

The strong woman behind the first Belgian expedition to the South Pole

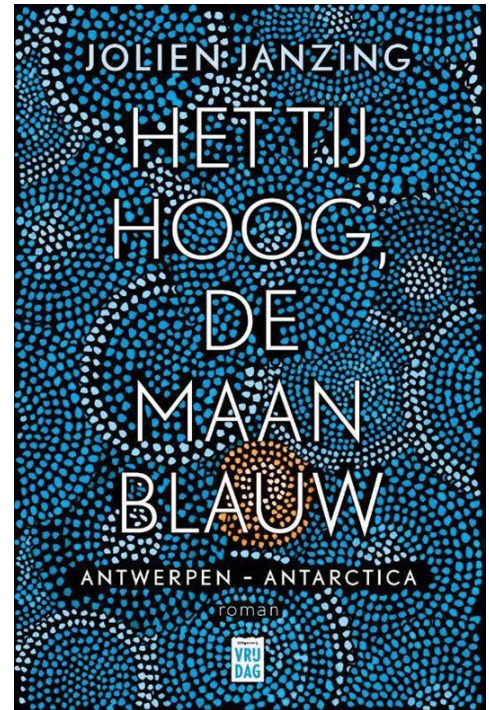
High Tide, Blue Moon

JOLIEN JANZING

Antwerp, late nineteenth century: Léonie Osterrieth, a cultured widow, organizes salons in her grand townhouse. Amongst her guests are musicians, writers and artists, but Léonie has a soft spot for explorers. She would love to travel to far continents herself, but despite her wealth her opportunities are limited as a woman. But what she can do is draw on her extensive network to help young Adrien de Gerlache embark on an Antarctic expedition. His dream: to be the first human being to overwinter on the South Pole.

Thanks to Léonie's lobbying and money-raising efforts, the three-master *Belgica* sets sail from the port of Antwerp. Adrien is the commander of the international crew, which includes the famous Roald Amundsen and Frederick Cook. On arrival in Antarctica, things start to go wrong: the ship gets stuck in the polar ice and the crew face a harsh winter. They survive by eating penguin and seal meat.

Drawing on the correspondence between Léonie and her entourage, Jolien Janzing reconstructs the experiences of captain and crew, making you feel as if you are there, but she also zooms in on those who are left at home and who can only guess at what is happening on the other side of the world. In doing so, Janzing gives Léonie Osterrieth the tribute she deserves. Without this emancipated businesswoman, bohemian and cultural lynchpin, the *Belgica* would never have reached Antarctica. And through this original and flamboyant protagonist the author manages to breathe life into the belle époque, which was known as much for its fascination with undiscovered land as for the straitjacket imposed on women. With plenty of vivid details and in an accessible and compelling style, Janzing reconstructs the most remarkable expedition ever undertaken from Belgium.



AUTHOR



Jolien Janzing (b. 1964) is a Dutch-Belgian author and journalist. She has had two nonfiction books published and made her debut as a fiction author in 2009. Her novel *Charlotte Brontë's Secret Love* has been translated into various languages and also made into a movie. At the beginning of 2017, her book *Audrey & Anne* came out, a novel about Audrey Hepburn and Anne Frank.

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