

SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES

1. WITCH OF THE SAHARA

Meiring Fouche

Translated by Chris Briston

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NO. 1
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by Meiring Fouche and translated by Chris Briston

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ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

“Chris Briston is a practicing attorney and member of the Law Society of the Cape of Good Hope. He matriculated from St Albans College Pretoria before obtaining a BProc. And LLB degree from the (then) University of Natal (Durban). He did his articles at De Klerk & Le Roux in Johannesburg and qualified as an attorney of the High Court in 1990. He has practiced for his account since 1999.”

SUMMARY

The thrilling adventure begins in the blistering Sahara desert, where a French Foreign Legion outpost finds itself under attack by a dangerous band of Arab raiders known as the Dulacs. During one bloody skirmish, a lone survivor tells a shocking tale, that the Dulacs are being led by a mysterious white woman. This news sends shockwaves through the outpost's leadership, who vow to hunt down this "Witch of the Sahara" and stop her reign of terror.

We follow brave Legion captain D'Arlan as he leads an expeditionary force into the desert to find the Dulac stronghold. After days of grueling march through the scorching sands, D'Arlan and his men finally reach an oasis village, only to find it deserted and polluted. It is the work of the merciless Witch. With their water supply poisoned, the Legionnaires find themselves on the brink of death from thirst. Just when all seems lost, the beautiful but deadly Karima appears to gloat over D'Arlan's predicament. She is indeed the Witch of the Sahara, a white woman who has rallied the Dulacs with promises of driving out the French colonizers. Karima offers the Legionnaires water and safety if they surrender, but proud D'Arlan refuses to yield. Teuns Stegmann, finds himself irresistibly drawn to the beautiful but dangerous Karima. What hold does she have over him, and will he betray his comrades? Will Teuns resist the Witch's spell and stay loyal to the Legion? Can the Legionnaires stop Karima

and her Dulac army from launching an all-out war across the Sahara? The chess match between D'Arlan and the Witch of the Sahara has only just begun with Teuns playing a key role in helping D'Arlan and his fellow soldiers.

Karima punishes D'Arlan for his stubbornness by condemning him and nine others to a horrific death atop the "Hill of Eagles," where they will be slowly tortured by the savage birds. One condemned man, however, an Italian named Petacci, manages to engineer a daring escape. Through quick thinking and heroics, Petacci frees the others, allowing D'Arlan to hatch a bold counterattack. With help from Arab villagers who also seek freedom from the Dulacs, D'Arlan launches a surprise offensive and turns the tables on Karima.

Filled with pulse-pounding action, thrilling chases across golden dunes, shocking twists and betrayals, and starring an unforgettable cast of heroes and a villainess for the ages, "Witch of the Sahara" by Meiring Fouche is a must-read for adventure lovers of all ages. This riveting book will keep readers hooked as they follow the French Foreign Legion's desperate campaign to crush Karima and her Dulac warriors. Fouche's masterful storytelling transports the reader directly into the action. Moving from bloody ambushes on the desert sands to inhuman cruelty in Dutra's lethal uranium mines, this is epic adventure storytelling at its best. Meiring Fouche expertly describes

the landscape and captures the essence of this lost world. This classic adventure tale will appeal to fans of Beau Geste with its perilous journey and timeless story of conflicted love. Combining romance, intrigue, and non-stop excitement against the backdrop of a brutal desert campaign, this book will leave you breathless and eager to continue the Legionnaires' saga. The Sahara adventure series continues with thirty-nine more exciting stories as we follow Legion heroes like Fritz, Jack, Podolski, and Petacci, and especially with the heroic, brilliant, and fearless South African, Teuns Stegmann, at the center of each story with nonstop action and adventure for book lovers of this genre.

EXTRACT

Two more eagles appeared, diving low across the men, and one clawed a nasty gash on Jack Ritchie's neck with its dangerous talons. He screamed short and loud from the pain. The other one imbedded its beak deep into the cheek of an elderly Russian who swore loudly. He wiggled his shoulders and tried to turn his bloodied face away from the mountain eagles' assault.

More and more came flying, screeching, swaying on their enormous rustling wings, and every time they attacked, the blood ran. The men swung their bodies backward and tried to kick the brutes, which only worsened their anger. "We are going to die, *Capitaine*," screamed the elderly Russian almost hysterically, and then he had to fight against a screaming eagle that had imbedded its talons into the poor old man's shoulders and head.

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1. WITCH OF THE SAHARA

Chapter 1

A WOMAN ON HORSEBACK

Private Podolski of the French Foreign Legion turned his back to the wickedly cold desert wind blowing from the distant Atlas Mountains and peered again to the East to see if there was any red sign of the day. He wished he was back in the barracks in Dini Salam, where he could have wrapped himself in a woolen blanket. But, unfortunately, Dini Salam was both a breeding ground for flies and an oven, where the Sahara sun mercilessly scorched you. However, it was still better than this lonely desert that wanted to finish you off with its heat during the day and shake you from the cold at night.

Podolski wondered what on earth had made him angry at the Russians. If he had not gotten mad with them because they had occupied his homeland, Poland, he would not have to stand guard in the cold wind on this god-forsaken dune. However, at his lonely outpost, he made a gesture with his hands, a gesture of acceptance. For what did it help to dwell on this now? He was in the French Foreign Legion, which was the end of it. The French Foreign Legion must guard the Sahara and its inhabitants.

