



Desert Flower: The Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad

By Waris Dirie, Cathleen Miller

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Waris Dirie ran away from her oppressive life in the African desert when she was barely in her teens, illiterate and impoverished, with nothing to her name but a tattered shawl. She traveled alone across the dangerous Somali desert to Mogadishu—the first leg of a remarkable journey that would take her to London, where she worked as a house servant; then to nearly every corner of the globe as an internationally renowned fashion model; and ultimately to New York City, where she became a human rights ambassador for the U.N. *Desert Flower* is her extraordinary story.

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Desert Flower: The Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad By Waris Dirie, Cathleen Miller **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

By age 6, Waris Dirie was herding her family's sheep and goats, fending off hyenas and wild dogs as the family carved a path through Africa. She was just twice that age when she ran off into the vast furnace of the Somali desert to escape an arranged marriage to a much older man. Traveling for days without food and water, she made her way to Mogadishu and later to London as a servant to her uncle, the Somalian ambassador. There she wrestled with culture shock and got her first taste of the modeling life that eventually brought her into the public eye. Dirie is resilient, having survived drought, hunger, and the ritual female genital mutilation that marks a step toward womanhood among some traditional Moslems but, argue critics, steals or ruins many girls' lives. "As we traveled throughout Somalia," says Dirie, "we met families and I played with their daughters. When we visited them again, the girls were missing. No one spoke the truth about their absence or even spoke of them at all." As a special ambassador to the United Nations, Dirie has spoken out loudly on this subject and championed environmental causes, too. How much of her sometimes breathless story is gospel truth and how much embellished is hard to say. Like Dirie herself, though, the combination is intriguing, powerful, and unique. --*Francesca Coltrera*

From Publishers Weekly

Joining the current rage for model memoirs (see review above) is Dirie, a native of Somalia, who has for more than a decade stalked the world's catwalks and appeared in numerous glossy magazines. This, however, is no fluff-job dictated into a tape recorder on transatlantic flights, then recomposed by a hired gun back in New York. Rather, it is a striking account of a personal odyssey that began in the Somali desert, where Dirie grew up without shoes, living amid nomadic tribes and tyrannized by patriarchal strictures. As a pubescent girl, Dirie was circumcised—a procedure described here in chilling detail—before escaping an arranged marriage to stay with an aunt in Mogadishu. Landing a job as a house servant in London, Dirie struggled to launch a modeling career while dodging British immigration authorities and the dreadful results of marriages of convenience. At the end of this affecting and at times very entertaining book, Dirie's metamorphosis from desert nomad into jetsetting nomad culminates in a post as a human rights ambassador to the UN, where, these days, Dirie campaigns for the eradication of female circumcision and women's rights around the globe. It's easy to forget that Dirie's memoir is a book about someone whose success has come from posing for the camera. Indeed, it is Dirie's remarkable lack of narcissism or entitlement that makes her so captivating a raconteur. Photos. Editor: Billy Kelly; agent: Christie Fletcher/Carol Mann Agency; author tour. (Sept.) FYI: Foreign rights have sold in 10 countries.

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From Library Journal

As a special ambassador to the United Nations, Somalian supermodel Dirie speaks out against the custom of genital mutilation, a "barbaric rite" that she underwent at age five. In this memoir, she "provides a fascinating glimpse of her separate lives—camel herder, supermodel, human rights activist—and manages to weave threads of drama, humor, and courage into each."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Colleen Thompson:

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Mark Guerrero:

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