

THE CHRISTMAS COMPASS



ALTA HALVERSON
SEYMOUR

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THE
CHRISTMAS
COMPASS





ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR

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A Grandma for Christmas (Norway)

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD SERIES

The Christmas Camera (Sweden)

The Christmas Compass (Netherlands)

The Christmas Donkey (France)

The Christmas Star (Norway)

The Christmas Stove (Switzerland)



The Tangled Skein
When the Dikes Broke



THE CHRISTMAS COMPASS



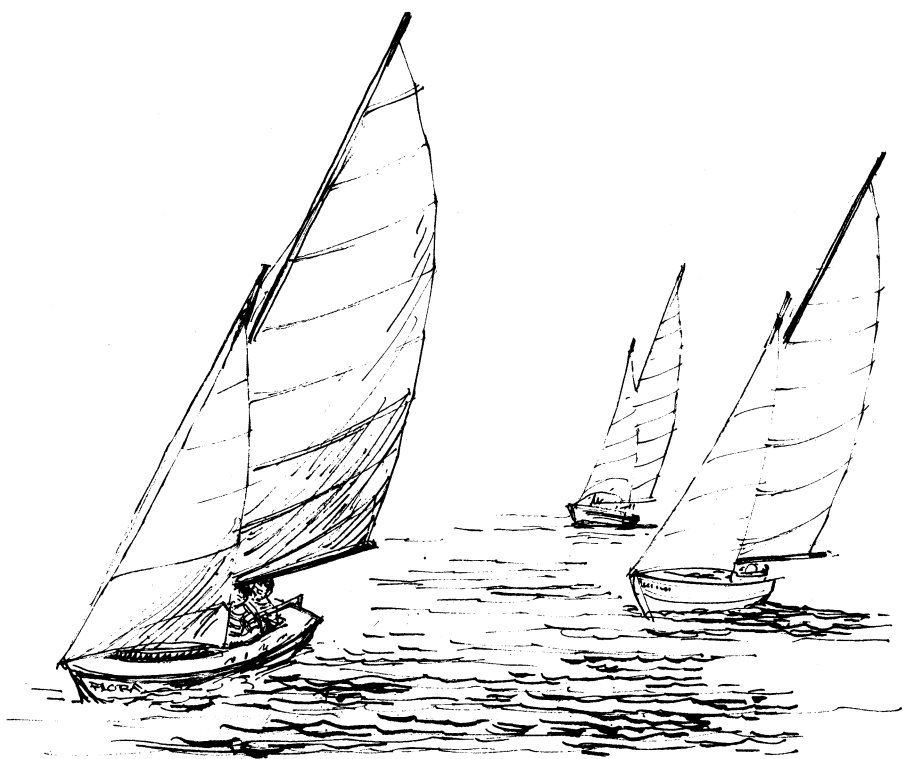
ALTA HALVERSON SEYMOUR

illustrated by W.T. Mars

Purple House Press
Kentucky

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MAIN CHARACTERS

WHOSE NAMES HAVE SURPRISING PRONUNCIATIONS

- Kaatje (KAHT-yuh) — this is Kaatje's story
Karel (KAHRL) — Kaatje's older brother
Annetje (AH-net-yuh) — Kaatje's younger sister
Kees (KAYSE) — Kaatje's friend
Jan (YAHN) — Karel's friend
Opa (oh-PAH) — Kees's grandfather

DUTCH WORDS

A FEW OF THE TRICKIER WORDS TO PRONOUNCE

- Vrouw (VROW)
Juffrouw (YUH-frow)
Mynheer (MINE-ear)
Heer (HEAR)
Tante (TAWN-tuh) — Aunt
- doorloopers (DOHR-lohperz) — skates
dubletjes (DUH-bull-chuh) — a tenth of a Dutch guilder
klompen (KLOM-pen) — wooden shoes
kwartje (KWART-yuh) — a quarter of a Dutch guilder
- kerstkrans (KAYRZT-krahnz) — Christmas pastry ring (wreath)
koekjes (KOOK-yuhs) — cookies
kokoskransens (KO-koz-krahnz) — coconut Christmas wreath
cookies
marzepein (MAR-shuh-pane) — almond paste and sugar candy
peperkoek (PAY-per-kook) — Gingerbread cake
poffertjes (POH-furt-yes) — miniature pancakes
rogge-brood (RO-hah-brode) — rye bread
speculaas (SPEE-cu-lahs) — crispy, spiced cookies

THE FLOWER FAIR AT BLOEMEN

“WHERE ARE YOU, Kaatje? Hurry up! Jan and Marta are waiting for us!”

Karel’s voice was impatient, and Kaatje picked up her unaccustomed full petticoats and clattered down the brick garden path as fast as she could in the wooden shoes which seemed so clumsy. “Coming!” she called.

Kaatje was as eager as her brother to get started. This was a great day. Their school had six grades, and today the three upper ones were going from the home village of Koopdam to the Flower Fair in the town of Bloemen, there to sing folk songs and do folk dances in the town market square.

For that purpose, their mothers had searched out the costumes of old Holland. The full petticoats and close-fitting bodice suited Kaatje’s sturdy little figure, and the pretty, starched white-winged cap was a becoming frame to her blonde braids and blue eyes.

The ballooning trousers and silver-buttoned jacket made Karel, with his square, determined chin, steady

gray eyes and the bushy yellow hair that he tried so hard to keep under control, look like a true Dutchman. And the wooden shoes, though a bit awkward, made a jolly noise.

