

MASKED ROBBER SERIES

2. LONG LIVE THE MASKED ROBBER



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The Masked Robber Series

The cover sketch has been specially designed to match the theme of the Masked Robber series. It is a new creation for the cover of the book. This book is available in e-book format for the first time.

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LONG LIVE THE MASKED ROBBER
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SUMMARY

Escape into a world of adventure and intrigue in colonial South Africa with Gerrie Radlof's thrilling saga, "Long Live The Masked Robber." This epic tale whisks readers back to the Cape Colony of the 1800s, where a mysterious, masked vigilante known only as the Masked Robber fights for justice against corrupt officials and greedy landowners.

In this second installment, the Masked Robber has mysteriously disappeared after being presumed dead. But when injustice once again threatens the local farmers over slave emancipation, the gallant night rider shockingly reappears to support the oppressed. With his black stallion, two pistols, and sword at his side, the Masked Robber embarks on daring missions under the cover of darkness to stand up for the exploited. But his secret identity remains hidden to all except his close friends, who know him as the wealthy nobleman Count Jean de Moreaux.

Jean's heart also secretly belongs to the beautiful Willa Rossouw, though their love seems doomed by his vigilante activities. Meanwhile, tensions escalate between the farmers and officials, led by the cruel Captain Otto Mehrens. Mehrens will stop at nothing to destroy the Masked Robber and his righteous rebellion. After a young farmer, Jasper Boonzaaier, is captured and sentenced to death, the Masked Robber boldly storms the Castle to rescue him. But Mehrens and his cohort, Percival Phillip, soon weave a deadly trap to expose the Masked Robber's true identity. When Phillip deduces that Count de Moreaux is the Masked Robber, he kidnaps Willa to force the Count's hand. Torn between saving his love and protecting his secret, Jean races against time to thwart Phillip's evil scheme. But a shocking turn of events leads to an unexpected savior coming to Jean's aid. It is his long-lost friend Jacques, once the lieutenant of the Masked Robber's gang. With Jacques' help, Jean embarks on another thrilling mission to uphold justice and secure his future with Willa.

Brimming with adventure, drama, romance, and colorful characters, "Long Live the Masked Robber" is a sweeping saga that brings colonial South Africa to vivid life. Thus, experience the thrill of midnight

escapes, cunning disguises, and breathtaking sword and pistol fights. Follow the Masked Robber through the Castle's dungeons and over rooftops under moonlight. Journey across the wild landscape and colonial towns. Feel the pounding of hooves and the rush of pistols fired from horseback. Immerse yourself fully into this sweeping saga of romance, mystery, and adventure. Let Long Live the Masked Robber transport you to 19th-century South Africa for a legendary quest against tyranny. If you crave action, intrigue, and justice, then this Masked Robber's story is just for your reading pleasure to experience the ride of your life under the starry African skies!

EXTRACT

And then Jean hears footsteps in the hallway. A moment later, someone suddenly curses. He must have stumbled against the captain's body.

The footsteps come quickly towards the stairs. Jean waits a second longer and then pulls out the trigger of his pistol. The shot echoes in the night.

He hears the curse in the hallway and the sound of someone stumbling back. He pulls out the second pistol from his waistband and leans over the wall.

Hannes and Jasper are almost down. He has to wait. They dare not all hang on the rope at the same time.

Suddenly, his heart pounded tumultuously. From the darkness to his right, between the few houses down there, a troop of horse riders bursts forth. They stormed straight towards the men under the wall. He hears Klaas cry out in fright.

But then he sighs aloud. Most of the horses are rider less. Faithful Andre heard the first shot and brought the horses closer!

Jean turns around. There is now a buzz of voices and exclamations and hurried footsteps in the corridor. He jumps over the wall and hangs on the edge of the loophole.

He fires through the hole towards the corridor and hears someone scream. Then he puts the pistol back in his waistband.

"Come on, De Moreaux," someone calls from below.

He leaves the wall and slides down the rope. It rubs and burns his hands. About twelve feet from the bottom, he lets go of the rope and lands on his feet.

