

# SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES

## 14. Dunes of Desolation



**MEIRING FOUCHE**

# DUNES OF DESOLATION

*by*

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## DUNES OF DESOLATION

by Meiring Fouche

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## SUMMARY

Madame Denise Ormonde, the beautiful wife of Pierre, a prominent geologist, finds herself alone in a remote Sahara camp. She is content with her luxurious, secluded life while awaiting Pierre's return from his oil expedition. Her tranquility is shattered by the sudden appearance of an unknown, menacing man in her room. He is filthy, with a wild beard, and wears the uniform of the French Foreign Legion. The intruder, apparently crazed, desires her. After a violent struggle, during which Denise defends herself with furniture and a revolver, she shoots him.

Teuns Stegmann, a tall South African and Legionnaire, plays a pivotal role as the leader of a small, secret mission to rescue Madame Ormonde. Along with Fritz Mundt, Podolski, Jack Ritchie, and Petacci, they are chosen for their bravery and knowledge of the Sahara. D'Arlan orchestrates the plan, suspecting that Koebikof, a cruel Russian and enemy of the Legion, is behind the attack on Pierre's camp. Through treachery, clever stratagems, and unexpected turns, Teuns leads his team through the perilous "Dunes of Death," where even experienced travellers sometimes lose their way. Tension mounts as they attempt to outwit the kidnappers, who also wear Legion uniforms, and free Madame Ormonde.

Teuns intends to mislead the kidnappers by pretending they are lost Legionnaires. With inventive plans, such as replacing the jeep's water with petrol, he tries to buy time and confuse the enemy. Teuns, with his strong leadership and tactical thinking, continually attempts to outsmart Dwinihof and force him to reveal his secrets. Dwinihof suspects Teuns possesses a valuable geological map that he desperately wants to acquire. Teuns plans to use this map not only to rescue Madame Ormonde but also to defuse a greater threat. However, the true danger lies not only in the enemy but also in the unpredictable "Dunes of Death." Is the map the key to survival, or the cause of their downfall?

## EXTRACT

But suddenly, the smile vanishes from Batar's face. She charges the first high dune, meticulously following the tracks the jeeps made earlier today. She practically flies up the dune, sending streaks of red sand flying through the air.

He also speeds up the dune, only to see that she is already over the crest and descending into the gully below. He pursues her at increased speed, and Batar realises he will have to try something different with this resourceful woman. He has gained some ground on her, but he doesn't know how he will force her to stop. He makes a decision that does not particularly appeal to him, but he knows it will be the only way if he wants to get his hands on her. He pushes his jeep even harder and gains further ground. He smiles once more as she tackles the next high dune, even higher than the one they just crossed.

Denise Ormonde glances back repeatedly to see Batar's position, and when she sees he has gained on her slightly, she unleashes everything the jeep has as she hits the foot of the dune. Her jeep roars deeper, swaying back and forth in the tracks carved earlier today by the jeeps. The speed of the valiant little vehicle rapidly decreases as it groans and roars up the steep incline. In the small mirror, she sees Batar has reached the base of the dune. He caught up quickly while her speed was broken by the dune's steepness.

# 14. DUNES OF DESOLATION

## Chapter 1

### UNEXPECTED VISITOR

Madame Denise Ormonde slowly drew the ornate comb through her luxuriant hair before the mirror. She was in no hurry, for time was abundant at this remote outpost in the southern Sahara. She combed her hair again and again. She applied makeup to her exquisite features with meticulous care. Her eyes shone with an inner contentment, and her complexion held the warm tan of a sun-ripened olive. Her shoulders shimmered softly in the late afternoon light.

She was a beautiful woman, Madame Ormonde, with her jet-black hair and her supple young body. And she was happy, even here in the Sahara, for her Pierre was a man to love. He was one of the most brilliant young geologists in France, earning a high salary from the French Petroleum Company of Paris. Their stay in this harsh part of the world was fortunately only temporary, just until Pierre had identified and demarcated these anticipated oil deposits beneath the masses of red sand. And once he had properly charted this subterranean wealth, they would return to Paris... to the splendour of the Champs-Élysées, to the gentle curves of the Seine, and to the nightclubs of Paris. Her beautiful eyes narrowed involuntarily as she thought of the sweet nightlife of the great city, of the fragrant nights, and of the song of a street singer near the Arc de Triomphe...

Besides, Pierre would receive a large bonus when they returned from here, and with it, they could perhaps undertake a journey, just the two of them, quite possibly to the Far East, which she had never seen.

