

**DESERTER
IN
ALGERIA**



JOHAN NEL

DESERTER IN ALGERIA

by

JOHAN NEL

and

translated, proof-read and edited by
PIETER HAASBROEK

Published by:

TREASURE CHEST BOOKS - PUBLISHERS

Strand Mews

Strand

2024

2

DESERTER IN ALGERIA

The cover sketch was designed using the AI-powered tool DALL-E 3 (openart.ai). This sahara book is now available for the first time in ebook format and in the English language. The translation was completed with the help of AI tools such as ChatGPT (chatgpt.com).

The copyright for these stories is reserved and cannot be reprinted or distributed in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission. Reprinting includes any electronic or mechanical form, such as e-books, photocopying, writing, recording on tape, or any other means of storing or accessing information. All characters and events in this story are purely fictional and have no connection to any living or deceased individuals.

DESERTER IN ALGERIA

by Johan Nel

ISBN 978-1-7764911-8-6

Published by:

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

Copyright @ Pieter Haasbroek (2024)

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

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

SUMMARY

During street riots in Beirut, the ten-year-old Ismael's parents were brutally killed by one of the fanatical fighters with a curved saber. He witnessed it all from a hiding place and swore revenge on the man with one foot significantly shorter than the other. As a young man in the Israeli Navy, one night he spots the same man in a North African city, the man on whom he wants to exact his revenge. However, he doesn't get the opportunity to kill him, but he sees that the man is now in the French Foreign Legion. Ismael deserts the Israeli Navy and joins the French Foreign Legion, hoping to encounter the man there.

During an operation in Vietnam, Ismael is struck by shrapnel and ends up in the hospital. There, he meets the girl of his dreams, but at the same time, he also sees his hated enemy in a bed a little distance from him. Due to his injured leg, he can't do anything, but the nurse helps him find out more about his hated enemy. Back in the Foreign Legion, Ismael is sent on another mission, where he loses all his comrades, and then he arrives at another division of Legion soldiers. There, he finally gets his chance after ten long years of searching to exact his revenge and avenge the blood of his parents. Due to his desertion from both the Israeli Navy and the Foreign Legion, he is shortly thereafter arrested by the government, and a judge must decide his fate.

EXTRACT

"They're starting a new attack!" one of the men shouted. Hundreds of rebels suddenly burst out of the forest and storm the hill. Machine guns chatter continuously. The rebels are cut down wave after wave, but each time a new wave crashes over their fallen comrades.

A few mortars explode among them, and many falls. A group of Legionnaires positioned lower down along the ridge is overrun. Ismael is stunned. For the first time since joining the Legion, he sees what is meant when it is said that the Legion never surrenders. It's either death or victory.

He moves back between the rocks. Then he sees Schauer lying right in front of him. He can easily draw his revolver and shoot Schauer from behind. His machine gun falls silent for a moment. He draws his revolver from the holster. Carefully, he pushes the barrel over the rock. In the sight, he sees Schauer's back... Now... Ismael's hand trembles, and sweat beads on his forehead. Someone taps him on the shoulder. Ismael jumps in shock.

DESERTER IN ALGERIA

Chapter 1 DAY OF DOOM

It was deathly quiet in the courtroom when the young man stood up to plead. He had sat withdrawn throughout the trial, listening. His eyes glowed brightly, like someone who knows much greater hardship than sitting in a courtroom waiting for a sentence. He had even smiled quietly at times when some officer explained to the judge just how serious an offense it is to desert the army, especially when it's Israel's army. The sailor had cost the state a lot of money. The training of sailors is expensive, and he had deserted. An unforgivable step that cannot simply be excused.

Then the young man stood up and calmly let his eyes sweep through the court. At the judge, at the officers, and at the small group of interested sailors who had worked with him on the Ararat before he disappeared. The silence in the courtroom suddenly became electrically tense. Here was someone who truly wanted to say something.

"Your Honor, I don't want to plead. I don't want to say I'm innocent. I admit it's wrong to desert, but I would like to explain why I deserted. Perhaps then you will understand better."

The judge leaned forward expectantly. He could tell when a man truly had something to say in court.

He looked at the young man before him. The pale young man with the serious face deeply etched with the marks of hardship. His story is a

long one. The young man speaks with passion. He believes that what he did is justified in light of...

His story quickly grips the audience. He takes them away to a quiet summer night along the milk-white beach of Oran on the Algerian coast...

In the port city of Oran on the North African coast, a brooding silence has descended. The sun slowly sets behind the restless, rolling waves of the Mediterranean Sea. Cargo ships rock alone on the waves between cranes that tower into the sky like silent sentinels.

