



Heart of Darfur

Lisa French Blaker

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This is the heart-breakingly honest and tender account of a nurse's struggle to help in the middle of the humanitarian disaster that is Darfur.

Heart of Darfur Details

Date : Published 2007 by Hodder & Stoughton

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Author : Lisa French Blaker

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Heart of Darfur

civil war
famine

1. New Zealander Lisa French-Blaker recounts her tough time as an aid worker in the civil war in Darfur. Read by Federay Holmes.
2. Lisa tries frantically to treat some desperate refugees. But in Darfur there's a strict curfew in force.
3. A terrifying confrontation with armed government troops prevents Lisa treating those dying around her.
4. Overwhelmed by the numbers needing treatment in Darfur, Lisa begins to feel unable to cope.
5. With another attack on a nearby town, Lisa French-Blaker listens to stories from survivors

It takes a strong person to deal with these conditions, so she has my admiration.

Finished 11/5/2012

3*

Darfur region of Sudan.

Katie Grace says

This book is an honest and moving account of one woman's experience providing emergency medical care in a disaster setting. Along with describing the human suffering and injustices she witnessed, she also truthfully recounts her own harsh realities of working with an international aid organization in a war-torn region.

A. Gulden says

An African mother doesn't grieve less because she does it often. I've heard people say, 'It's different there,' when they hear of death and dying in Africa. They say, 'Those people are used to death and for them it's natural.' Stand listening to a crying mother as she holds her dead child in her arms and tell me if you really believe that. They cry and grieve and ache inside and the aching never goes. The difference is they have no choice without the care we take for granted. Their children die and they can only watch. So they lift the body, tie it to their backs with a colourful sheet and carry another baby home to bury in the sand.

Lindsay Eaton says

Horrifying yet compelling

Lara says

This was a seriously eye opener. The pain and struggle of some people's lives is heartbreaking and it was shown consistently throughout this outstanding book.

Ruth Forbes says

I have read many books in my life and this was the one that had me in tears for much of the book. It should be mandatory reading for all Australian MPs. Also required reading for all the Australians who, when faced with refugees say, "We should take care of our own street people first." I care about street people too, and humanity is not governed by country, colour of one's skin, religion or any other factor. Where there is a need, our hearts need to respond. Lisa French Blaker has illustrated that very clearly. Bless her.

Chanel Ryall says

Too self centered and weepy for my liking. I was hoping to learn more about darfur and its people's but found the book way too focused on Lisa's struggles to cope with her experience (though to be fair it was perfectly understandable) but just doesn't make for a good or interesting read. The book would have benefitted greatly from a good editor, it was very repetitive!

Musa says

its super amazing

Liralen says

If ever there was a sense of purpose in my life, it was Darfur and the work that I could do. Small steps and small successes. That was all I could claim and I wanted to keep going. I wanted to try. (332)

Blaker says this sort of thing more than once, and it's not that I don't believe her: I believe that she's committed to (and good at) her work as a nurse with Médecins Sans Frontières, that she wants, wholeheartedly, to make a difference, that on many levels the uncertainty and fear and trauma of working in Darfur was worth it to her.

But -- despite protestations of hope -- this is not a hopeful book, nor a happy one. There are only so many people Blaker and the rest of the MSF team can treat and only so many they can save. She's sad and overwhelmed and sometimes terrified. She's angry at incompetence (real or perceived), frustrated by power plays, wracked with guilt when she has water and her patients don't.

It does not sound as though Blaker was happy in Sudan -- more simply overwhelmed and feeling as though she'd never be able to do enough. I can't criticise her for that; it sounds like hard, hard work. But I wonder what her other MSF assignments had been like in comparison (she writes very little of her time outside Darfur), and I would have liked to see the focus turn further outwards, further from her struggle to accept the situation.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4:

New Zealander Lisa French-Blaker recounts her tough time as an aid worker in the civil war in Darfur.

Caitlyn says

A moving book!! Very compelling!!

Banu Altunbas says

Working for MSF and working in Darfur at the moment (2 years after Lisa's experience), I found her writing self-centered, tear jerking and self pitying and absolutely ego centric and de-meaning to the rest of the MSF expatriates.

I felt upset reading about the story, even though some parts of the book reflect the situation then and even now in Darfur, she has to deal with her own problems before writing a book.

I didn't enjoy the book at all..

