

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood

By Alexandra Fuller

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***NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER • *ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY*'S #1 NONFICTION BOOK OF THE YEAR • A *NEW YORK TIMES* NOTABLE BOOK • FINALIST, *GUARDIAN* FIRST BOOK PRIZE**

"This is not a book you read just once, but a tale of terrible beauty to get lost in over and over."—*Newsweek*

"By turns mischievous and openhearted, earthy and soaring . . . hair-raising, horrific, and thrilling."—*The New Yorker*

In *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight,* Alexandra Fuller remembers her African childhood with visceral authenticity. Though it is a diary of an unruly life in an often inhospitable place, it is suffused with Fuller's endearing ability to find laughter, even when there is little to celebrate. Fuller's debut is unsentimental and unflinching but always captivating. In wry and sometimes hilarious prose, she stares down disaster and looks back with rage and love at the life of an extraordinary family in an extraordinary time.

From 1972 to 1990, Alexandra Fuller—known to friends and family as Bobo—grew up on several farms in southern and central Africa. Her father joined up on the side of the white government in the Rhodesian civil war, and was often away fighting against the powerful black guerilla factions. Her mother, in turn, flung herself at their African life and its rugged farm work with the same passion and maniacal energy she brought to everything else. Though she loved her children, she was no hand-holder and had little tolerance for neediness. She nurtured her daughters in other ways: She taught them, by example, to be resilient and self-sufficient, to have strong wills and strong opinions, and to embrace life wholeheartedly, despite and because of difficult circumstances. And she instilled in Bobo, particularly, a love of reading and of storytelling that proved to be her salvation.

A worthy heir to Isak Dinesen and Beryl Markham, Alexandra Fuller writes poignantly about a girl becoming a woman and a writer against a backdrop of

unrest, not just in her country but in her home. But *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* is more than a survivor's story. It is the story of one woman's unbreakable bond with a continent and the people who inhabit it, a portrait lovingly realized and deeply felt.

Praise for *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*

"The Africa of this beautiful book is not easy to forget. Despite, or maybe even because of, the snakes, the leopards, the malaria and the sheer craziness of its human inhabitants, often violent but pulsing with life, it seems like a fine place to grow up, at least if you are as strong, passionate, sharp and gifted as Alexandra Fuller."***—Chicago Tribune***

"Owning a great story doesn't guarantee being able to tell it well. That's the individual mystery of talent, a gift with which Alexandra Fuller is richly blessed, and with which she illuminates her extraordinary memoir. . . . There's flavor, aroma, humor, patience . . . and pinpoint observational acuity."***—Entertainment Weekly***

"This is a joyously telling memoir that evokes Mary Karr's *The Liars' Club* as much as it does Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*."**—New York *Daily News***

"Riveting . . . [full of] humor and compassion."***—O: The Oprah Magazine***

"The incredible story of an incredible childhood."***—The Providence Journal***

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
A classic is born in this tender, intensely moving and even delightful journey through a white African girl's childhood. Born in England and now living in Wyoming, Fuller was conceived and bred on African soil during the Rhodesian civil war (1971-1979), a world where children over five "learn[ed] how to load an FN rifle magazine, strip and clean all the guns in the house, and ultimately, shoot-to-kill." With a unique and subtle sensitivity to racial issues, Fuller describes her parents' racism and the wartime relationships between blacks and whites through a child's watchful eyes. Curfews and war, mosquitoes, land mines, ambushes and "an abundance of leopards" are the stuff of this childhood. "Dad has to go out into the bush... and find terrorists and fight them"; Mum saves the family from an Egyptian spitting cobra; they both fight "to keep one country in Africa white-run." The "A" schools ("with the best teachers and facilities") are for white children; "B" schools serve "children who are neither black nor white"; and "C" schools are for black children. Fuller's world is marked by sudden, drastic changes: the farm is taken away for "land redistribution"; one term at school, five white students are "left in the boarding house... among two hundred African students"; three of her four siblings die in infancy; the family constantly sets up house in hostile, desolate environments as they move from Rhodesia to Zambia to Malawi and back to Zambia. But Fuller's remarkable affection for her parents (who are racists) and her homeland (brutal under white and black rule) shines through. This affection, in spite of its subjects' prominent flaws, reveals their humanity and allows the reader direct entry into her world. Fuller's book has the promise of being widely read and remaining of interest for years to come. Photos not seen by PW. (On-sale Dec. 18)Forecast: Like Anne Frank's diary, this work captures the tone of a very young person caught up in her own small world as she witnesses a far larger historical event. It will appeal to those looking for a good story as well as anyone seeking firsthand reportage of white southern Africa. The quirky title and jacket will propel curious shoppers to pick it up.

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From School Library Journal
Adult/High School-Pining for Africa, Fuller's parents departed England in the early '70s while she was still a toddler. They knew well that their life as white farmers living in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time) would be anything but glamorous. Living a crude, rural life, the author and her older sister contended with "itchy bums and worms and bites up their arms from fleas" and losing three siblings. Mum and Dad were freewheeling, free-drinking, and often careless. Yet they were made of tough stuff and there is little doubt of the affection among family members. On top of attempting to make a living, they faced natives who were trying to free themselves of British rule, and who were understandably not thrilled to see more white bwanas settling in. Fuller portrays bigotry (her own included), segregation, and deprivation. But judging by her vivid and effortless imagery, it is clear that the rich, pungent flora and fauna of Africa have settled deeply in her bones. Snapshots scattered throughout the book enhance the feeling of intimacy and adventure. A photo of the author's first day of boarding school seems ordinary enough- she's standing in front of the family's Land Rover, smiling with her mother and sister. Then the realization strikes that young Alexandra is holding an Uzi (which she had been trained to use) and the family car had been mine-proofed. This was no ordinary childhood, and it makes a riveting story thanks to an extraordinary telling.
Sheila Shoup, Fairfax County Public Library, VA
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From Library Journal
It is difficult for most people even to imagine the world described in this book, let alone live in it as a child: the nights are dark, scary, and filled with strange noises; the people welcome you and despise you at the same time; there is a constant anxious feeling burning in your stomach, which, you later realize, is fear of the unrest surrounding you. The British-born Fuller grew up in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), losing three siblings to disease as her father fought in the Rhodesian civil war and her mother managed the farm. She approaches her childhood with reserve, leaving many stories open to interpretation while also maintaining a remarkable clarity about what really transpired in her homeland, in her own home, and in her head. The narrative seems complicated, weaving together war, politics, racial issues, and alcoholism, but its emotional core remains honest, playful, and unapologetic; it hardly seems possible that this 32-year-old has so much to say and says it so well. In this powerful debut, Fuller fully succeeds in memorializing the beauty of each desert puddle and each African summer night sky while also recognizing that beauty can lie hidden in the faces of those who have crossed her path. Highly recommended.
- *Rachel Collins, "Library Journal"*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Douglas:

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are really reading whatever they consider because their hobby is reading a book. How about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, person feel need book if they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you will need this Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood.

Christina McMullen:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style in this particular era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that can give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world could share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. Many author can inspire their own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the story that share in the books. But also they write about advantage about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your sons or daughters, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors on this planet always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some research before they write to the book. One of them is this Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood.

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Mary Moore:

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