wijnbrugstraat houses, a wren sang from its perch on a frosted limb. The “little winter king” piped a joyful melody, gurgled a mixed-up prelude to a rising trill, gushed exuberant notes descending and then spiraling upward again. It trembled in the effort.

“Maybe it’s ov—” Jo’s words broke into chopped hacking as she bent, arms wrapped around her chest, coughing to bring up what never came. A wheezing followed the hacking into the lamplight of the disordered bedroom as she breathed a slow pattern and rubbed her chest in firm, upward motions. *Lord, you take care of that little bird, and you’ll take care of me.*

“Glad to hear that wheezing,” Jo’s mother said at the fireplace, where she twisted a towel over a bowl of hot water. “If the wheezing stops, we fetch the doctor out of his bed. It would not be the first time he has rushed to the Schaay family

in the middle of the night.” She shook the crimps from the towel, feathering the air with a delicate steam, and then laid it over Jo’s nose and mouth. “Breathe in and out as best you can,” she said, patting Jo’s shoulder. “After the towel comes the coffee. Hennie will be up with it soon—a labor of love. Your sister enjoys her bed on such cold mornings.”

Warm, damp air came through the flannel as Jo breathed in and out—like waves on the beach at Hoek van Holland. They come slow and steady there, the breakers foaming over the white sand almost to the footpaths through the dunes. *Lord, you put the waves in motion and set limits on how far they can go.* She breathed in and out, and at last the shaking rested.

“Coffee,” Hennie said, rushing into the room, her nightcap dangling askew and her long wrapper buffing the doorpost. “Can’t you time these attacks for the afternoon, when the kitchen’s not like an icehouse?”

“If I could, I would.” Jo took the cup and inhaled the aroma, roasted sweet. Measured breathing hushed her dread, and, when the coughs ebbed, a subdued wheeze resumed.

“Already your cheeks gain color,” her mother said, easing Jo back onto the pillow.

In the doorway, Jo’s father stood taller than most, his gray hair silver light. “How is my brave girl?” he asked, crossing the carpet of woven roses and ivy to sit beside Jo. “Since you have turned eleven, I hope you are not too old for a bedtime story.”

Jo curled into her father’s arm, a hand in his. “Tell me about David and Goliath.”



The clock in the hall chimed eight as Jo pulled the goose-down quilt to her chin and stretched in the warmth. Yawning,

she tossed off the quilt and announced to the wallpaper, “Slept most of the night!”

At that, a skinny-legged terrier landed on the bed to nuzzle her face.

“You little scamp,” Jo said, taking the pup tight in her arms in order to stroke a finger along his jaw. “Those dark eyes of yours are like black pearls, or a starless night, or—”

“If that dog is hiding in your room . . .” Jo’s mother called from the hall downstairs.

A firm grip on the terrier’s white snout, Jo waited.

“Send him down to the kitchen before you leave for the church.”

“Yes, Mama.” Jo dumped the pup on the floor, where he landed on his paws and began a circle-chase of his tail. She took up a two-month-old newspaper that lay on the bedside table. January 6, 1853. Boston, USA. A coupler on a train failed and sent all passenger cars down a frozen embankment. Benjamin Pierce, age 11, son of the new American president, killed. She removed the front-page news and folded it gently into a drawer.

The pup came again, eager for another circus. “Pesky little scamp,” Jo said, balling up a page filled with advertisements for shoehorns, lampwicks, and shaving cream. She tossed it high into the room; he caught it on the fly, trapped it on the floor between his front paws, and tore into it.

“Breakfast first, and then sewing class for me,” Jo informed the pup, who gave no sign of interest in anything other than ripping the newsprint. “Today I get to help the young pastor’s wife.” She filled the bowl at the washstand with cold water and then turned at a knock on the door.

“Miss Johanna,” Louisa said, peeking into the room. “Your

mother sent me up with this hot kettle. Hold your head over it for five minutes.” She plunked the kettle onto the washstand’s marble top and glanced at the carpet, where she saw the puppy and shredded paper—more work. She grabbed him by the scruff of the neck. “Go.”

Jo took Louisa’s arm. “Be easy on him.”

Louisa set the pup down. “You allow that scamp the run of the house.”

“If you give him a good reason to go, he’ll go,” Jo said. She massaged his ears to focus his attention and build expectation, and then, drawing out each syllable, she said, “Brat . . . wurst.”

The pup wiggled out of her hands, bounded out the door, and, with ears laid back, raced down the stairs while Louisa cleaned up the shredded paper. “That stray mutt thinks he belongs here,” she said, grumbling and stuffing her apron pockets.

At the dressing table, Jo pulled a towel over her head. As she leaned into the rising steam, drawing in the fresh-air scent of laundry soap and sunshine, clouded voices filtered up from the hall. And then her mother’s words came clearly: “Whatever you think best, doctor.”

“All necessary steps,” the doctor replied before the front door closed.

Jo dried her face and then opened the wardrobe, causing the tortoiseshell inlaid in the doors to glisten in the morning light. Pulling out a blue dress with spring flowers embroidered on the collar and cuffs, she asked over her shoulder, “Help me with the crinoline?”

“Raise your arms,” Louisa said, lifting a haircloth petticoat over Jo’s head. She tied the waist strings and adjusted

the heavy, stiff fabric, spreading it over Jo's hips and down to her knees. "Whoever came up with this absurdity should be jailed."

