SONJA

meisie van Nigel

'n lewensverhaal

CAREL F. CRONJÉ

PRESS KIT

Introduction

Sonja Herholdt, the singer who took South Africa by storm in the mid 70's, continues to amaze and surprise audiences 30 years later, sharing creatively from her life. This time she has chosen to do it in the form of a book, written by her songwriter Carel F Cronjé. Draw inspiration from the dramatic lifestory of one of the most lauded South African Afrikaans singers of our time, with this honest and personal account of her life.

Background

Sonja Herholdt was born in Nigel, on the 1st of December 1952, showing early signs of singing capabilities, when she performed her first song at the age of 3.

In 1975, Sonja was crowned with the Sarie Best Singer award for the song "Ek Verlang na Jou". This was the first time that a newcomer received the Sarie honour. The single hit Gold selling more than 25 000 copies. Sonja received her first Gold Music Award and "Ek Verlang na Jou" became the most popular song of the day.

In January 1976, Sonja married FC Hamman and later that year, she received her second SARIE award for Best Long Playing Record and Best Singer for the album named simply "Sonja". This was to set a pattern for the following three years, where she continued to dominate the category of most popular singer. "Harlekyn" also won best Long Playing Record of the year in 1979. Sonja is the only singer in the history of Afrikaans music to have won the award six times in a row, in the same category.

Sonja is not only recognised in South Africa. She released singles and performed in both Norway and America, appearing on national television in both countries. Her song "Oberammergau" was on both the Norwegian and Belgian hit parades.

In 1991, she received an honorary award from the Afrikaans Department of Pretoria for her outstanding contribution to the furthering of light Afrikaans music.

Since 1999, Sonja has taken her music in a new direction, financing it herself and working alongside writers Carel Cronjé and Cornell Boshoff. The resulting album "Reconstructing Alice" had a more personal tone to it. On the countrywide tour for the album, Sonja found that women resonated with the issues the songs raised.

Sonja began "In Celebration" in 2003 as a forum to address issues particular to women. She shares personally from her life experience, bringing a message of hope and sense of solidarity amongst women.

The Author : Carel F Cronjé

If there's anyone capable of writing the story of Sonja's life, it is Carel F. Cronje. Since 1999, he has worked closely with Sonja, writing many of her songs in a more reflective personal style. From this vantage point, Carel could capture her story with an integrity that few others had.

It was with this in mind that Sonja first approached him. She was convinced that he could do it. Eventually what started out, in his mind, as a harebrain idea, gathered momentum and resolve, as ideas of style and story began to form. Vision for the project built and "Meisie van Nigel" was birthed.

For Carel, the story needed to have an informality of tone. What excited him initially to take on the project, was the notion of presenting Sonja in a completely accessible way.
The distance between "celeb" and close friend had to be bridged. If Sonja's lifestory was to have the impact she desired, he needed a device to bring that intimate tone to the fore. He found this in the analogy of a "scrapbook" or "home movie". Readers were to feel like mates in the sitting room couch getting the backstory on the family's home movie or scrapbook of photographs.

Die Storie

Die verhaal skop af met Sonja as 'n klein dogtertjie in die vyftigs in Nigel. Sonja wat by Ouma Lollies gaan kuier, wat met haar teddiebere onder die bed inkruip as die grootmense vir mekaar grom. Min het sy geweet haar eie huweliksboodjie sou later langs dieselfde stroompie afseil!

Dit neem 'n mens deur haar skooljare, waar sy eers 'n rebel is en later die liefling van die skool word tot by haar sorgvrye Goudstad-dae. Dié tyd is gekenmerk deur haar ontmoeting met FC Hamman, haar trouman, die begin van haar sangloopbaan en 'n heerlike verhaaltjie van 'n afspraak wat so skeefgeloop het dat die motor in die Emmarentia-dam beland het!

Die Sonja van vandag lewer kort-kort skerp en tot op die been eerlike kommentaar oor haar en andere se optredes, uitsprake en menings. Asof sy alleen in 'n donker kamer in haar huis sit en na ou home movies van haarself kyk.

Die blou Borgward wat FC as student gebruik het, is in Sonja se woorde "deur die genade van God gedryf" – dalk ook soos Sonja se eie lewe aangedryf is deur die ewige teenwoordigheid van God, met wie sy altyd in gesprek is – soms kinderlik eerlik, soms vol vrees en soms met 'n ysere wil.

Die een boodskap wat deur die boek telkens opduik, is iets wat Sonja vroeg in haar lewe besef het, naamlik dat liefde is wat liefde doen. Sy vra dan ook self, net na haar eerste seksuele oomblik met FC, of dit die begin van die einde is.

Die boek volg haar sangloopbaan noukeurig, van 1975 met die uitreiking van "Ek verlang na Jou", wat 'n fenomeen was wat die land getref het en haar oornag 'n ster gemaak. Al het die klankman wat dit opgeneem het, gesê die opname was 'n mors van tyd en geld!

