

# **MASKED ROBBER SERIES**

3. THE MASKED ROBBER AND HIS GANG



# **GERRIE RADLOF**

# THE MASKED ROBBER AND HIS GANG

*by*

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### **THE MASKED ROBBER AND HIS GANG** by Gerrie Radlof

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## SUMMARY

Step into the thrilling world of the Masked Robber, a mysterious vigilante who fights for justice in the Cape Colony of the 1800s. In this third installment of the popular series, the Masked Robber finds himself in a web of intrigue and danger as he takes on new foes who threaten the safety of the colony.

It all begins when the governor attempts to appease the warring tribal chiefs on the Eastern border with gifts, much to the dissatisfaction of the local citizens. Sensing injustice, the Masked Robber emerges from the shadows to campaign the oppressed colonists against the governor's plans. Slipping into the forbidding depths of the Castle's torture chamber, he stages a daring rescue of his faithful servant. Yet greater dangers await as he becomes entangled in the machinations of the unscrupulous Captain Grattan and his accomplice, the smuggler Gibbons.

Posing as the newly appointed captain of the garrison, Grattan has insidious plans to entrap the Masked Robber. But he hasn't counted on the courage and cunning of Marcus D'Southy and his sister Sylvia, who find themselves unwitting pawns in Grattan's schemes. With lives on the line, unlikely alliances are formed as the Masked Robber and his followers race against time to thwart Grattan and uncover his true motivations. From the lamp-lit streets of Cape Town to the windswept Eastern frontier, the action never lets up. Narrow escapes, surprise twists, and moments of tenderness between the Masked Robber and his allies punctuate the non-stop drama. Through it all, the Masked Robber relies on his wits, athleticism, and sense of justice to evade the governor's forces and turn the tables on his foes. But will it be enough to save the colony from turmoil?

Brimming with adventure and suspense, this book transports you to a long-ago era of chivalry and danger. As the Masked Robber's breathtaking exploits unfold, you'll understand how his legend came to inspire the oppressed. Strap in for a sweeping saga of bravery, sacrifice

and last-second reversals that will keep you guessing until the final page.

## EXCERPT

A few moments later, the first gunshots rang out. The group of guards in front of the gate moved in that direction, but then one called out that they were not allowed to leave their posts. They turned back.

Shortly after the first gunshots, a great commotion broke out inside the Castle. People and soldiers shouted at each other, and then footsteps of men who were quickly approaching could be heard through the gate. Grattan, with Krause on his heels, emerged. He looked in the direction of the wagons and then called for a group of the inner guards to follow him. Grattan turned around and shouted over his shoulder.

“You guard stay here in case any of the Castle’s inhabitants want to come out, stop them because it may be dangerous outside!”

Then they ran forward to take up position at the wagons. Jean turned to Jacques and whispered softly.

“This D’Southy does not seem stupid,” he said, “but the poor man will have to learn quite a few lessons tonight.”

### **3. THE MASKED ROBBER AND HIS GANG**

#### **Chapter 1**

It is late in the year 1834. The Southern Swan has already been away from England for two months, and in the faint rays of the setting sun, it now appears to be lying still on the water, not far from the Cape of Good Hope. Indeed, the outlines of Table Mountain are already visible through the mistiness of the sea. But around the ship, the sea protests with small foaming breakers against the wind, and the heavy masts bend almost under the weight of the graceful, white-bellied sails. Groaning, the vessel moves forward, but it keeps pace with the movement of the waves so that the girl by the railings gets the impression that they are anchored on the vast expanse of water.

Sylvia D'Southy's eyes are dreamy, fixed on the beautiful scene before her. She is barely aware of the movement of the large ship and the gentle wind playing with her golden, shiny hair. Her blue eyes reflect the blue of the sea and sky, and her delicate, facial features are blooming with the healthy outdoor air in which she has lived for the past two months. Lost in thought, she watches the approaching mist in which her new home lies.