1. LONG LIVE THE MASKED ROBBER

CHAPTER 1

Behind a rock face against the slopes of the Hottentots-Holland Mountains stand three horses tied up under a large wild fig tree with knotty roots. Between the curved branches and shining leaves, the rays of the full moon flicker, casting a mixture of shifting half-moon patterns on the black, fertile soil.

The horses stand still, looking tired. Their necks are slightly bent, and the faint streaks reflect dull-bright against the sweat on their flanks. Closer to the cliff, on the left of the large wild fig tree that obscures the red glow of the camp fire from the direction of the valley, three men are squatting. They are discussing something seriously and are so engrossed in their discussion that they do not notice that the fire is dying out. A sharp breeze blows against their backs from the valley below, but they do not notice that either.

“Then we have to gather here against the slopes like thieves at night,” says the oldest of the three, Petrus Henning, shaking his dignified head to emphasize his deep disapproval of the regrettable state of affairs. The Stellenbosch farmer’s brown eyes are alert in their frame of fine wrinkles, and his bushy beard has a copper sheen in the flickering glow of the dying camp fire. “I do not like your kind of arrangements, Jasper.”

The young man stares at the glowing coals. His hair is slightly wild on his head, and his prominent chin casts a shadow over his mouth and cheeks.

“I know Uncle Petrus does not like this,” Jasper Boonzaaijer answers, his bright, mellifluous voice sounding apologetic yet not entirely conciliatory. “But Marthinus Wessels is in a cell in the Castle. The three of us have a great interest in him. If anyone sees us together now, they will smell a rat right away.”

“Yes, Jasper, but you are too hasty,” Uncle Petrus says. “We have to wait a bit. Let us first see what happens in court when Marthinus is interrogated.”

“No, uncle, that will not help us.” Jasper shakes his head vigorously. His grey-green eyes sparkle as he looks at the older man. “This governor has only been here for barely three months, and look at how

things are going! He simply agrees with everything Phillip says. I say, uncle, we will lose every penny of this hefty compensation for our slaves.”

Petrus Henning sighs deeply. He stands up and stretches his stiff limbs slightly. Then he squats down again and bends forward to deftly throw a piece of coal onto his pipe. He sucks for a moment, lost in thought. Then he speaks slowly.

“If our good governor were still here, things would not have been so bad. He might have sorted things out. But now every farmer on the eastern border is already busy moving, and many around here are also packing up. I really do not know what will become of us. I do not feel like leaving my belongings and my land, for which I worked so hard, so easily.”

“That is how we all feel, Petrus,” says the third man, Hendrik Wessels. He is a quiet, withdrawn man, the kind you would never expect to hold a grudge against his fellow man. His face is elongated and looks slightly weak at first glance. However, his eyes contradict that impression, they are bright and straight, and he looks directly at Petrus Henning while he speaks. “The farmers on the eastern border are moving, but there are too many of us here in the west who would rather stay and keep our property and possessions, even if it becomes difficult later.”

“And even if we have to fight, uncle!” exclaims the young Jasper Boonzaaier, his eyes flashing as if he wants to convince the camp fire too. “We have to fight for our rights. Waiting for hearings will not help us. It is all just eye-wash. Marthinus is just one of many of us who will have to follow the same path.”

“But not all agents are so bad, Jasper. Some will get our money from England and bring it to us. After all, the money is due to us for the slaves we lost. Marthinus was too hasty with his affairs.”

“He was not, uncle,” defends Jasper his friend. “The agent made Marthinus understand that he would only get a quarter of his money. He said he was already in contact with the offices in England.”

“Yes,” sighs Hendrik Wessels, “if only the Government would pay us the compensation here in the Cape. But to expect us to go to England to get the money is very unreasonable. What will happen to our farm in the meanwhile? It takes months to get there.”

Jasper Boonzaaier stands up impatiently. He kicks a stone in front of him so that it jumps into the embers and sends small sparks into the air. "Talking will not help us. Marthinus is his uncle's nephew and Petrus's cousin. He is my best friend. They are throwing him in a cell because he is fighting for his rights. We cannot do nothing about it!"

"Yes, yes, Jasper," Petrus Henning also stands up. "I understand that well. We have talked about it enough. I will accept any reasonable decision you and your gang of friends take."

