

SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES

10. MADEMOISELLE JULIE

Meiring Fouche

Translated by Andelene Brits

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NO. 10
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by

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and

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Published by:

**TREASURE CHEST BOOKS -
PUBLISHERS**

Strand Mews

Strand

2023

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by Meiring Fouche and translated by Andelene Brits

ISBN 978-1-928498-87-2

Published by:

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

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

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

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 sands of the Sahara desert hold many mysteries and dangers, as Captain Gaston Lefevre of the French Foreign Legion soon discovers. Stationed at the remote Fort Laval with a small garrison of only 30 men, Lefevre receives devastating news. His daughter Julie has gone missing from a hotel in Dini Salam.

Frantic with worry, Lefevre requests to lead a search party to find Julie. But his request is denied by his superiors, who order him to remain at Fort Laval. Lefevre descends into an alcohol-fueled despair, dreading the fate that may have befallen his beloved daughter. Then a strange rider appears on the horizon outside the fort. It is a woman's figure rigidly perched atop a horse. The doll-like rider carries an ominous message for Lefevre. Julie has been kidnapped by the Dulacs, a tribe of brutal nomadic warriors. Their leader, Sheik Feisan, offers Lefevre a deal. Surrender Fort Laval and receive safe passage for Lefevre's garrison. Feisan will also return Julie unharmed. Refuse, and Julie dies.

Lefevre agrees to Feisan's terms, despite the protests of his men. He asks for a volunteer to retrieve Julie from the Dulac camp. Only the brave South African legionnaire, Teuns Stegmann, steps forward for the dangerous mission. But upon reaching the Dulac camp, Stegmann is captured. Inside the tent of Sheik Feisan, he comes face to face with the stunningly beautiful Julie Lefevre. Feisan

gives Stegmann only 15 minutes to return to Fort Laval and demand its surrender, or Julie dies. Stegmann never returns, but to Feisan's shock, Captain Lefevre himself appears out of nowhere. After taking Lefevre to the seemingly deserted fort, Feisan suspects treachery. He orders Lefevre to open the armory but there he only finds the weapons smashed beyond repair.

Lefevre has outwitted Feisan, but with Julie's life hanging by a thread, the true battle is only beginning. Danger lurks around every corner of the labyrinthine fort. As Lefevre and Stegmann fight to save Julie and evade capture themselves, they launch a daring gambit. With time running out, Stegmann disguises himself in Arab robes and slips into the Dulac camp once more on a secret rescue mission. Will he reach Julie before the Dulacs discover him? Meanwhile, can Lefevre beat the odds against thousands of Dulac warriors, alone? And what fate awaits Julie if Feisan's offer of safe passage proves yet another Dulac trick? Lefevre is caught in a terrible dilemma. Sacrifice Fort Laval to save his only child, or doom Julie to save his honor as a French officer? In the unforgiving Sahara, the stakes are life and death. Lefevre and Stegmann must match wits and weapons against Sheik Feisan's hordes and the stage is set for a dramatic final showdown. With Lefevre wounded and their ammunition dwindling, Teuns and Julie dig in to defend the commanding officer's office against endless waves of Dulac warriors bent on avenging their sheik's death.

Outgunned and outnumbered, their bold plan is the garrison's last hope for survival.

“Mademoiselle Julie” is the tenth book in the exciting “Sahara Adventure series” by author Meiring Fouche. Action erupts from the first page and will grip readers from start to finish with a breathtaking finale. This Sahara adventure story delivers thrills and heartache in equal measure. Amid the sweltering sands, who will emerge victorious, and can Lefevre ever be reunited with his beloved daughter? The answers await within this riveting tale of valor, duty, and rescue against impossible odds. Fouche weaves another edge-of-your-seat tale, set in the scorching Sahara desert in the early 1900s. The book has action, adventure, drama, and romance that will leave readers sweating like they're the ones fighting for survival in the sweltering desert heat. The author's vivid writing puts you right in the story as steely Legion heroes battle bloodthirsty Dulac tribesmen with an innocent maiden's life hanging in the balance.

EXTRACT

Teuns runs to the door and jumps out into the corridor. Some Dulacs are already running down the stone passage, their cloaks fluttering in the dim light. Teuns plants himself with his legs far apart and carries them with the automatic rifle's deadly lead. The last one dies long before anyone can reach the cross-passage, which leads to the armory and fort square.

On Teuns' order, Julie Lefevre comes running outside, and he grabs her hand. The two walk down the passage, with Julie, struggling and moaning in his grip. Teuns merely holds on to her, lowers his head, and pulls the hood of the Arabic cloak he is still wearing lower down over his face.

Julie had summarily thrown the heavy revolver down the front of her blouse, and she pretended to struggle and strain so convincingly, Teuns could not help but smile when he looked at her.

The Dulacs, who had heard the rapid salvos, come storming around the corner but stop once more when they see the tall man with the struggling woman.

Teuns stops in front of them with the struggling woman, and they stare at him dumbfounded. "What happened inside the fort?" they ask in surprise, looking at Teuns and the woman in turn.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. Strange Rider
2. Two Flags
3. Unexpected Guest
4. The Fort is Quiet
5. Surprise
6. Untimely Death
7. Mademoiselle Julie
8. Dangerous Venture
9. Four Bullets
10. Breath of Death

10. MADEMOISELLE JULIE

Chapter 1 STRANGE RIDER

Captain Gaston Lefevre, the middle-aged Frenchman with his grey temples and tired eyes, once more pulls the bottle of cognac across the top of his bureau towards him. He pours the drinking glass half full and gulps it down with two swallows. Then he leans forward, rubs his eyes hard, and shakes his head with impotent and desperate tension. Like during the previous four days, he involuntarily listens every second for when the door to his office will be opened and for the orderly to enter with a new message.