Pierre... her Pierre... so large and strong and dark. How she longed at this moment for the embrace of his arms! How she yearned for the touch of his lips! "A true Frenchman. A perfect lover," she whispered to herself as she sat before the mirror. But it wouldn't be long now before

he and his small party returned from the sandy wilderness where they worked during the day. Strange, she was almost completely alone in this small camp when her husband and his companions were away. Then it was just she and the cook and one or two other helpers.

She glanced at her wristwatch. It was getting rather late. Her afternoon nap had lasted longer than usual today. What else could one do in this wretched heat but sleep?

Funny that Pierre wasn't back yet. He had specifically said he would come back a little earlier this afternoon. One of the fellows was having a birthday, and last week they received a case of champagne when the supply plane was here.

That was why she had put on this light, snow-white frock, which contrasted so sharply with her honey-brown skin, the sleeveless one that so delightfully bared her beautiful shoulders. It always stirred a strange and happy excitement within her when her Pierre came to stand behind her, letting his lips caress her shoulders, her nape... down her neck. And it always thrilled her when she realised how the other young men in the camp stared at her furtively and appreciatively. Sometimes she almost felt sorry for them, being the only woman in this camp, knowing how they yearned for female company. Perhaps it wasn't fair to the other men that Pierre had brought her here. It only intensified their longing, unnecessarily sharpening their desires. But, well, her Pierre couldn't manage without her for so long, and that's why he had brought her here for the three-month holiday.

An interesting world, this Sahara. She had only read about it in storybooks and magazines. But no storybook or magazine could make you comprehend the overwhelming heat, the blinding power of the sun here, or the indescribable beauty of the sunsets, or the exquisite sight of the early dawn.

Madame Denise Ormonde reached for the small bottle of expensive French perfume, removed the stopper, and dabbed a light touch behind

each ear, down her neck, and on the tip of her nose. Then she smoothed some of the delightful perfume over her sleek, shimmering hair, knowing that her Pierre would hold her in his arms for a long time tonight, his face buried in her hair, her young body soft and willing against his.

“Madame has beautiful hair... and your skin looks like sunshine...”

Denise Ormonde first startled before the mirror, and then she became furious.

It was a man who had addressed her, standing somewhere diagonally behind her.

Could this Algerian cook possibly have the audacity to enter her bedroom? Or could it be one of the helpers? She had told Pierre several times that she didn't trust the peace, being left alone in the camp like this when he and his party were away. But he had always maintained that these men were completely trustworthy.

Slowly, she slid open the drawer of her small dressing table, which Pierre had fashioned himself here. The small revolver with the mother-of-pearl handle lay there gleaming before her eyes. She reached her hand towards it.

“I wouldn't do that if I were Madame,” the voice came again from behind. “Madame is too beautiful to play with hidden weapons...”

Then the man laughed, a harsh, ugly laugh.

A deep frown furrowed Denise Ormonde's brow. It couldn't be the cook. She had never heard this voice before. Nor could it be one of the helpers, for she had heard them speak too. This voice was deep and resonant, yet with a strange barbarity in it. It was not refined or educated. It sounded like the voice of the wild.

She peeked into the mirror to see if she could catch a glimpse of his face, but he was apparently standing in the bedroom doorway, and from



there he wouldn't be visible in the mirror.

She wanted to look around, but she just didn't have the courage. It was as if her entire body had suddenly become cold and rigid, rendering her almost incapable of moving a limb. She sat staring, almost mesmerised, at the small white revolver lying so close to her fingers, but it was as if a dark hypnosis rendered her powerless.

"If I were Madame, I would close that drawer," the voice came again from behind. The words sang through her mind, lingering there.

"From here, Madame is the picture of perfect feminine beauty. The shoulders glisten. The hair shines... And what beautiful hair it is! Not too long, nor too short. You must be Madame Ormonde?"

The paralysis broke within Denise. "Will you please leave this room, whoever you are," she commanded in a small, fine voice, tilting her head back slightly.

The man started laughing again, harsh and cynical. "No, I am not leaving this room," he said. "I have come to visit the most beautiful woman in the Sahara... I wish to be treated like a guest."

"My husband will be back any moment now... Will you please leave the room?"

This time he laughed deeply and hollowly.

"I wonder if Madame's face is as lovely as your hair and your back and your shoulders... as your hips. May I not see Madame's face? I want to see if I heard correctly."

Denise tossed her head defiantly, her hair swinging iridescently. "Will you please go! My husband is returning shortly, and then I wouldn't want to be in your shoes."

"Your husband won't be back just yet, Madame..."

There was something in the man's voice that made her turn around

slowly, slowly and fearfully, as if expecting to behold some dreadful apparition.