The whole delightful plan had been the idea of their teacher, Juffrouw van Hoorn. For weeks she had been drilling them in the old songs and dances, and now she had written about it to her uncle, a member of the town council of Bloemen. Mynheer van Hoorn was so well pleased with her suggestion that he had sent them a very special invitation to sing and dance at the Fair, and offered to provide transportation by barge from the village of Koopdam through the canals to Bloemen.

It was very exciting, and Kaatje could hardly wait to be on her way. But when she had said good-bye to small Frans and Annetje, they had stood very still for once, looking so forlorn, their round blue eyes so wistful, that she had run back to comfort them. "Don't you mind," she whispered, giving each an extra hug. "Kaatje will bring you a present."

And indeed she felt very rich, for Uncle Hans, the bachelor uncle who was visiting them, had given her two whole guilders to spend on her trip. She wanted to use some for the delicious bars of chocolate filled with hazelnuts. But now, when she saw the looks of delight

on the rosy faces of her little brother and sister, she resolved to bring them something very special.

“What were you doing? Do you want to make us both late? We’ll have to run now!” said Karel. “Look out for those wooden *klompen*.”

Kaatje felt like making a sharp reply, but running in the wooden shoes and with the full petticoats kept her too occupied to talk. Karel always seemed to think he was the boss, and Kaatje didn’t like it. After all, she thought indignantly, he was only a year older—scarcely twelve—and he didn’t need to act as if he were her grandfather.

The barge waiting at the edge of the canal looked very cheery, with its orange and blue paint and its flying flags. Already school children were surging aboard, shouting greetings and laughing over the odd and quaint costumes. Everyone was in high spirits. For one thing, school holidays were rare, and for another, it was early morning of a bright spring day, and this was a very special occasion. As the barge began its leisurely progress through the canals, everybody began to sing.

Kaatje felt she would like to go on and on sailing through the rich green pastures where the fat black and white cattle grazed so comfortably. Here on the farms, she saw people wearing wooden shoes as they went



about their work, and she hoped they felt more comfortable in them than she did. It was fun to go through the villages with their small neat houses of rose-red brick, the house doors and shutters and sills painted red or yellow or green, the gardens with scrubbed brick paths and brightly painted garden gates. It made her laugh to see women scrubbing the tree trunks in their gardens as high as they could reach—just like Mother.

No doubt many of the trees so carefully lined along streets and canals had been planted by the school



children. At home in Koopdam, each school child had planted a tree to make up for the ones destroyed in the war. Juffrouw van Hoorn told them that all over Holland school children were doing the same thing.

And windmills—she counted dozens of those, though Karel told her that a good many were standing idle now that electricity was so widely used.

But best of all, to Kaatje's mind, were the flowers. The farther they went, the more flowers they saw. Flowers everywhere—in the gardens, in the windows,

carts of flowers for sale on village street corners, trays of flowers riding along on the luggage racks of bicycles.

“But just wait till we get to the flower fields,” Karel said, “then you *will* see something!” And indeed Kaatje’s eyes grew wider and wider, and she kept giving excited exclamations as they entered the far-reaching flower fields, bright with tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, and narcissi. Children here were cutting off flower heads and stringing them into wreaths. Juffrouw van Hoorn said they sold the wreaths for a few pennies, and it must have been so; for horses, dogs and people, and even automobiles were bedecked with them.

Kaatje had always thought Mother’s garden in the spring was about the prettiest spot in the world, with its gold and purple and crimson and bright red tulips, its rose and lavender and yellow hyacinths, its daffodils and crocuses. Now it was as if Mother’s neat little square garden had been multiplied thousands of times.

“It’s like a whole sea of flowers!” she exclaimed in delight.

“And it’s only in Holland you’ll see a sight like that,” said Karel with pride. He had come once or twice with his friend Jan de Groot, whose grandfather had a large bulb farm not far from Haarlem. “I’ve been here before,” he added loftily.

“I come this way often,” said Jan, who was a good-natured lad but couldn’t help boasting a little when he had such a good opportunity. “My grandfather can use my help. I’m learning all I can about flowers, and next year, when I’ve finished school in Koopdam, I’m going to the horticultural school in Haarlem.”

Kaatje only replied with a little sigh. Boys certainly had all the best of it. She never had any real adventures—not any that amounted to anything. The boys didn’t even take her along on their trips in Karel’s little sailboat. But she cheered up as she remembered that Karel had said they might take her this summer if she would help with the food. What she really wanted to do was help with the sailing, but she was very willing to go along on any terms.

Karel and Jan were always doing interesting things. Right now they were both absorbed in a small object which Karel had taken out of his pocket.

“What is it?” asked Kaatje, bending over to look too.

“Compass,” said Karel carelessly, but it was easy to see how proud he was of it.

“Where did you get it?” asked Kaatje curiously.

“Oh, Uncle Hans gave me some money for this trip, and I’d been saving some before. I’ve wanted one for when Jan and I go on sailing trips, and now I’ve got it.”



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD
NETHERLANDS



Ten-year-old Kaatje yearns for her older brother Karel's approval, but he acts like the boss treating Kaatje as if she's always careless and clumsy. Karel has all the adventures too, going on sailing trips and entering races with his sailboat.

When Kaatje gets left behind on the way home from a school trip, she falls into a canal and is fished out by a boy living on a canal barge. This leads to new friendships and exciting trips on the barge with his family.

Dive into this moving tale full of Dutch customs, family bonds, fun and adventure, ending with a traditional Dutch Christmas celebration. Don't miss out on the two newly added Dutch recipes at the end, gingerbread cake and speculaas cookies, which both Kaatje and Karel enjoy!



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