Later volg haar ontmoeting met Anton Goossen, wat as vryskutjoernalis vir Huisgenoot 'n onderhoud met haar doen en terloops noem dat sy hom kan bel as sy materiaal nodig het. Sy loopbaan as liedjieskrywer het danksy Sonja momentum gekry maar toe hy later as sanger beroemd raak, kon hy nie meer 'vir koeksisters en marsmallows' werk nie! Dit het hulle verhouding versuur en hulle het eers jare later dinge weer reggemaak.

Op die kruin van haar sukses in 1978 vind sy skielik uit sy is swanger en die vrees pak haar beet. "Dit gaan alles ruineer! My loopbaan, ons toekoms. Ek is mos 'n hele maatskappy! Ek moet werk. Ek moet sing. Wie gaan vir ons geld maak as ek dit nie doen nie? Jy dalk, meneer Hamman?" Sonja besluit tot haar groot spyt op 'n aborsie in Engeland. Dit vreet vandag nog aan haar.

Regdeur haar huwelik het ander vroue 'n groot rol in hul lewe gespeel. Sharon, Mariaan, Greta, Tanja, die danseresse…en natuurlik Zelda, wat FC se kind gehad het skaars ses weke na hul eersteling Claudi se geboorte. Dit sou Sonja jare neem om Hayley te aanvaar. Sy ervaar deurentyd 'n geweldige gevoel van 'ek is lelik' en handhaaf deurgaans 'n baie swak selfbeeld.

Die geboorte van haar kinders, die ewige stryd om haar man se aandag op haar gevestig te hou, 'n sukkelende loopbaan, kritiek op kritiek oor haar agt Saries. Alles is ineengeweef in een lang verhaal. Heerlik vertel in Sonja se eie unieke, hartseer maar tog skerp humoristiese manier. Sy neem die leser op 'n reis deur haar persoonlike lewe – tot in die fynste intieme detail.

Die boek laat jou glimlag, jouself in haar raaksien, die absolute menswees van 'n celebrity besef. Die besef dat die 'glamour life' ook maar vol dorings is. Maar dat die Son weer sal skyn! Sonja gaan oornag elke gefrustreerde, pasgeskeide leseres se beste vriendin word. Sy raak sommer net Sonja, of Son, en mens kyk nie meer grootogig na dié celeb nie.

"Meisie van Nigel" is vir elke vrou wat net probeer oorleef in die besige, moeilike wêreld van ma-wees, beroepsvrou en vrouwees. En vir elke man wat nou sal verstaan wat 'n vrou nodig het en beslis nie nodig het nie. 'n Heerlike, openhartige boek vol lewenswaarhede.

Pers Vrystelling

"Meisie van Nigel"
lewensverhaal van Sonja Herholdt
geskryf deur Carel F. Cronjé

Die Meisie van Nigel is 'n plakboek, 'n movie eintlik, van Sonja Herholdt se lewe. Sonja glo dit plaas haar lewe van die afgelope 30 jaar in perspektief. "As mense met my lewensverhaal kan identifiseer, glo ek dat dit genesing en hoop kan bring."

Of die lewe nou met jou gebeur of nie, dit is somtyds maar moeilik. Die lewe van Sonja Herdholdt, sangeres, enkelouer en ma van 'n gestremde kind, vriendin en sakevrou, is eintlik niks meer of minder as enige ander Suid-Afrikaanse vrou nie. Dit is die verhaal van 'n vrou wat 'n lewe probeer maak te midde van terugslae, teleurstellings, hartseer maar ook vreugde en groot sukses.

Dit is 'n boek vol waarhede en wyshede geskryf deur Carel F, Cronjé, iemand wat as skrywer van haar liedjies sedert "Reconstructing Alice", so naby aan Sonja gekom het om die vrou in haar te verstaan.

Dit leer mens dat jy kan kies om jou omstandighede te hanteer, dit te oorkom en daaruit te leer of jy kan kies om nie meer te voel nie, nie meer om te gee nie en ook om nie meer te leef nie, maar net te bestaan sonder enige hoop in die moontlikhede wat die toekoms kan bied.

Te midde van groot suksesse, wat insluit niks minder nie as agt Saries, die Papillon Rising Star Award as een van die agt top vroue in Suid-Afrika wat sukses behaal het, 'n Erkentlikheidstoekenning van die Afrikaanse Sakekamer van Pretoria en 'n optrede voor die Amerikaanse president, beleef sy ook intense laagtepunte wat insluit 'n aborsie, 'n man wat regdeur hul huwelik openlike verhoudings met ander vroue gehad het en ook 'n kind by 'n ander vrou gehad het, 'n ernstige motorongeluk, 'n kind wat op twee jaar doof word, selfsekwestrasie en die ewige media, wat deur die jare positief en ook baie negatief oor haar berig het.

Die verhaal is in heerlike storie-vorm geskryf, vertel in die eerste persoon en die groot sorg aan detail van gesprekke en gebeurlikhede is 'n aangename verrassing.

Die Meisie van Nigel is nie net vir diegene wat in 1978 daar was om haar eerste treffer saam met haar te geniet nie. Dit is vir elkeen wat in die lewe van 'n celebrity belangstel. Suid-Afrika het nog min ware divas gehad – Sonja Herholdt was voorwaar een van ons beteres. