



SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES

8. BLOOD IN FRONT OF THE SUN

Meiring Fouche

Translated by Andelene Brits

The cover art is a dramatic illustration. In the upper left, a large, dark bird of prey, possibly a vulture or eagle, is shown in flight against a dark, stormy sky. Its wings are spread wide, and its talons are visible. Below the bird, a man lies on his back on a yellow, sandy ground. He has a bloody wound on his forehead and is wearing a patterned tunic and a red sash. A small, dark bird is perched on his right arm. The background is a bright, glowing yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall tone is one of tragedy and adventure.

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NO. 6
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by

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and

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BLOOD IN FRONT OF THE SUN

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

“Blood in Front of the Sun” is part of the exciting “Sahara Adventure series” chronicling the adventures of Teuns Stegmann and his French Foreign Legion comrades in the treacherous Sahara desert. Set against the blistering sands of the Sahara desert, this book is the eighth installment in the action-packed series.

This gripping tale follows the courageous Teuns Stegmann and his loyal band of Legionnaires as they find themselves embroiled in a deadly game of cat-and-mouse with the villainous Abdul Hoessein. Caught by the soldiers of the French Foreign Legion, Brigitte Bonnet, the influential leader of the proud Dulac people, must face execution at the French Fort, Dini Salam, in the Sahara Desert. This is the decision of the French Supreme Authority due to her involvement in the deaths of several Legion soldiers. The bitter task of attending the execution falls upon Teuns Stegmann, the blonde South African who played a significant role in her capture. When the influential Dulac leader Brigitte Bonnet stages a daring escape from her French captors, it sets off a chain of explosive events that will test the mettle of Teuns and his friends.

Bonnet swiftly enlists Hoessein to enact a devious plot for revenge against the Legionnaires who aided in her capture. Teuns and his comrades soon find themselves at the mercy of the vengeful Bonnet and the treacherous

Hoessein after being abducted in a surprise ambush. Brutally tortured by the sadistic Hoessein, Teuns, and his friends endure unimaginable hardship as they are dragged across the scorching sands toward Bonnet's desert stronghold. Refusing to break under the torment, the loyal Legionnaires hatch a bold plan to turn the tables on their captors and escape. But with Bonnet's forces closing in, time is running out for the embattled group.

Dodging bloodthirsty Tuareg raiders and battling dehydration and exhaustion, Teuns struggles valiantly to keep his men alive and evade the clutches of the infamous Dulac leader. Outgunned and outnumbered, the Legionnaires must rely on their wits and brotherhood to survive the perilous Saharan wastelands. As Teuns and his band of Legionnaires are pushed to their physical and mental limits, the desert becomes an unforgiving arena that will force them to sacrifice everything for the sake of loyalty and honor. Equipped with only their courage and Teuns' indomitable will, the men steadily make their way across the desert toward a final showdown.

"Blood in Front of the Sun" is a breathless tale of strength, sacrifice, and valor showcasing author Meiring Fouche's talent for adventure writing. With vivid descriptions of the harsh desert terrain, surprising plot twists, courage in the face of mortal danger, and heart-pounding action, Fouche crafts a white-knuckle thrill ride that will leave readers gasping until the final page. Can Teuns lead his

men to victory against impossible odds? Will the Legionnaires triumph against the evil forces allied against them? Find out in “Blood in Front of the Sun”, the next exhilarating chapter in the Sahara Adventure series. Overflowing with danger and drama, this is classic adventure storytelling at its absolute best. If you enjoy classic adventure stories full of action and drama, don’t miss “Blood in Front of the Sun”!

EXTRACT

Jack sags down on the sand and waits. He knows it is just a question of time. The exertion to have reached D'Arlan's jacket and placed it over his back has sapped his energy further. It feels like all his strength is gone, and he would not even be able to fight a vulture if his hands were loose. The sand burns his chapped lips, and he turns his head quickly. He struggles against a trance threatening to draw him into a deep, green abyss. He fights it because he knows the end is near if he succumbs to it. Hunger and thirst punish him with a new fever, and tears sting his eyes.

He hastily pulls his left leg up and jerks, but the only thing that happens is a pain coursing through his body. He does the same with his other leg, but then he realizes that it is futile.

Or is it? He turns unto his side and then unto his back. He first starts laughing and then crying.

"You low bastards!" Jack Ritchie shouts, and his voice is small and insignificant in this vast, silent desert, where the only movement is the crazy dance of the heat shimmer.

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8. BLOOD IN FRONT OF THE SUN

Chapter 1 DEATH AWAITS

The young woman with auburn hair and green eyes rises once more from the hard wooden bench and walks towards the small barred window. The cool night breeze flows through it against her face and caresses her hot cheeks. She looks outside at the twilight, slowly descending over the desert she loves so much and yearns for. First, she stares at the red ribbon the setting sun throws against the purple sky. Then she looks further to the south, where the sky is a deeper blue and the Atlas Mountains are situated.

Somewhere a clock strikes eight o'clock.

Slowly the clock strikes the hours, and it sounds to her like perdition.

She quickly shuts her beautiful eyes and lowers her head against the bars.

“One more night!” she mutters, and her hands close spasmodically. “Only one more night!”