Footsteps behind her interrupt her train of thought. She recognizes them immediately because she has already spent many pleasant hours on board in the company of Edward Hastings. There were only three passengers on the heavily loaded cargo ship, so they were mostly reliant on each other's company. She and her brother, Captain Marcus D'Southy, both like the wealthy young man and were therefore delighted to have him as a fellow traveler.

She looks over her shoulder and smiles warmly. Hastings comes to stand next to her and rests his hands on the railing while he looks at the dull lines of Table Mountain and Lion's Head for a moment. Then he turns to her and smiles in her eyes.

“So, Sylvia,” he asks in his mellifluous, deep voice, “are you excited?”

She does not answer immediately. Once again, she feels that pleasant glow pass through her as she looks into his dark brown eyes. She is aware of his black hair and sunburned features, his slightly high cheekbones that give an almost Eastern look to his eyes, and his nose that protrudes above his thin, firm lips. His broad shoulders rise above his thin waist, but they do not give the impression of strong power. It is as if they rest comfortably on his body, with only a slight indication of the muscular strength that lies within them.

Her attraction to him lies in that half-hidden masculinity that is reflected in his entire posture. She is now again aware of the mystery that always lurks in his eyes. It seems as if you can only ever grasp a small part of this man’s thoughts and feelings. Your knowledge of him will ultimately remain superficial.

Finally, she answers dreamily. “Of course, I am excited, Edward. How else if you had to travel almost halfway around the world to reach your new home?”

“It will not be forever,” he consoles her. “After Marcus has distinguished himself in the colony, you can return to your parents’ home, and he will, of course, be quickly promoted.”

“We no longer have a parental home, Edward,” she says softly.

“I am sorry, Sylvia.” There is indeed a sound of regret in his voice, but, as always, it is as if there is no feeling accompanying the words. And that is precisely what makes him so interesting to her. She never knows what is going on inside him.

“I sometimes forget that your parents are no longer there.”

“It does not matter,” she replied more cheerfully. “We are already used to it.”

“And where Marcus goes, you go?” he added with a laugh.



“He is all I have,” she said softly. “It was not difficult to say goodbye to my friends and family when he got the appointment as captain of the Cape garrison. In fact, I decided without hesitation to go with him into the unknown. It may be difficult at first, but as long as we are together, I am happy.”

“I will be there too, of course.” He looked into her eyes and for a second, he could see the fleeting emotions in them. Then she looked down to hide the faint blush on her cheeks.

He immediately looked away and laughed cheerfully, giving her a chance to overcome her embarrassment.

“Anyway,” he exclaimed, “the journey is finally over, right! We can go ashore early tomorrow morning.”

From the bow of the ship, the captain approached them. He saw them standing against the railing and joined them.

“Miss D’Southy. Mr. Hastings.” He nodded politely and greeted them in his customary semi-formal manner. They returned his greeting and he continued.

“Well, I have finally got you close to your destination, even though it took a bit longer than I expected.”

“It was not your fault, Captain Wycliffe,” Hastings objected. “As far as I could tell, we sailed through at least ten areas of calm.”

The captain laughed.

“Be that as it may, I am in a hurry now! With this wind, I will be able to make good progress, that is, if it holds. Unfortunately, we will not be able to go ashore tonight, but I will get you on land early tomorrow morning and then leave shortly after noon. I do not really have any business to attend to in Cape Town, and besides, we still have sufficient supplies on board.”

He looked back to the north where the breeze was coming from, and

then to the west where the sun had already set. “But come, let us have a final toast together before we eat.”

In the corridor leading to the captain’s quarters, the young lieutenant, Marcus D’Southy, joined them. He was neatly dressed in the full uniform of the British Colonial forces. The gold embroidered knots on the shoulders of his red jacket stood out brightly against his blonde hair. He had the same delicate facial features as his sister, but his broad jaw testified to his determination and willpower. Nevertheless, he was unaware of his attractiveness, but his entire demeanor was proud of the high rank he had achieved at such a young age. He was especially proud of his rapid promotion because he knew that his noble lineage had nothing to do with it.

