



REBUKE THE WIND

TRIP MACKINTOSH

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Trip Mackintosh

for
the girls of the Sahel
and
Cameron, Terra and Whitney,
collectively,
my Isa

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*And he arose,
and rebuked the wind ...*

Mark 4:39

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PART I

Chapter 1

Mik

He heard someone walking over to him. Hands tied behind his back, legs tied to his hands, he was arched with his face down. A rag over his mouth made it difficult to breath. He could smell nothing but dirt. He was blindfolded. The approaching footsteps caused him to squirm. He anticipated the worst.

A boot kicked him in the side. He grunted in pain. He tried to roll out of the way but could not.

A male voice said, “Mr. Engineer, what are you looking for with your face in the dirt like that?”

Another kick.

“Maybe you want to build us a water plant here in the bush. Can you? Answer me!”

Another kick.

“I see the problem. There is no water here. Maybe I can help with that.”

Water hit the back of his head and neck. He heard men laughing.

His tormentor kicked him again and walked away shouting, “The Christian has agreed to build us a water plant here in the Sahel.”

More laughter.

Mik inhaled deeply through the dusty rag, straining to get a full breath. He knew he had to calm himself, to go in his mind to a better place.

He found some comfort by pulling up memories of his youth, such as breathing cool, clean, air in the Pyrenees. With his eyes pressed against African red soil, he imagined the sharp peaks of those mountains. He could imagine being enveloped in the heavy, cool mist that marked so many mornings.

Mik had grown up at the foot of these mountains in Mauléon, France. His father was his sole parent and he the only child. His early life was limited to Mauléon and the mountains to the south. His father was a pharmacist who took his responsibilities seriously. He rarely left town or took a vacation.

“I am one of two pharmacists in town. I have to be available. Any number of clients could need urgent assistance,” he explained when Mik grumbled about never going anywhere. In Mik’s view, there was never anything “urgent” in Mauléon.

If he did get to leave town, his father’s idea of “grand adventure” was a short drive to the beach at Biarritz. Like many French, he went to the same place and did the same thing every August. He rented the same apartment and set up his towel and umbrella on the same bit of beach.

One August his father said while spreading out his towel, “I think we’ll name this spot of sand, ‘Mauléon Beach’.” Mik was a teenager at the time. He had rolled his eyes and walked away, embarrassed.

Year after year, nothing changed.

Now, he wished he were there, lazy and mindless on ‘Mauléon Beach’ with his father. If he tried, he could almost hear the sound of the northern Atlantic smacking against the massive rocks of the Biarritz coast.

He was startled back to reality by the slam of a truck door. He heard men and boys talking and laughing. He recognized the ominous, familiar sound of weapons being checked, cleaned and loaded. He tried to adjust his chest and back to relieve the pain caused by the ropes. There was no relief.