Her forehead breaks out in cold sweat, and she can feel her hands shaking in disbelief and fear.

Now for the umpteenth time, she realizes that this is her last day on earth, her entire last. Maybe she will see the sun in the morning, or maybe not.

She turns away from the window hastily and returns to the wooden bench. She sits down and holds her head between her trembling hands. She feels the bouncing of her heart

and the blood pulsing like hammer blows in her temples. “The last night, the very last!” she whispers desperately, staring at the deep, grey granite of the cell’s walls around her. If she only had the strength, she would have pushed these walls over with her bare hands to be free once more, to feel the heat of the sun on her hands, to experience once again the cool caress of the desert wind on her burning cheeks, and to feel the rhythmic movement of a massive horse underneath her.

She hears the distinct words of the French general again, so clear as if he is uttering them right now in her presence. “The court of war finds you guilty, *Madame*. You are guilty of the charges of sedition, criminal incitement, and bloodshed. Tomorrow morning at sunrise, you will be executed by firing squad in this fort. Is there anything you would like to say?”

There were so many things she wanted to say and shout out to these French rulers, but strangely enough, even when the crushing words were still ringing in her ears, she was unable to say even one word back at them. She, who had led the warriors of the desert in so many bloody battles in the past, she who had had big men tortured until they had cried out like lost children, she who had done it all, then had nothing to say.

For a moment, she thinks about the Atlas Mountains and the big valley where the capital of the Dulacs is situated. She thinks about the big, cool palace where she had lived and remembers the submission of the wild desert dwellers she had commanded.

She thinks this only fleetingly, and then her thoughts return to the events of this day. The heat in the small hall of the barracks building, the tall French officers with their impressive uniforms, the questions, the cross-examination, and the accusations. She remembers the endless days she had spent in this cell before they had started with the trial. They had been long, lonely days that had crept past slowly.

She jumps up from the bench again and goes to the window. She grabs onto the cool bars with her hands and gazes at the evening light slowly deepening over the earth. There is panting in her throat, and sobbingly, she presses her face against the cold granite.

One more night!

Just one more night!

With the morning's arrival and the light coming, death will also come for her.

She weeps, and the tears roll down her cheeks. This was the first time in years she had cried. The last time she cried was when she found out that the French Foreign Legion had killed her sister, Karima, leader of the Dulacs, out here in the desert. That was the last time.

But now she cries because fear has made her a woman again. The warring cloak has been torn from her, and all her cruelty and anger have disappeared.

She is now merely a crying woman.

Night slowly creeps closer over the desert.

Morning is surely being born again over the sea to the east of here. The dawn of her death...

* * *

“Drink and be merry, brothers, because tomorrow or the day after, we might be killed.”

The loud voice climbs up over the drone of the many voices in the Arabian café. It is the voice of Fritz Mundt, the huge, blonde German and the most muscular man in the French Foreign Legion. His massive hand encloses the bottle again, and he fills up the four glasses before him.

“Prosit!” Fritz roars and lifts his glass in the air. “Prosit, boere chap!” he shouts once more and slaps Teuns Stegmann so hard between his shoulder blades that the blonde South African gasps for breath.

A small rebellion surfaces in Teuns’ blue eyes as he secretly looks up at the German.

“Keep your hands to yourself, big guy,” Teuns says. “If I should lose my temper now, I will hit holes in your carcass!”

“Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha!” Fritz laughs and tilts his big head backward. “Listen, who would like to hit holes in Fritz Mundt! Listen up!”

“I had seen it before when Teuns had slammed you into the ground, big guy,” Podolski, the Pole, says.

“He only has a big mouth,” Jack Ritchie, the Englishman, adds. “He can merely drink and brag. I swear little Petacci might still give him a hiding one day if he gets angry enough.”

“You guys are quite rebellious tonight,” Fritz complains. He puts his glass down and glances warily at the other three men. “Everybody wants to kill me.”

“You talk too much, big guy,” says Teuns, sipping the syrupy, tasteless wine. It is so sticky you want to gag from it.

“Why may I not speak?” Fritz asks.

“Mundt,” Podolski says sharply. “Have you forgotten that a woman will be executed here tomorrow? I do not think we are in the mood tonight for your extravagance.”

“Must be a big joke to him,” Jack Ritchie lashes out.

Fritz quickly wipes his hand over his big, bald head, and his eyes change. A deep frown furrows his brow.

“Could it be because of this woman that you guys are so dead tonight?”

He leans far over the table while asking the question. There is a profound shock on his face.

“She is not a woman. She is a witch.”

“That may be,” Teuns Stegmann admonishes him, “but she is still human, and tomorrow morning she will be shot to death.”

“She is a witch!” Fritz shouts and slams his hand hard down on the table. His eyes narrow, and there is tension on his face. He balls his fists.

“Have you forgotten what she has done to us? Have you forgotten how many innocent people she had sent to a horrible death? She is a danger in the desert! They should have put her against the wall long ago.”

“But, she is also a woman,” Jack Ritchie says, “and you do not shoot and kill women.”

“She has conducted herself like a barbarian,” Fritz hisses angrily and quickly drinks his wine.