Along the harbor, where greedy waves caress a long, white sand ribbon, three young sailors of the Israeli Navy walk. Ahead of them, the lights of Oran begin to twinkle. There's distraction for a young sailor in Oran. The nightclubs with their authentic North African atmosphere, the young veiled girls with enticing curves gliding through the misty lights... The three quicken their pace.

Suddenly, one of the sailors stops. His eyes scan the sand in front of him, and his face tightens.

"Come on, Ismael, it's getting late, the places are filling up!" One of his mates pulls at his sleeve.

But the young sailor stands dead still. He stares intently at the white sand. He bends down and scrutinizes the tracks in front of him carefully. Then he looks up again. There's a strange flicker in his eyes.

"Go on, I'll catch up later."

"But Ismael, what's the matter now?"

"You wouldn't understand, but tonight I've found something I've been searching for the past ten years!" His finger traces the ground. "This track was made by the foot of the man who killed my parents in Beirut. Go ahead, my friends, I have work to do in Oran..." The two sailors slowly walk away from the young sailor with the strange light in his smoldering blue eyes...

Like a bloodhound, he follows the trail in the mysterious twilight. His pace quickens, and he bends low. The track he follows meanders aimlessly through the sand. The young man's breath quickens feverishly. There is now no doubt, his search ends tonight. The man who left this track, short left foot and right foot of normal size, is the man he has been seeking for ten years.

The trail veers towards the city. The young sailor looks up. Ahead of him, two soldiers of the French Foreign Legion are walking. Their white trousers, caps with a white flap at the back to protect from the scorching Sahara sun, and blue-and-red jackets stand out brightly against the twilight.

Ismael watches them closely. One of them limps slightly. He quickens his pace. A hundred steps behind them, he stops. One of those soldiers is the man he has been searching for ten years...

A hired car rattles by on the street above the beach.

"Hey!" The soldiers wave with their caps. The hired car screeches to a halt. Hastily, the two soldiers slip into the car. A roar and a rattle follow, and then the young sailor stands deserted on the beach.

With wide, unseeing eyes, Ismael stares at the dark ceiling of the torpedo destroyer Ararat's sleeping quarters. He has been trying to sleep for the past three hours.

Each time sleep begins to tug at his eyelids, his thoughts flutter wildly back to a turbulent past. He sees a crowd of people huddled together in a narrow backstreet. He is once again the wide-eyed ten-year-old boy who timidly stands behind a crumbling wall. The crowd in front of him churns restlessly, gesticulating wildly with their hands. He once again feels the cold, paralyzing fear that made his teeth chatter and his legs buckle.

Another group of people suddenly appeared around the corner. They halted when they saw the group in front of them. Threats were exchanged. Soon, stones began to buzz across the street. The groups moved menacingly closer to each other. And then, with loud shrieks, men, women, and children began to fight. Young children fell and were trampled by the hurried, charging feet of adults. Blood quickly formed pools on the cobblestones. The mobs grew on both sides. A terrible street fight broke out in the backstreets of Beirut. A fight in which frenzied, starving rabble descended upon each other with senseless bloodlust in their eyes.

And then, when the battle was at its bloodiest, something happened that left an indelible mark on the young boy who was hiding behind the wall with terrified eyes. Old Ismael, the tentmaker, and his wife Bekka had been returning from their small business to their home. They had

slinked along winding paths to try to avoid the fierce fighters. Ten steps from their house, ten steps from the wall behind which their frightened, only son hid, a tall, blood-smeared, fanatical fighter spotted the slinking couple.

"Hey!" he shouted. "One of the dogs trying to run away, huh?" He charged wildly, murder in his eyes. Bekka screamed, and old Ismael dragged her towards the house. With his saber menacingly raised above his head, the fighter charged. As the terrified old couple stumbled up the steps with naked fear in their eyes, the saber flashed in the sun. The boy behind the wall screamed. His eyes froze. With a triumphant shout, the fighter stormed down the street, seeking more blood. In the doorway, the two old people lay deathly still. Blood trickled down the weathered steps. Ismael, who was ten years old, was suddenly alone in the world.

He crept closer, very slowly and very fearfully. Besides his father, and why he noticed it immediately was a mystery to him, lay the trail of the fanatic. It was a strange trail. One foot was long, and the other was short, very short.

A thin trickle of blood had pooled in the imprint that the short foot made in the dusty path. Ismael sighed and turned away. His shoulders shook with sobs, but his heart was cold.

Ismael looked at his watch. It was already two o'clock in the morning. He would need to try and sleep now. The Ararat would depart from the