Jasper answers almost grumpily.

"My friends are not crazy, sir. We are serious about this matter. It is an injustice against the entire farming community."

"And what are you going to do? You know that Marthinus will be shipped to England the day after tomorrow. They say it is a violation of an order from the British government and that the case should therefore be heard there."

"I know, sir. Klaas, Hannes, and Gerhardus are waiting for me near Wynberg. Tomorrow morning, as soon as the moon is down, we are going to get Marthinus out of the Castle!"

Hendrik Wessels jumps up, and Petrus Henning stares sternly at the young man.

"That is rebellion, Jasper."

"I know, sir, but it is the only way we will save ourselves. We have to act decisively. If we lie down under the yoke of these oppressors, we will never rise again."

Petrus Henning suddenly bursts out laughing.

"Oh, I see," he says, "you went to all this trouble just to get me and Hendrik's support. You already had your plans laid out."

Jasper looks guiltily at the coals.

"I am very concerned about Marthinus, sir. But we are young. We would rather act without you and Uncle Hendrik's support. You have influence over everyone, and the farmers will listen to you. With your permission, it will become a national issue and not just the irresponsible behavior of a few young men."

Petrus Henning and Hendrik Wessels now look at the glowing coals.

"We appreciate it, Jasper. God bless your undertaking," says Hendrik Wessels. "May your actions be to the benefit of this Colony, and may it

usher at the end of all the oppression and wrongdoing of this unsympathetic governor.”

Jasper Boonzaaier reaches out his hand and over the dying coals, he firmly shakes the hands of the two older men.

“We will try not to use violence. And now I have to go, Hannes and the others are waiting.”

After a few more words, they release the horses. The animals already look rested, and Jasper’s large brown stallion prances energetically around.

“If we are not recognized, I will arrive at uncle’s tomorrow. Otherwise, I will come to tell you where we are hiding later at night, and we can decide how to continue the campaign.”

A few moments later, the horses make their way down the slope, step by step. Down in the valley, Jasper waves farewell once more before urging his horse forward.

The stallion shoots like an arrow over the level road. The moon is bright and still high in the sky. In fact, it is light enough to distinguish every rock and bush in the path.

And Jasper Boonzaaier’s thoughts are far ahead of him. He thinks of Marthinus’s sister, Suzanne. Will her eyes not sparkle when she hears that he, Jasper Boonzaaier, freed her beloved brother from prison? And maybe... that kiss he has been longing for so long.

But those are not the kind of thoughts he should be preoccupied with now. Hannes, Klaas, and Gerhardus are waiting. He still does not know exactly how they will proceed. But tonight, Marthinus must be out of the Castle. And then the puppets will dance!

This kind of thing cannot go on. It must be stopped at some point, and that is what they are going to do tonight. After all, they stand on the side of what is right, they only demand what is rightfully theirs. Even if they have to fight! A free farmer is not born under a yoke, so why should he grow up under one?

Involuntarily, his thoughts go back a year or so ago when the peace and quiet of the Cape were disturbed by the raids of the mysterious Masked Robber, the hero of all the oppressed, the man who stole from the rich and gave to the poor, the rider on the black stallion who appeared like a ghost out of the night and ruthlessly frightened his rich victims into

giving up every penny, then reaching out his hand in generous benevolence to the poor and disappearing unexpectedly into the night. And then there was the commotion when Count de Moreaux arrived in the country, and the story went around that he was pursuing the Masked Robber. Suddenly, the Masked Robber disappeared, or rather, nothing more was heard of him. Then the roads of the Cape became safe again for the rich and government officials.

The wealthy Count de Moreaux, however, stayed in his large house on Buitengracht Street, and he is now courting the stunning Willa Rossouw. It is even said that they will soon marry. Deep down, Jasper Boonzaaier curses the nobleman with all his riches, for the only conclusion he can reach is that the same Count de Moreaux was responsible for the death of the Masked Robber. As far as he knows, the then-governor was also involved in the matter, but the good man has since been replaced by the current oppressor and tyrant who is causing all the trouble.