“Cursed Dulacs,” sighed Podolski out loud. “If they did not get it into their heads to raid caravans, I would not have had to stand here now. So they must shoot the bunch of them, and then there would be an end to this nonsense,” Podolski bitterly said.

He felt a slight tingling down his spine and quickly swung around, carefully peering into the dark, trying to see if he could spot an enemy creeping up on him. However, it was still too dark to see well. So, he drew a circle around him on the ground with the bayonet he had attached to his Lebel rifle. Then he quickly swung the firearm around him again.

Because the Dula's were worse than cats, silent, virtually invisible when the light was faint and deadly, Podolski thought of that horrible night at the foothills of the Atlas Mountains when the Dulac assassins cut the throats of all a Legion's regiment's sentries before they knew what was happening.

But Private Podolski found nothing. Only the thin whistle of the wind blowing through the sparse scrub and desert grass growing here and there on the dune's crest.

If only the day would come, yearned Podolski. If only one could see. He could not understand why the commander in Dini Salam had not yet sent a proper expeditionary force against the Dulacs. They should have been wiped out long ago.

But the ways of the commanders of the Legion were beyond understanding. All they did each time was to send a small group of legionnaires to protect each camel caravan. As a result, several caravans had been eliminated by the bloodthirsty Dulacs just the previous week with their guards.

Podolski's musings suddenly stopped, and he felt utterly cold where he stood, even colder than the touch of the

dawn wind.

Could that have been the whinny of a horse?

He could have sworn that he had heard something. Something not far, perhaps behind the next dune, which now grew like a giant black whale in the dark before him, as the day moved slowly out from behind the earth.

Podolski immediately loaded the Lebel, doing it slowly and silently as they had been taught. He suddenly wondered how many hours he had spent in the awful sun on the parade ground to learn how to load a Lebel silently. There was only a slight click sound when he slid the bolt open and closed it. He stared at the dune in front of him, concentrating intensely on its dark crest. Then he turned slowly around in a circle, exploring the area around him. His trained ears are looking for the slightest noise... But there was just the hissing of the wind and nothing more. Perhaps he only imagined he heard something. Maybe his nerves were too tense.

If only it would become day, a day so clear you can see an enemy's eyes!

Podolski completed the circle and then stared eastward again from where the saving light of the day would come. And then Private Podolski, formerly of the Polish army and now an ordinary private in the Foreign Legion, suddenly stiffened as if he had been shot through the heart.

No longer aware of the singing wind. He was no longer feeling the Lebel in his cold hands and not knowing whether to breathe.

Because in front of him, on the crest of the red dune, black against the first thin glow of the day, stood a rider. Black as a statue. A still silhouette, threatening and motionless. Podolski swallowed heavily, moving his tongue over his dry lips.

“Dulac,” he whispered in the wind, almost choking on the word, so dry was his throat.

He glanced around him quickly, concentrating fervently. He imagined every shrub and clump of grass was an enemy, with the dreaded curved short dagger and the equally dreaded curved sword in their hands.

When Podolski looked east again, he saw others. They appeared on the crest like dark shadows next to the first rider.

And still, they came, one after another, until they all stood mounted on the crest.

The Polish private waited no longer. He jumped up and sprinted back to the camp that the few legionnaires had pitched in a circle around the camel caravan...

He ran hunched over to a small tent on one side of the camp. The camp was still quiet. Everyone was still asleep with one or two snoring, so Podolski imagined the Dulacs could hear them up on the dune. Here and there, a camel sighed, satisfied.

Podolski entered the small tent and shook the sleeping man lying on the cot bed by the shoulder.

“*Sergent, mon Sergent,*” said Podolski. “Dulacs, at four hundred paces eastward.”

The young Sergeant Lazarre almost pushed the anxious

Pole over as he jumped out of bed.

“How many?” he urgently asked as he grabbed his revolver’s holster and hurriedly belted it on.

“A good forty. There could be more. I did not wait,” Podolski said.

“*Mon Dieu!*” Lazarre said aloud, sticking his kepi on his head while rushing out of the tent.

“Wake up your comrades,” Lazarre commanded Podolski, “but do not fret. Maybe those heathens have not seen us yet. Could it be that they are passing us by?” But the young sergeant knew that he was being optimistic. Dulacs are among the best spies globally, and it would be a miracle if they passed by a caravan that lay here in the open between two dunes.

Podolski roughly shook the other legionnaires awake. Some protested and moaned at the invasion, but they all immediately got to their feet and grabbed their Lebel. Lazarre himself got in among the Arab hawkers and roused them quietly. Some camels protested loudly, and Lazarre felt as if he could hit their big mouths with the butt of his revolver.

While the camp silently woke up, some other sentries came running in.

“Form a circle!” commanded Sergeant Lazarre hoarsely in a stage whisper. “Number off so long.”

Forming a circle was the only tactic in the open when the Arabs would far outnumber the few legionnaires.

As the men form a circle, they numbered off. Then the even and odd numbers would take turns to fire,