A while later, the four of them are sitting in the captain’s spacious cabin. Marcus and his sister sit next to each other on the soft couch right under the long window. To their right, in an armchair, sits Edward Hastings, and behind his desk sits Captain Wycliffe. In front of him, on a large tray, stand a few bottles of wine and four glasses.

After offering each of them a glass, Captain Wycliffe raises his own. “I drink to the pleasant journey we have had together and to the future.”

They empty their glasses, and Captain Wycliffe continues. “Usually, my journeys to the East are monotonous, sometimes even boring, so I was pleased when you requested to accompany me.”

“Fate sometimes forges unexpected friendships,” philosophizes D’Southy.

“Yes, and tomorrow, Captain D’Southy, you will surely resume your duties at the Castle, but for you, Mr. Hastings, an unknown period lies ahead.”

“Yes, Captain,” Edward Hastings lowers his head for a moment. “I am afraid to think of the future. My brother has disappeared so completely that I can only hope he is still somewhere in the Cape Colony. It has

been almost two years since I last heard from him. Anyway, I feel it is my duty to search for him.”

“Perhaps Captain D’Southy can still assist you. He will have considerable influence and be in a position to aid you in the search.”

He stands up to refill the glasses. D’Southy waits until he has sat down again and then, while looking thoughtfully at the red sparkling liquid in his glass, says, “I will, of course, do everything in my power to help you, Edward, but I do feel a little apprehensive about the responsibility that awaits me. As I understand it, there is much unrest in the young colony. The tribes in the east continually harass and loot the settlers at will. From what I learned in London, this is largely the fault of the frontier farmers themselves, but I reserve judgement until I can get first-hand information. Furthermore, I understand that the farmers in the Western Province are very dissatisfied, and there are apparently frequent protests against the government. Anyway, I have rested so well during this journey that I feel like a bit of hard work.”

“Yes, Captain D’Southy,” adds Captain Wycliffe, “I do not envy your position, but,” he chuckles slightly, “I do think that you might get a bit of help from other quarters.”

“What do you mean, Captain?” Sylvia asks immediately.

“I am actually being a little sarcastic now. I am referring to that mysterious Capetonian, the Masked Robber.” He remains silent and looks at the questioning expressions on his guests’ faces.

“The Masked Robber?” Sylvia asks. “That almost sounds like some kind of pirate.”

“Well, not really a pirate, but a bandit.”

“But, Captain,” said Marcus, “you speak as if this man is an established resident of the colony. As a bush robber, he should have long been behind bars!”

Captain Wycliffe laughed cheerfully. “Captain D’Southy, I must tell you that I’m not very knowledgeable about the matter. I often stay a few days in Cape Town on my way to the east, and that is when I hear the stories. In my opinion, and I base it on those who do not pay attention to rumors. The Masked Robber is merely a legend. However, whenever a robbery takes place in Cape Town, there are always people who want to drag this mysterious name into the matter.”

Sylvia D’Southy’s curiosity was now aroused. She looked excitedly at the captain. “You are not telling us everything!” she exclaimed. “A legend will be forgotten unless it is kept alive in some way.”

“Absolutely right, Miss D’Southy. In this case, however, it is kept alive only by word of mouth and, as I already told you, by the fact that when crimes occur that cannot be solved, they are attributed to this legendary figure. I mentioned it precisely because there was a similar incident some time ago. It is also related to the dismissal of the previous garrison captain and indirectly led to your brother getting the job.”

“But then you must tell us about it,” Sylvia insisted. Before Captain Wycliffe could answer, Edward Hastings interrupted them. All three looked surprised at him, immediately noticing the intense tension in his voice. They also now noticed for the first time that his hands were tightly gripping the arms of his chair and that his face was as white as a sheet.

“You completely reject the possibility that the Masked Robber still exists?” he asked slowly.

Captain Wycliffe did not answer immediately but looked intently at the young man. “If you perhaps associate your brother’s disappearance with this...” Before he could finish his sentence, Sylvia interrupted him.

“Edward!” she exclaimed, “You surely do not think that your brother has become a bush robber in Cape Town?”

Edward Hastings tried to laugh off her words, but it was clear that he