He wishes that the Masked Robber still existed! He would have tracked him down, no matter the cost of the search, and he feels sure that the benefactor would not have abandoned him and his friends. Jasper Boonzaaier shrugs his shoulders, he and his friends are now alone in the fight. They will have to make the best use of their strengths.

The moon has already sunk far to the west, and he still races tirelessly. The brown horse glistens with sweat in the moonlight, but as much as Jasper is attached to the animal, he does not spare it. It is Marthinus, his good friend and the brother of his beloved, whose life is at stake. And Jasper is convinced that it is a matter of life and death, life or death for the entire population of this small Colony! Not everyone can leave, and those who stay behind must fight for their rights. He and his friends will start the fight, and the others will follow their lead later.

When the moon had already sunk behind Leeuwberg, he rode among the trees into Wynberg. He is late for their appointment, but he has to speak to Uncle Petrus and Uncle Hendrik first. With them on his side, he can be sure of the support of almost the entire farming community of the Cape. And Klaas and the others will not mind either. They will be excited enough about the dangerous and exciting adventure that lies ahead for them.

Under a large oak tree, a horse is neighing. Jasper sends the brown horse there, and a moment later, he sees three figures in the shadows.

“Is that you, Jasper?” It is Hannes Burger’s voice.

“Yes, I am sorry, I am late.” Jasper dismounts from his horse and leads it to the others, for he has decided to let it rest for a while in case they need to get away quickly later on. It is very dark under the tree, and he can barely make out the shapes of the other horses. “Did you get a horse for Marthinus?”

“Yes.” Hannes Burger steps out of the shadows. His broad shoulders are clearly visible under the light linen shirt he is wearing. “What does Uncle Petrus say?”

“They are standing with us.”

“Ah.” Klaas Durandt steps forward as well, letting out a sigh of relief. His goatee and rough mustache emphasize his downturned lips. He truly feels relieved now, as he is always the most worried about the outcome of their undertakings, giving the impression that he carries heavy burdens. “Then everything is alright now.” And he smiles, something he rarely does.

“Is everything okay?” Gerhardus Marais exclaims, adding his thin figure to the others. He looks frail and small among his friends, but many have mistaken him for a young man with strong muscles. “Is everything okay?” he repeats indignantly.

The entire task is in everyone’s mind.

“It is just child’s play!” Klaas says. “I want to see the garrison that will stop the four of us tonight.”

“This morning, you mean,” Jasper dryly corrects him. “Come on, guys. The moon has already set.”

They mount their horses and set off at a brisk gallop towards Cape Town. Here and there at the farmhouses, they can already hear the first roosters crowing. They do not talk much, as each one is preoccupied with their own thoughts.

Behind Lion Mountain, there is still a dull glow, and the outline of the lion is clearly visible. They can hear the soft rumble of the waves in the bay, and where the Castle stands, there is a light.

“I think we should leave the horses here,” Klaas suggests, handing the reins. “They will make too much noise. There is still light in the Castle.”

“There is always light in the Castle these days!” Jasper replies. “There are always guards too. After all, we expected it, did we not?”

“Yes, but we do not have to warn them that we are coming,” Klaas argues again.

“For heaven’s sake, Klaas,” Hannes bursts out, “must you always make predictions? We dare not leave the horses here. We will need them if we decide to leave in a hurry.”

“Let us dismount,” Jasper commands, and his order is not disputed. “Let us lead the horses closer.”

About a quarter of a mile from the Castle, among a few trees and thick bushes, they dismount. The white beach is visible to their right.

“And now, no more chatter,” warns Klaas. “Stay quiet!”

They move forward in silence. Almost under the wall at the back of the Castle, they leave the horses in one of the outer streets. The few houses near them are silent and dark. They walk past the seaside of the Castle.

“Be careful now.” Jasper raises his arm and the others stand behind him. A faint light is burning at the Castle entrance in front of them. “There will be a guard at the gate.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I will walk ahead. Follow me until the corner of the fence and wait until I whistle. Like this.” He whistled softly and high like an owl. On their right, from the direction of the Parade, an owl responded. Jasper quickly looked in that direction, but it was pitch dark.

“What is that?” Hannes asked in a whisper.

“Did you hear that whistle?”

