

## PRAISE FOR SHIRLEY GOULD

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—*USA Today*'s best-selling author Susan May Warren



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*of*  
**ZANZIBAR**

THE AFRICAN SKIES SERIES

SHIRLEY GOULD



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To JR

*Our forty years together were filled with saucy romance, amazing  
African adventures,  
and a plethora of cherished memories.*

*We faced our challenges as a team with the Lord as our guide.  
Now, as I pen snippets of our story, it's easy to create a great hero—  
because you were my knight in shining Land Rover.*



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## PROLOGUE

**T**he heavy metal gates of the mission compound clanged behind her as Joy Deckland wove her Subaru minivan into Zanzibar's bustling traffic flow.

"Jessicah, when we get to the market, buy a tray of eggs and put them in the van. Then get some onions and tomatoes for tomorrow's meal."

"Sawa, Mama Joy. I will do it."

Joy laid on her horn in an attempt to get a herd of mooing milk makers to clear the dirt road. When they parted, she downshifted and gunned it through the mayhem.

"I'll leave the side door unlocked for your purchases."

"Sawa, Mama. Is it potato day?"

"Yes. The shipment arrived from Tanzania right after lunch. For the best selection, I want to get there before it gets too late in the day. The Zanzibaris will come for their potatoes on their way home from work. I'll get us twenty pounds of potatoes and a large bag of charcoal, then meet you here."

Joy slowed, parked her minivan, and put some shillings into Jessicah's hand. Jessicah smiled at her employer and slipped out of the Subaru.

Joy watched the frail, sweet-spirited woman enter the open market with a smile. Joy pocketed her keys and some money. After swinging her long brown braid to her back, she perched her sunglasses on top of her head. Making a path under a dingy canvas awning that offered a reprieve from the scorching African sun, she moved toward the back of the overgrown kiosk. Joy sauntered through rows of stacked produce, cages of live chickens, and baskets of beans. Reaching the piles of potatoes, she pivoted, searching the area for the Zanzibari woman she usually bought from, who wasn't manning her kiosk. *That's weird. Someone is always here.* She couldn't find a soul. *Something's wrong.*

"Where is everyone?"

"They have taken a dinner break."

That evil voice grated on her last nerve. The hairs rose on the back of her neck as she scanned the market for anyone who could help her—but found the area abandoned. Jessicah was busy at the front row of the market, where the chaos of the evening traffic would drown any cry for help. She turned slowly.

"Aga Kahn, what do you want?" Though petite in stature, Joy perched both hands on her hips and met his intense gaze.

His white robes and turban exuded the power he thought he had as the leader of Islam on the island. "I've warned you many times, but you have failed to listen. Now, I want you silenced!"

"That's not going to happen. I've come to Zanzibar to spend my life sharing hope and love as I spread the good news of Jesus."

He stepped forward. "I demand that you stop!"

"No! This island needs our Christian message." She hid her fear behind a cold stare.

He blew out a hot, angry breath and motioned for his man to come closer.

“You don’t scare me, Aga Kahn,” she lied.

“As the Sahar of Zanzibar, you are not a wise woman.

You’ve angered me too many times.” He stepped closer.

“This conversation is over. I’m reporting you to the police, Kahn.” She spun around and started to leave the market.

Kahn’s hired man grabbed her. She kicked him, jabbed her elbow into his side, and struggled against his strength for release as he put a cloth over her mouth. The sweet-smelling concoction on the material caused her to relax. Her knees buckled. She tried to scream, to signal for help, but her body wouldn’t cooperate. The man carried her out the back of the market and dumped her drugged body in the back of a large black SUV and tied a gag across her mouth.

Dizzy, weak, and disoriented, she tried to make sense of what was happening. He slammed the back door as the truck’s engine revved. She felt every pothole as he drove entirely too fast, tossing her back and forth.

*Jessica won’t know where I am. If Kahn is trying to scare me, it’s working this time. But I refuse to stop doing what I’ve been sent to do.*

Aga Kahn’s man hit the brakes, slamming her body against the bench seat. He opened his door, causing the beeping of the ignition to call for attention. As evening traffic sped by, Joy heard his footsteps as he moved to the rear of the SUV and opened the back door.

Joy was ready. She kicked him in the stomach and tried to get out. He took the hit and shoved her back onto the floor of the vehicle, raised a silver blade, and stabbed her twice, turning the knife with the second penetration. Her scream was muffled by the gag as excruciating pain stole her breath. Jerking Joy out of the SUV before her blood stained the carpet, he dropped her in the dirt outside the gate of her mission compound. He kicked her twice on the wounds he had inflicted, then hurried to make his escape. He sped away,

slinging dirt and debris on her wounded body as Joy's blood soaked Zanzibar's soil.

As his taillights faded into the distance, Joy held her hands on the wounds with as much force as she could muster.

Cars, buses, and vans passed, emitting clouds of exhaust as they stirred dust in their wake. A dog sniffed her and barked before moving on. Feeling weak from blood loss and pain, she lost consciousness. Coming to again, she tried to cry out as dirt filled her eyes. Using the last of her energy, she kicked the gate, attempting to get the guard's attention. The movement caused blood to gush from her stab wounds.

*Lord, I'm sorry I haven't finished the task You sent me to do. Gasping for a breath, she winced against the pain. Blood was filling her mouth. Time was slipping away. Please take care of Eli and my sweet baby, Judah.*

Though the sun hadn't set in Zanzibar's cerulean sky, everything went black for Joy Deckland.