

SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES



5. THE FORT IS QUIET

Meiring Fouche

Translated by Andelene Brits

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NO. 5
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by Meiring Fouche and translated by Andelene Brits

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ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

“Andelene Brits was born in Paarl in 1966, the youngest of three daughters. I attended Paarl Gymnasium and matriculated there in 1983. After that, I worked in financial institutions. I got married in 1989, and I have three sons. I do not have grandchildren yet, only a lot of dogs! For the last twenty years, I have been a housewife. I have written many stories over the years but have never published anything, although writing is my passion. I love books and have a whole library in my house. I go and browse second-hand bookstores for treasures. My other passion is people, and I do charity work for those in need. There is not much more I can say about myself, just that what I am doing now is something I have been waiting for all my life to do. Deal with the written word. Words are power. Thank you.”

SUMMARY

The blistering heat of the Sahara desert provides the backdrop for Meiring Fouche's thrilling fifth tale, "The Fort is Quiet". The story follows three soldiers, Teuns Stegmann, Fritz Mundt, and Jack Ritchie, who find themselves transferred to the isolated Fort Laval as punishment after getting into a bar fight. As Lieutenant Juin and his relief column approach Fort Laval, they immediately sense something is amiss. The fort appears deserted, with gates eerily left wide open.

Venturing cautiously inside, Juin and two other soldiers are shocked to find not soldiers but a striking woman, Brigitte Bonnet, behind the commander's desk. Claiming to be the new authority of the fort, she promptly takes Juin and his men prisoner. They soon realize Brigitte is enacting a bitter plan for revenge against the French Foreign Legion for the death of her sister, the late Princess of the Dulacs, El Karima. Brigitte has the thirty soldiers locked in the fort's sleeping quarters without food or water to systematically weaken them for a cruel experiment. Soon bloodcurdling screams echo through the halls, as one by one, men are taken away for torturous experimentation with a secret poison gas weapon. Afterward, their bodies are disposed of and left for the vultures in the sweltering Sahara desert. When Teuns is selected next, Fritz and Jack are permitted one last trip for food and water before being shot dead in an "escape attempt".

Trapped and outgunned, morale plummets amongst the captive troops. Betrayal and madness threaten to tear them apart from within. It seems Brigitte has planned her revenge flawlessly. Yet as Juin counsels patience, hope still glimmers for the men of the Legion. As the remaining Legion men grow increasingly desperate, a strange tapping sound emanates from beneath their quarters' floor, suggesting they might have a secret ally. They hear the rhythmic sounds of Morse code. Is it a message for Lieutenant Juin? But who is behind this covert communication? And can it somehow aid their dire situation before all is lost?

Meanwhile, Brigitte continues her cruel agenda, denying water and executing more Legion soldiers to punish any misbehavior. The arrival of the maniacal Professor Benesj escalates matters further. Juin realizes they will soon all be marched into the desert for a massive live experiment under the effects of the horrific gas. With time running out and lives hanging in the balance, Juin desperately hatches a risky overnight plan. Can the garrison be saved in time? Will Brigitte's thirst for vengeance consume them all? As despair threatens to overtake the men and the desert sun climbs into the sky, the story builds to an explosive, unexpected climax where a fierce and bloody conflict will determine who lives and dies at Fort Laval.

With fluid action sequences, rich details of Legion life, camaraderie in the face of adversity, and a brewing love

story, “The Fort is Quiet” will keep readers enthralled until its thrilling climax. Thus step into the Sahara and experience an unforgettable tale of intrigue, bravery, and sacrifice. Meiring Fouche crafts a gripping and suspenseful tale that will keep readers anxiously turning pages. Grab a copy of “The Fort is Quiet” to experience this thriller firsthand! With vivid characters and nonstop intrigue, this book provides an addictive adventure that will stay with you long after the shocking conclusion.

EXTRACT

Juin grabs the doorknob, and the door swings open. With the pistol in his hand, he stands with his legs apart, and his eyes are burning. The other two step forward from behind and flank him, their rifles parallel to the ground, ready to aim.

The shock and amazement make their fingers uncurl from the triggers because here, behind the desk of the commanding officer of Fort Laval, one of the most beautiful women they have ever seen is sitting.

Her luxurious bush of hair shines like copper, and her eyes, with some amusement, are the color of the deep, green ocean, her lips soft and voluptuous but strict.

She is wearing the tunic of a sheik but without the headdress. Furthermore, the tunic is light purple, the color an Arab high dignity official would wear. Her skin is the color of an olive, and a huge red ruby glistens in the ring she is wearing.

Teuns Stegmann stares at her in total bewilderment, not only because of her stunning beauty but also because of something else. There is a chain around her neck, one he has seen before, and he stumbles in shock and disbelief. At first, he thinks it might just be a chain that looks like the one he knows, but then he realizes it is the same. He will swear to that.

She rises slowly from the revolving chair, stretches herself up to her majestic length, and a small smile plays on her beautiful mouth. Her green eyes are soft and seductive, but all three men instinctively know that the

devil himself hides behind those lovely green eyes.