“It is an owl. So what?”

“You probably fooled the poor woman with your teasing,” Gerhardus said.

“It does not matter,” Jasper looked at them sternly. “As soon as you hear me whistle, follow me to the inner courtyard.”

He did not wait for an answer but crept carefully in the direction of the gate. After a moment of listening carefully, he peered around the corner. On the other side of the gate, a single guard stood against the wall. The light hanging from the roof cast a faint glow in the wide entrance. The inner courtyard was shrouded in darkness.

The guard stood with his back against the wall. The butt of his gun

rested on the ground next to him, and his head was drooping forward onto his chest. Fortunately, his feet were slightly apart, or he would have fallen over.

Jasper crept closer step by step. Now and then, he stopped to listen. But the Castle continued to sleep peacefully. Only once did the man stir slightly, and Jasper hesitated uneasily before suddenly lunging forward on his toes with the barrel of his pistol firmly gripped in his hand.

Without a trace of remorse, he raised his hand, and with a dull thud, the butt struck the sleeping man on the back of the neck. Jasper caught the limp body in one arm and the gun in the other hand. He first let the soldier sink to the ground before laying the gun against the wall on the ground.

He quickly looked around before taking the unconscious guard under his arms and dragging him around the corner into the dark inner courtyard. Furthermore, he also looked around there, but everything was shrouded in darkness, and a dead silence prevailed. Then the rumors about the many guards were not true. Only the one at the gate. Perhaps the governor was not even aware of the dangerous mood in which the farmers found themselves.

He let out a sigh of relief, then jogged back and picked up the guard's gun. Suddenly, behind him in the inner courtyard, he heard a sound like the bolt of a door sliding open. The sound echoed hollowly through the quiet courtyard.

Jasper stood frozen in his tracks. He listened intently, but everything was quiet. And yet, the silence was ominous to him now, and he was aware of the hundreds of dangers that could lurk in the darkness."

Then he sneaks back to the farmyard. He looks in all directions but sees nothing. Maybe it was just his imagination. But no, the sound was too clear and distinct. Perhaps it was the cold morning air that caused a door to snap shut on the latch, making a noise. He tries to reassure himself, but he does not entirely succeed in shaking off the feeling of unease.

High and yet softly, he hears the call of the night owl, and like shadows out of the night, his three friends rush through the gate to join him. At the same time, he hears the answer from the female owl, but the other owl is now much closer. However, he does not have time to think about it.

“What now, Jasper?” It is Klaas Durandt. His lips show more pessimism than usual, but his hoarse whisper is nonetheless excited. He is ready for any daring venture.

“We will have to look for the guardroom. I think it is one of the rooms on either side of the gate.” Jasper thinks for a moment. “If there was only one guard, he may have had the most important keys on him. Let us take a look.”

He quickly searches the pockets of the motionless figure of the unconscious guard.

Behind him, his three friends stand. Gerhardus and Hannes are keeping watch, but Klaas Durandt has his back turned to them. His eyes wander over the dark farmyard. He can barely make out the outlines of the buildings in front of him.

Somewhere in here, the governor sleeps, the man who has incurred the hatred of the entire farming population with his ill-considered actions. Everyone thought he was aware of it and lived in a degree of fear, surrounded by soldiers, to sleep soundly at night. And here are four young men walking easily through the gate to rescue their friend! The governor is probably not as scared as they think, or maybe he is aware that rumors of his numerous guards are circulating and is therefore at ease.

“There is not a single key to be found on the man.” Jasper’s impatient whisper intrudes on his thoughts. He turns around. Of the four, he is the only one with his pistol in his hand.

At that moment, a door on their left bursts open. A bright, blinding light shines in their eyes, and before they can recover from their shock, another door on the other side of the gate opens. The entire area is suddenly illuminated by the two lights shining on the four young farmers from both sides.

The four friends stand as if they are petrified. Gradually, they become accustomed to the light, and then they see the two men, one in each doorway, standing with their lamps raised and other soldiers rushing through underneath their arms to surround the four with their rifle barrels menacingly aimed at them. Altogether, there are ten soldiers, along with the two holding the lamps, and even they have pistols at the ready in one hand.