

SOUTH AFRICAN ROMANCE RISES ABOVE THE PAST

Charmaine Pauls' latest novel, **Second Best**, is a dramatic romance about the scars of the soul and the road that leads to healing. When a juvenile delinquent and a war journalist meet, they fight not to become victims of their past.

The first time Molly sees Malcolm is in Oudtshoorn, South Africa in 1978, when he jumps from the back of an army truck to challenge her through the school yard fence. Little did she know then, when she boldly gave him the middle finger, how their lives would become intertwined.

Surviving the secret horrors of an industrial school, juvenile delinquent Molly van Aswegen grows into a tough and troubled woman who has sworn never to love anyone enough to be vulnerable. When Malcolm McLeod, rebel journalist and soldier, comes home from the Angolan border war to save Molly from her institution, he starts fighting a different war altogether – the battle for both of their souls.

Molly's fight for survival and Malcolm's moral struggle will expose them as anti-conformists, at risk of being branded and outcast from society during a politically turbulent time when South Africa is in the midst of a twenty-three year long war.

“The story was inspired by my childhood experiences, growing up on juvenile delinquent school grounds where my father was a teacher, and my brother's two-year compulsory military training at the dog explosives unit in Bourke's Luck, South Africa,” says Pauls. The author resided in Oudtshoorn, and decided to use this Karoo town as the setting where the novel kicks off. Pauls says, “Not only did Oudtshoorn provide the perfect backdrop for Molly's school, but it also happened to be the town where the famous South African reconnaissance military unit was formed, providing the connecting factor when Molly and Malcolm meet.”

Pauls uses exotic contemporary settings inspired by her travels for her romance novels, such as Easter Island, Patagonia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brazil, France, and Tahiti, while she likes to include elements of fantasy in her work. **Second Best** is her

first book that plays off in her home country, and that does not contain a supernatural element.

Second Best is Pauls' fourth novel. Previous books include the romance drama, **Between Yesterday & Tomorrow**; futuristic romance, **Between Fire & Ice**; and paranormal romance, **The Winemaker**. Pauls' next book, **The Astronomer**, a futuristic romance that plays off in Chile's Atacama Desert, is due for release in October 2014 by Mélange Books.

The author was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, and obtained a Masters Degree in Communication at the University of Potchefstroom. She worked in the fields of journalism, advertising, graphic design, photography, brand marketing and public relations before she turned to full-time writing. Pauls previously lived in France, and currently resides in Chile with her husband and children.

For more information, visit www.charmainepauls.com.

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