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Miriam's Song: A Memoir

Mark Mathabane

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MIRIAM'S SONG




a memoir


MIRIAM MATHABANE

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Mark Mathabane : Miriam's Song: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Miriam's Song: A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I wish I had read Miriam's Song before Kafir Boy By C.H.M. If I had read this before " Kafir Boy", I might have been more impressed. However, I did read "Kafir Boy" first and it was

much better. "Miriam's Song" was worth the read if you have nothing else available. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing Book!! By Joanne Another amazing book that I just can't put down from Mark Mathabane! He never disappoints I love and have read all of his books!! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Miriam is a moving personality By Ms. Vee I really like her story, she was really a good girl, smart student and determined to achieve regardless of obstacles.

Mark Mathabane first came to prominence with the publication of *Kaffir Boy*, which became a New York Times bestseller. His story of growing up in South Africa was one of the most riveting accounts of life under apartheid. Mathabane's newest book, *Miriam's Song*, is the story of Mark's sister, who was left behind in South Africa. It is the gripping tale of a woman -- representative of an entire generation -- who came of age amid the violence and rebellion of the 1980s and finally saw the destruction of apartheid and the birth of a new, democratic South Africa. Mathabane writes in Miriam's voice based on stories she told him, but he has re-created her unforgettable experience as only someone who also lived through it could. The immediacy of the hardships that brother and sister endured -- from daily school beatings to overwhelming poverty -- is balanced by the beauty of their childhood observations and the true affection that they have for each other.

From Library Journal Mark Mathabane, the author of *Kaffir Boy*, helps recount the life of his sister, who remained behind in South Africa after he left and witnessed its struggle to throw off apartheid. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s From the South African born Mathabane (*Kaffir Boy*, 1986; *African Women*, 1994, etc.) comes this unsparingly graphic account of his sister's growing up in the last days of apartheid--when violence turned black townships into killing fields and schooling ceased as young Comrades insisted on liberation before education. The story told by Miriam, now studying in the US, is a searing indictment of the violence to women engendered both by apartheid and by traditional African attitudes. Both quashed human potential and aspirations, and good daughters and students like Miriam were as penalized as their more recalcitrant sisters. Born in 1969 and raised in Alexandria, a sprawling black township to the north of Johannesburg, Miriam offers vivid details of township life: the food eaten (a whole chicken was an undreamed-of luxury), the small houses (spotless despite the number of people living in them), and the ubiquitous scrawny dogs picking over the uncollected trash. She describes growing up as the middle daughter in a family made dysfunctional by circumstance. Her illiterate father, unable to find better-paying jobs, is often unemployed, drinks, gambles away their food money, and beats the children; her mother, a devout Christian, lacks the proper documentation and also has employment problems; and her elder brother steals Miriam's savings. The black schools are poorly equipped, the teachers are sadistic, and Miriam (who wants to become a nurse) soon finds her ambition thwarted by the times and by custom. A teenager in the 1980s, when anti-government violence made life in townships dangerous, she has to stay home when the schools are forced to close. Then, in a society where black men traditionally are free to do as they please (to take 13-year-old girls for wives, for example, as one of her uncle does), she is raped by her boyfriend and finds herself pregnant. But brother Mark, who has used his tennis talents as a passport to the US and success, will change Miriam's life. A moving story of a survivor, but Miriam herself often seems more a reporter recalling an eventful past than a reflective memoirist. -- Copyright 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. Ken Otterbourg The Winston-Salem Journal Inspirational and often affecting...there is an important message to this story. Glamour This memoir of growing up in South Africa during apartheid is alternately evocative and wrenching, but always inspiring....[It] captures both the brutality and beauty of their childhood.