"Fashionable ladies would disagree," Jo said, working a loose strand of dark hair into the coil at her neck. Hair parted in the middle, rolled and pinned into a crochet net, she inspected her tapestry sewing bag and noted each of the contents: a pine box with lid and cherry-red wool fabric left over from a birthday dress. *I'll make a special box for all my cards and feathers and seashells.*

Downstairs, Marta turned from the stove and swiped her forehead as Jo came into the kitchen. "Miss Johanna, you're the last one to breakfast this morning," she said. "All your brothers and sisters are already out of the house. Except Hennie."

"Where's Hennie?" Jo asked, plopping onto a bench by the trestle table.

"She's in the parlor with your mother, waiting for you." Marta handed Louisa a breadboard with a fresh rye loaf from the bakery. "And that pup? Marched in here like he owns the place, but I got him. Dropped a bit of bratwurst, and out he went."

Jo eyed the back door, lips clamping back a grin.

"Good to see pink in your cheeks," Louisa said, slicing the loaf and nodding at the table before she set a boiled egg alongside two slices of bread and handed the plate to Jo.

"Not much appetite this morning," Jo said.

"Maybe for the last piece of my cake? Mama added currants and almonds to it for my sixteenth birthday."

"I never turn down some of Marta's cake," Jo said, "but you should have the last of it."

Louisa shook her head. "Watching my figure. Gerard's ship

docks next week.” She smoothed her skirt. “He might ask me to marry him while he’s in port this time.”

“You’re too young to marry,” Hennie said in the doorway. “Only three years older than I am.” She pulled a chair up to the table and settled her long, spare frame into it. “Wait at least ten years. If you marry so young, you’ll never have a life beyond tending children and keeping your husband happy.”

“There’s nothing wrong with that, Miss Hennie,” Marta said. “It’s the way the Lord made us.”

Jo nodded, worrying the cake glued to the roof of her mouth. She swallowed and then reminded her sister, “Hennie, you want to marry.”

“I didn’t say *never* marry,” Hennie said. “I meant to wait until the last minute to catch a husband.” She pinched a crust off the bread and popped it into her mouth. “Everyone agrees that twenty-seven is the age limit. After that, your bloom is gone, and no man will see your finer qualities.”

Her eyebrows knit tight and her chin bobbing, Louisa leaned into Hennie. “So you think I should go to parties and concerts and dances for the next ten—”

“You could get an interesting job,” Jo said, her eyes darting from Hennie to Louisa, “and work for a few years before you marry.”

“Of course. Naturally. No doubt,” Louisa said, bobbing her head.

“A factory’s hiring women to make waxed cloth like that expensive batik stuff,” Jo said. “I read it in the newspaper yesterday. That stuff is wildly popular, so workers earn bundles of money in Helmond.”

Marta’s hands flew up as her words flew out. “Helmond’s almost to Germany! Louisa’s needed right here.” She gave a

yank to the blue cotton stretched over her hips. “My daughter stays in Rotterdam.”

“Don’t fret, Mama,” Louisa said, brushing crumbs into her apron. “Gerard plans to get a job on the wharf. Life’s rough on board a ship, and he hardly ever gets a full night’s sleep for rats running over his blanket.”

“Rats wouldn’t bother me,” Jo said, “as long as I could travel the world.” She cracked the egg and spread the yolk over the bread. “If I were a sailor, I would go to America and stand at the foot of Niagara Falls and listen to the roar of all that green water cascading down the rocks.” She rippled her fingers from above her head down to the floor.

“Uh-huh,” Hennie said. “That idea is a few feathers short of a duck.”

Jo cast an arc with the egg spoon. “I would hike the grassy slopes of the Alps in Switzerland and sail to Italy to climb the leaning Tower of Pisa, and then to the great pyramids in Egypt and—”

“You read too many travel magazines,” Hennie said. “Think you can go everywhere and see everything!”

“And marry a handsome young man and get six children,” Jo said. “I’ll marry a sailor, and our whole family will sail around the world together.”

Chin in her hand and wisps of hair curled around her cheeks, Hennie’s voice softened as she said, “I want to see Robert Schumann conduct his third symphony and hear his wife play a concerto. Everyone says she’s marvelous. They’ll both be in Rotterdam before Christmas.”

“You should go,” Louisa said, “being such a good musician yourself.”

Hennie seemed to consider Louisa’s suggestion at length,

but then she said, "About waiting to get married—I hurt your feelings, and I'm sorry. Mother married when she was fifteen, and she's done all right for herself. You will too."

The hall clock struck the half hour.

"Nine thirty," Jo said, scurrying Hennie from the table.



A LOVING WIFE, A POLITICAL ACTIVIST, A FAMILY LEGACY

As the 1800s draw to a close and a new century begins, two women actively engage Dutch society. Johanna is a traditional pastor's wife eager to inspire and encourage her husband, the future Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper. Henriette is an international traveler, writer and speaker, advocate of women's suffrage, and wartime correspondent—among much else! Both mother and daughter break with custom and risk reproach—changing their world for good and for God's sake.

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GRACE ACCOMPLISH EXTRAORDINARY THINGS.

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—AIMEE BYRD, author of *Housewife Theologian*,
and her daughters Solanna and Zaidee

"There were moments when I had the impression that I was reading a story of my parents' family—how I was raised. I enjoyed reading this very much."

—HEIN SCHAAIJ, great-nephew of Johanna Kuyper

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ABIGAIL VAN DER VELDE was born and raised in North Carolina, lived in New York City, and then married a Dutchman and moved to the Netherlands, where she lived for eight years. After experience in both journalism and editing, she is now pleased to present her first book.


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BIOGRAPHY/YOUTH

ISBN: 978-1-62995-276-5
EAN
9 781629 952765 51299