

SAHARA

ADVENTURE SERIES

37. Sword of Destruction



MEIRING FOUCHE

SWORD OF DESTRUCTION

by

MEIRING FOUCHE

and

translated, proof-reading and edited by
PIETER HAASBROEK

Published by:

TREASURE CHEST BOOKS - PUBLISHERS

Strand Mews

Strand

2025

SWORD OF DESTRUCTION

The cover illustration for the Sahara Adventure Series was generated by AI software, which enriches the narrative. This book is being released for the first time in English in e-book format.

The copyright for this story is reserved and may not be reprinted or distributed in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission. Reprinting includes any electronic or mechanical form, such as e-books, photocopying, writing, tape recording, or any other way of storing or accessing information. All characters and events in this story are purely fictional and have no connection to any living or deceased individuals.

SWORD OF DESTRUCTION

by Meiring Fouche

Published by:

Treasure Chest Books - Publishers, Strand Mews, Strand 7140
South Africa

Copyright @ Pieter Haasbroek (2025)

Online Store: <https://panther-ebooks.com>

Website: <https://www.softcoverbooks.co.za>

SUMMARY

The story commences in the French Ministry of War in Paris, where General Zelle is distressed by Colonel Pons's news that the Sword of Doetra has vanished. This sword, a symbol of power for the Arab peoples, has been stolen from its fireproof vault. General Zelle dispatches Dubois of the military secret service to retrieve the sword, and also sends a message to General Laval in North Africa to bring all garrisons to readiness for a potential attack. Meanwhile, Teuns Stegmann, a South African legionnaire, is on leave in Algiers, where he is seduced by an alluring dancer, Lola.

Teuns Stegmann is led into a trap, where he discovers that Lola is actually a Bonnet, the sister of El Karima and Brigitte, and that he has been captured to account for his role in El Karima's death. He learns that the Sword of Doetra, recently stolen, is being kept safe at the stronghold of the Doelak people. The narrative unfolds with Teuns in a desperate predicament. Not only must he save his own life, but he also realizes the consequences of the sword's disappearance and the potential large-scale war that could be triggered by it. Throughout, he must devise plans to escape from the clutches of the rebels while simultaneously attempting to steal back the sword before it can unleash a full-scale war in the desert.

Teuns Stegmann formulates a daring plan involving El Hakim, a captive aviation expert. He employs his ingenuity and expertise, constantly confronting the looming dangers, to gain as much time as possible and to plunge the rebels into confusion. His final plan relies on an appeal to Lola's conscience and a desperate attempt to escape with the Sword of Doetra. What secrets is Lola still concealing from Teuns, will she betray him again, and what other perils await Teuns Stegmann in the city of Doetra?

EXTRACT

The head of the guards moves towards the sound of running water. “Mademoiselle,” he calls, “where are you? In the bath?”

“Who is it?”

“It is the head of the guards here. I have orders from Her Highness to search your quarters.”

“Search my quarters?” Lola asks, somewhat indignantly, from the modern bathroom that Brigitte Bonnet had installed years ago here in the ancient Arab temple. “Why? Am I under suspicion?”

“No, mademoiselle,” says the chief, “a prisoner has escaped. A Legionnaire, and we know he must be on this floor. However, we find no sign of him. We were wondering if perhaps he might be hiding here in your living quarters.”

Suddenly, the bathroom doors open and there stands Mademoiselle Lola, her beautiful hair tied up high, dressed in a nearly translucent negligee.

The eyes of the guards, and of the head of the guards himself, nearly bulge from their sockets. She is an image of desirable beauty and feminine irresistibility.

“But, monsieur,” says Lola in her finest French, “what makes you think there is a prisoner here? I have been here the entire time. When did the legionnaire escape then?”

“Probably a little over half an hour ago, mademoiselle,” says the head of the guards.

37. SWORD OF DESTRUCTION

Chapter 1

THE SWORD OF DOETRA

Colonel Pons enters the office so swiftly, his face ashen white, that General Zelle looks up from his desk. It is a large and opulent office within the French Ministry of War in Paris. General Zelle is currently occupied with the morning's mail, as it is still early.

Colonel Pons salutes quickly and stiffly.

"Yes, Pons," asks Zelle, for he is a renowned man, and moreover very brusque and stern. "Why do you look as if you've just escaped the guillotine?"

"Mon General," says Pons, also speaking hastily in his high-pitched voice. "There is a matter of the utmost importance that I must discuss with you."

General Zelle leans back and regards his subordinate somewhat venomously. "What is so urgent now, Pons? Are you trying to tell me there's peace in Algeria, or has someone annihilated the French Foreign Legion?" There is a chilling sarcasm in General Zelle's words.

"Mon General," says Pons, "it is not that."

"Well, what is it, Pons? What is it, man? Has someone attacked the French Republic?"

