



The Lion Sleeps Tonight

Rian Malan

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Since its original publication twenty years ago Rian Malan's classic work of narrative nonfiction *My Traitor's Heart* has earned its author comparisons to masters of literary nonfiction like Michael Herr and Ryszard Kapuscinski.

The Lion Sleeps Tonight is Malan's remarkable chronicle of South Africa's halting steps and missteps, taken as blacks and whites try to build a new country. Some of the essays previously appeared in a collection published only in South Africa, *Resident Alien*, but others are collected here for the first time. The collection comprises twenty-three pieces; the title story investigates the provenance of the world famous song "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," which Malan traces back to a Zulu singer named Solomon Linda who recorded a song called "Mbube" in the 1930s, which went on to be covered by Pete Seeger, REM, and Phish, and was incorporated into the musical "The Lion King." In other stories, Malan follows the trial of Winnie Mandela and plunges into the explosive controversy over President Mbeki's AIDS policies of the 1990s.

The stories, combined with Malan's sardonic interstitial commentary, offer a brilliantly observed portrait of contemporary South Africa.

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