

MASKED ROBBER SERIES

2. LONG LIVE THE MASKED ROBBER



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THE MASKED ROBBER SERIES

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LONG LIVE THE MASKED ROBBER

by Gerrie Radlof

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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!

EXCERPT

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.

2. 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 Boonzaaier 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.