"It concerns the Sword of Doetra, mon General."

Now Zelle is no longer jesting. His body stiffens, and he sits bolt upright instantly.

"The Sword of Doetra? What about the Sword of Doetra?"

"It has vanished, mon General."

A lightning bolt might as well have struck the office. General Zelle is instantly on his feet. He slams his fist hard upon the desk.

“You are out of your mind, Pons! How could the Sword of Doetra have vanished?”

“It is indeed so, mon General. I have just made the alarming discovery.”

“When?” bellows Zelle.

“It must have been a short while ago, mon General. I inspected the fireproof vault where the Sword is kept only the day before yesterday. Now it is gone. The fireproof vault has been broken open.”

“Mon Dieu,” exclaims Zelle. Then he snatches up his cap and baton and storms out of the office with Colonel Pons trailing behind him. Zelle trots down the corridor and then turns into the section of the building where all the French war memorabilia are kept and also important documents, certain weapons, and especially the Sword of Doetra.

Pons is on his heels, and when Zelle stops, bewildered, before the sturdy fireproof vault where the Sword of Doetra was kept for so long, Pons is beside him. No explanation is necessary. Everything is crystal clear to the grizzled general. The vault door has been burned through, apparently with a blowtorch. The vault still contains everything, except the Sword of Doetra.

General Zelle sighs. “This is a disaster,” he says. “This is a tragedy. I wonder what the outcome of this will be...” Then he spins around again and storms out of the place. He trots back to his office, leaps to the telephone and barks an order into the receiver.

“Dubois,” he thunders. “Tell Dubois to come to my office immediately. I want him here within two minutes. This is Zelle here.”

Less than two minutes later, Dubois of the military secret service trots into the irate general’s office. Pons stands trembling and pale to one side.

“You may go, Pons,” says Zelle.

Pons’s presence is actually no longer required, for he is practically just the custodian of the war memorabilia in the French Ministry of War.

“Dubois,” says Zelle, “I have bad news for you. The Sword of Doetra has been stolen. The fireproof vault was cut open. You know what this means.”

Dubois turns ashen. “The Sword of Doetra stolen?” he asks, emphasizing every syllable.

“That is what I am saying, man,” snaps Zelle. Then he leans forward, looking almost resentfully at the head of the secret service.

“Dubois,” says Zelle. “I am giving you an order now. I don’t care if you turn the whole of France upside down, I don’t care if you invade North Africa with an army, I want the Sword of Doetra back. Is that clear? I don’t care what means you employ. Nor do I care who gets shot in the process. All I want is the Sword of Doetra. It must not be smuggled out of this country, Dubois. It doesn’t matter what you do to prevent it. That is an order. Do you want it in writing?”

“I understand your order completely, mon General,” says Dubois. “I shall commence work immediately.”

“You must enlist the help of the French detective service, the help of the police, the help of all of France. That is all, Dubois.”

Dubois runs out of the office, for he knows Zelle. When necessary, Zelle is a reckless and relentless man. Within fifteen minutes, half a dozen experts from the secret service, as well as a few select experts from the French detective service, are in the office where the fireproof vault was broken open.

They search for fingerprints. They search for tracks. They search for the slightest indication that might provide them with a clue in this baffling drama. And while they are thus occupied, General Zelle stands before

a large map on his wall.

It is not a map of France. It is a map of North Africa. He is not searching for anything. He gazes at a small place marked in red on the map, encircled by a distinct blue ring. Within that blue circle stands a simple word. "Doetra."

It is situated in the Atlas Mountains. Zelle looks at it, not knowing why himself. He himself was in Doetra on occasion, and he knows what it looks like there. It is one of the ancient cities of the Arab people. It is almost inaccessible from the outside world. It is situated in a basin within the Atlas Mountains, a basin surrounded by perpendicular cliffs, so high, so steep, so smooth that, as far as is known, no person has ever succeeded in scaling them. And Doetra is accessible only from the Sahara Desert through a tunnel in the mountain, a natural tunnel guarded day and night at both ends. Thus, whoever is in Doetra cannot leave without being seen. And those approaching from the desert outside cannot enter without being seen. It is utterly impossible.