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5. THE FORT IS QUIET

Chapter 1 THE QUIET FORT

Through the heat waves, it seems as if the dunes are swimming and floating, as if the very earth's crust is moving up and down and forming long, swaying folds in the boiling mass of the desert. It is already late in the afternoon here in the southeastern part of the Sahara. This was a terrible day, easily one of the worst days these hardened men have ever experienced while walking through the sands of the desert. Their foot soles feel just about cooked because of the baking heat of this long day that has even burnt their feet through their thick boots. The rucksacks are like lead on their backs, and they have difficulty seeing, as the sun's glare and the sweat from their brows have severely burnt their eyes. It seems like months since they left Dini Salam, although it has only been a few days. While walking through the desert, they experience such a sense of gloom that it feels like they have no tomorrow or future. They are dead to the world with no energy or interest in anything.

"If we should come across some Arabs now, they will be able to kill me with an oxtail," sighs Fritz Mundt, the biggest man in the French Foreign Legion. "They can do anything to me they wish, and I will not even be able to put up a fight."

"If I should find a bed now, I will sleep for a whole week," says Teuns Stegmann, the tall, blonde South African

walking next to Fritz. “I do not think I have ever been so tired in my life before. This is pure murder, this marching through the desert. It looks to me as if the Sahara is also trying to punish us, like the Legion.”

“Before you bury me, I would like to have a wiener schnitzel and a huge flask of Italian Chianti on ice,” Jack Ritchie offers his opinion. He is walking in the same row as Stegmann and Mundt. These two look sharply at the blonde Englishman as if he has committed a crime by conjuring up such a vision with his words.

“I do not think you have all your ducks in a row,” snorts Teuns Stegmann, “otherwise you would not have spoken such nonsense under these circumstances.”

“Have you lost your mind, Englishman?” Fritz explodes. “Do not you realize we are on our way to Fort Laval? Do not you know that we will have to survive for three months on dry bread, fruit, and tins of meat? Therefore, a law that prohibits any man from talking about food and cold wine while another man is dying of thirst and hunger should be implemented!”

“They should put them up against a wall in front of a firing squad,” Teuns suggests.

“I was only dreaming out loud,” says Jack apologetically. “If a man cannot eat and drink, he can at least dream about it, right?”

“The next time you start dreaming, do it in silence. We do not want to hear it.” Fritz spits out a piece of rolling tobacco into the sand. He takes out his flask and holds it in front of his mouth, but it is a futile gesture. All the water

is gone.

“You do not have to throw hints every time you want some water, Fritz Mundt,” Jack Ritchie admonishes him.

“You only have to ask.”

The German smiles at Jack as he hands him the flask.

“You might as well finish these last drops of water. You have already guzzled up most of my water,” says the Englishman.

“You have such a good heart. They should award you the Croix de Guerre,” Fritz mocks him, takes the flask from Jack, and takes a big swallow. “In any case, we should reach the fort at about twilight, and then we can have more water and eat some of those wonderful, nutritious stone bread.”

“The only thing that will work for you, Field Marshall Rommel,” Teuns tells the German, “is for them to send along a pack mule with two vats of water every time we go on patrol. You always finish our water but still do not have enough.”

“Or two kegs of beer,” quips Jack Ritchie.

Fritz kicks the Englishman on his shin and orders. “Stop it! It is bad enough to mention wine, but beer...! I will cave your head in if you talk about beer again.” He wipes the sweat off his big face.

“This is your entire fault that the three of us are currently walking here, Fritz Mundt,” Teuns reasons and adjusts the straps of his backpack because it feels like it is cutting through his shoulder blades. “If you had not hit that miserable yellow beak the other night, we would not have

been on our way to Fort Laval now.”

“Yes, he must always be different and cannot keep his paws off the Arabs,” Jack Ritchie adds accusingly.

“That was my business, and I did not ask for your help,” roars Fritz.

“If it were not for the two of us, those thugs in the bar would have killed you,” Teuns reminds the big German.

“And now we are sitting in his situation,” Jack continues, “three months in that hateful little fort at the end of the earth, miles away from Dini Salam.”

“Someone had to go and relieve the garrison anyway,” Fritz tries to defend himself because he feels guilty that the other two have also been sent to Fort Laval as punishment. And all because the three of them fought with the Arabs and cleaned the floor with them.

“Yes, but it did not have to be us,” Teuns emphasizes.

“There is enough riff-raff in Dini Salam that could have been sent to relieve the garrison.”

“We will get you back yet, Fritz Mundt,” Jack threatens.

“We might even throw some magic powder into your food.”

“He-he-he,” Fritz laughs raucously and wipes his face again. “Why are you guys so worried? We can rest for three months there because there is nothing else to do there. I have been there before. The only thing you can do there is to kill flies and sand fleas. Furthermore, you sleep and dream about the wonderful outside world, out of your reach, while you are dying of boredom and misery.”

“What does a man do for three months in this godforsaken