He rises and slams his fist down on the table in a fury. He is impervious to the pain caused by the hardwood, as alcohol has numbed all his senses. That is, except for the dull pain he is experiencing because his daughter has gone missing. Captain Lefevre pulls the radio communication message towards him again. He must have read it several hundred times during the past few days.

Commanding Officer Dini Salam to Lefevre Fort Laval. Your daughter, Julie, is missing from Europa Hotel. An extensive investigation is underway. I will regularly keep you posted. Colonel Le Clerq.

Just that and nothing more, and since he had received the message, they have sent a radio message every day,

saying that the search for Julie Lefevre continues.

And here he is, trapped in the fly-infested Fort Laval, hundreds of kilometers away from Dini Salam, with a small garrison of roughly thirty soldiers. And he, a captain in the French Foreign Legion!

But that is what a bottle of alcohol can do to a man... If your superiors think you are drinking too much, you get sent to a nest like this to hold the command of over thirty soldiers. You are sent to a remote part of the Sahara, the foremost post of the French authority, amid this immeasurable, unfriendly, and dangerous sandy wilderness.

Gaston Lefevre rises quickly, hobbles to the window, and stares over the desert. While he is squinting his eyes to cut the glare against the bright heat waves dancing over the sand swells, he wishes there was something he could do to look for his daughter. If only he could do something! But what could he do from this godforsaken and out-of-the-way place? He only has thirty men at his disposal, and he does not even have the faintest clue where she could be.

He grabs hold of the iron bars in the window, and for a moment, he feels as if he could break them out of the stone walls. He and his garrison would have been relieved a couple of days from now, and they would have returned to Dini Salam. There he would have met up with his only daughter, who had specially flown from Algiers to come and see him. After the death of his wife last year, Julie is all he has left now. The grey-haired captain hangs his head

and feels the tears burning in his eyes.

“What have I done to deserve this?” He gives a short gasp and tugs helplessly at the iron bars. He turns around and totters back to his bureau. Sagging down onto the chair, he pulls the cognac closer once more. Cognac is the only thing giving him hope and courage right now during this terrible crisis he finds himself in.

Yesterday he had asked permission by radio to lead a search party out of Fort Laval. He had been very aware of the fact that it would be futile, as he had no idea where his daughter could be, but he had been going crazy with the waiting... hour after hour, and day after day. The fear and uncertainty gnaw at him constantly.

The answer to his request had come through Paul Le Clerq, Commanding Officer of the main garrison in Dini Salam. It had been a short and pertinent refusal, accompanied by a strict order. Under no circumstances was he allowed to leave Fort Laval.

For that reason, Gaston Lefevre now pulls the cognac bottle closer again without taking the trouble of using a glass. Instead, he drinks directly from the bottle.

“Orderly!” he shouts in a very unprofessional way, and as soon as the frightened orderly’s head appears in the doorway, he roars. “Go to that damn marconis, and find out if there is any news yet!”

The orderly jogs towards the radio room. He thinks it has to be the hundredth time that he has to walk there without need, as every time a message comes through, the marconis immediately sends it to the commanding officer.

Moments later, the orderly appears apprehensively at the door of Lefevre's office and salutes energetically. "No further news, *mon Capitaine*," he announces humbly.

Lefevre starts laughing, and it is an ugly, cynical laugh. It is the laughter of a drunken man, echoing through the small office, hitting the walls, and drifting away in the heat. He struggles upright, slaps the cognac bottle from the bureau, plucks out his revolver, and shoots blindly through the window's iron bars.

The frightened orderly shut the door without ceremony and stood trembling still for a few seconds. He waits on the next outburst of the captain.

"Orderly! Cognac!" the captain shouts from inside the office, and he quickly runs to the officer's mess to get a new bottle. Upon his return, Lefevre's head is on his arms on the table. He slowly swings his head from side to side while repeatedly mumbling his daughter's name.

When he looks up and sees the orderly before him, he says very softly. "Julie... My Julie... She is all I have left."

"*Qui, mon Capitaine*" are the only words the orderly can think of. He cannot understand how this can be the same man... This man under whose command he had once fought his way out of an ambush by the Arabs.

That very same day, this Captain Lefevre had set an example for them with his death-defying braveness, and it had not been something one of them would ever make off lightly.

But although he is sitting here like a child now, with his red, dull eyes and trembling hands, the orderly

understands the situation perfectly. Naturally, therefore, he merely salutes respectfully before leaving.

* * *

Private Zoelak is a Russian. Once in Ukraine, he had dealt a blow to the neck of a communist commissioner with a shovel. After that incident, he reckoned the French Foreign Legion would be the safest place for him. At this moment, though, while patrolling in the scorching sun on the guard gantry of Fort Laval, he is not thinking about that long ago day next to the cornfields in Ukraine. Instead, at this moment, he thinks about what distorted miracle could have created the Sahara, this wilderness of heat, loneliness, flies, and hardships.

He looks sideways up at the sun. It cannot be too long anymore until he gets relieved. Sighing gratefully, his heavy boots beat a rhythm over the worn board of the gantry behind the battlements of Fort Laval. He is entirely unaware of the Lebel rifle hanging from his right shoulder and that he is supposed to stand guard. He can only think about the huge amount of money he owes Private Petacci, the small Italian man.

This afternoon, after he has finished with his guard duty, he will go and play some more cards. A full three months of his service pay had already been pawned to this sly little gambler, but this afternoon Zoelak wanted to try to turn the tables and win back some of his money. He is not prepared to fatten Petacci anymore with his own money! Zoelak makes his round on the south corner of the battlement, clicks his heels, and swings around. He stops