He stands there before the map and thinks of the significance of Doetra, the ancient city of the Arabs, the city of glory for the Arabs. He once read its history so meticulously, and it had interested him greatly. It was the greatest period in the history of the Arab people when they were ruled from Doetra. And as an emblem of their power, their glory, and their culture, one of the ancient kings had the Sword of Doetra crafted. A magnificent piece of workmanship. One of the most beautiful on Earth. A long sabre of pure silver, inlaid with the most exquisite precious stones. It is not only beautiful, it is also worth a fortune. But that is not the sole significance of the Sword of Doetra. Its significance lies in the fact that during the time the Doelak people possessed the Sword, they were virtually unstoppable. There was a time when they nearly annihilated the French Foreign Legion in the Sahara, but when the Sword was taken from them, they were paralyzed. They regressed and became a second-rate tribe. The French Ministry of War realized this when they dispatched a special expedition to North Africa to

retrieve the Sword of Doetra. It happened in a remarkable manner. In the French Foreign Legion, there is a South African. Zelle even remembers his name. His name is Teuns Stegmann. Here, standing before the map, Zelle can even visualize Stegmann's eyes. They are light blue. A tall, robust fellow with the physique of an athlete. Long ago, he succeeded in escaping from Doetra with the famed and inspiring Sword. The Arabs ambushed him during his flight, and he flung the Sword into a small oasis. He made a meticulous record of its location, and later, the Ministry of War was informed.

They sent a special military expedition, unearthed the Sword, and brought it to Paris, where it was placed under strict guard in a fireproof vault.

And now, the Sword of Doetra is missing. Zelle shudders as he considers this. It is no longer just a Sword. It is a symbol. A symbol not only for the Doelak people but for the entire Arab populace of North Africa. If it becomes known that the Sword of Doetra is once again in the hands of the Doelak people, then preparations can be made for one of the greatest eruptions ever witnessed between the French and the Arabs of Africa.

Recently, there has indeed been ferment among the Arabs. Something is stirring among them. And as the general stands there before the map, he thinks not only of a South African with clear blue eyes, but also of a remarkable woman, Madame Brigitte Bonnet, the white ruler of the Doelak people. He knows the history so well. First, it was her sister El Karima, the woman who led the Doelaks through so many victories years ago and who then died at the hands of the French Foreign Legion in the desert.

The general wonders if Madame Bonnet still possesses her youthful beauty or if she has aged through the years of hatred, for she surely hates the Foreign Legion more than any other person on earth. He wonders what she is plotting. And he wonders who is responsible for the removal of the Sword of Doetra.

The Sword suddenly becomes like a flame drawn across the earth, igniting everything in its vicinity.

Finally, the general turns from the map and returns to his chair. He sits down and summons his orderly. When the young man enters, an order cracks from General Zelle.

“I wish to send a special messenger to North Africa. Get one for me immediately. It is urgent.”

And that very same day, a secret military messenger departs by plane from Paris to Algiers. He carries a personal message from General Zelle to a small, dark, intense man behind a large desk at the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion.

He opens his case, takes out the message, and lays it before the short man.

General Laval, supreme commander of the French Foreign Legion, carefully opens the document and regards it with interest. It has been a long time since he last received a special message by courier from Paris.

The message is brief and forceful, but for Laval, it is fraught with dark significance.

All it says is the following.

Sword of Doetra stolen from the Ministry of War. Ensure all garrisons are at full strength. Ensure all forts are fully armed. Zelle, General.

Laval’s sallow face turns pale, and sweat breaks out on his forehead as he folds the order and asks the messenger to leave the office.

Within the next hour, all hell breaks loose in the Sahara. Just as it has broken loose throughout France. Radio messages are sent crisscross to the strongholds of the Foreign Legion in the Sahara.

A message is sent even to the furthest, most remote fortress in the sandy desert. The message is also brief and forceful.

Ensure garrison is at full strength and combat-ready at all times. Laval, General.

The commanders of the various strongholds receive the message with astonishment. They know nothing more. They do not know the reason. All they know is that their garrisons must be at full strength and combat-ready.

Laval paces around his office, firing orders at members of his staff gathered there. “Within the next twelve hours, everything must be ready. Every fortress must be at full strength and on a war footing. All guards must be doubled at all forts. All patrols must be recalled immediately. Where reinforcements are needed, reinforcements must be sent. Is that clear?”

And from Paris, Colonel Dubois is busy combing the entire country. He has also set his organization in North Africa in motion. There is a clamor and bustle to find the Sword of Doetra. But nobody knows where it is or by whom it is carried. All they know is that the entire Arab populace in North Africa sits waiting for the Sword of Doetra to appear.

In an Arab cabaret-eatery in Algiers sit five men blissfully unaware of all the activity throughout France and North Africa. They are in high spirits, for they are on leave. And when a man of the French Foreign Legion gets the chance to escape the heat, the flies, and the solitude of the Sahara for the bright lights, the women, and the sea of Algiers, then they do not think of danger or war, or even of their comrades left behind in the forts of the Foreign Legion. On such occasions, they live only for themselves. They try to extract all the pleasure from every moment.

These five around the round table in the Arab cabaret venue are exceedingly cheerful. They have already heartily indulged in the sweet Arab wine and they sit gaping at the exquisite beauties who appear each time with the most provocative dance performances on the small stage. One of them is the man General Zelle thought of earlier today when he stood before the wall map in his office. His name is Teuns Stegmann,