And what she beheld made her recoil in terror. There in the doorway stood a man leaning against the frame. He looked like a giant, with a wild red beard and the glowing, menacing eyes of a madman. He wore the uniform of the French Foreign Legion, but what struck her was that he wore two gaiters. Over his shoulder hung a French automatic rifle, and in the holster at his side rested a heavy German revolver. His eyes were blue, yet not blue.

In their depths lurked fire and madness. He was dirty, and that uniform of his was rather worn.

“What are you doing here?” Denise asked whisperingly. “You have no right to be in this bedroom. Will you please go now. I don’t want trouble when my husband returns.”

“No, I have no intention of leaving, Madame Ormonde,” he said in his thick voice. “I am sure at this moment your body must be wonderfully fragrant. I desire you, Madame...”

He straightened up from his leaning posture and walked slowly, deliberately towards her. He moved slowly and ponderously, like a monster. With the threatening, latent power of a depraved colossus. Lust burned in his eyes, and a horrid smile made his red beard tremble.

Denise Ormonde stood up from the dressing table. Her entire being shuddered. She sprang aside and tried to dart towards the door, but he quickly stepped aside and, with a hollow laugh deep from his chest, blocked her path.

“I am not going to let Madame flee from this delightful boudoir,” he growled, grabbing for her. But she evaded his grasping hand, which looked like the hand of a gorilla. She rushed back towards the dressing table, but he was there with her, stamping shut the drawer containing her small revolver. Then he started laughing.

“Madame is alert, lively... Just as I desire it. A man must fight for his pleasure... That is what I believe...”

With a swift movement, she snatched up her heavy jewellery box and flung it at his face. This time he wasn't quick enough. That clumsy hand couldn't deflect it in time. The sharp corner of the box struck him on the forehead, and the next moment, blood slowly seeped down his wrinkled forehead, becoming a small trickle and flowing between his wild eyebrows.

“Aha!” he exclaimed, moving closer.

Denise Ormonde grabbed the chair that stood there, seized it by the backrest, and the next moment, she attacked him with it. She struck with all her might, and as she struck, she slowly retreated towards the door.

She might as well have been striking the trunk of a large oak with this chair. He merely held up his massive arm to ward off the blows. Two of the rungs broke with a crunch. Then a leg. Before she knew it, she stood holding about half of the light wooden chair in her hands. Her eyes were like fire, and her cheeks looked as if they were ablaze. Sweat glistened on her beautiful face, which she had made up with such care moments ago. Her black hair was dishevelled, and the beads of sweat made her shoulders glisten even more.

She hurled the chair at his face and simultaneously lunged for the door again. However, he flung the chair away with his left hand and, with his right, grabbed her by the low neckline of her dress, pulling her violently against him.

“We have played enough now, Madame...”

His body was filthy and sweaty. He pulled her tight against him, pressing his large face hungrily and yearningly into her fragrant hair.

Denise Ormonde screamed loud and high, fighting like a wildcat in his arms, hitting him in the face with her fists, kicking him, scratching, doing anything a woman is capable of when entangled with a repulsive

adversary.

It felt as if his grip was breaking her body. It felt as if his arms were squeezing the breath out of her. With short, furious sobs, she fought, twisted, writhed, grabbed his beard, and pulled with all her might.

But it was as if the man was in a strange ecstasy, as if pain no longer had meaning for him while he blindly fought to reach her lips. He just held her in his brutal embrace, her young body soft and warm against him.

She felt her strength waning. She realised how unbreakable his power was. She was aware that he was overpowering her step by step, panting and mute, just like an animal. As he fought with her, he moved her slowly towards the bed against the wall.

And then, in the depths of her blind struggle, Denise Ormonde remembered something Pierre had taught her one day when they barely knew each other – the way to handle a man trying to overpower you.

She suddenly went limp in his arms. She stopped fighting. The large stranger assumed she had surrendered, and then his moist mouth found her lips, causing a soft sob of revulsion and disgust to break deep from within her.

But this was the moment she had prepared for. She allowed him to be carried away by the soft wonder of her lips.

And then she thrust her knee upwards, swiftly and powerfully, as hard as she could.

The bearded giant gasped, screamed in pain, and then staggered away from her, his eyes wild and terrified. His body jerked forward, and he groaned in agony. Denise Ormonde didn't wait any longer. She sped to the dressing table, yanked open the drawer, and pulled out her revolver. With a trembling left hand, she swept the dark hair from her eyes, and with her right, she aimed the small revolver at the stranger standing there, bent over and groaning. There was a frozen expression in his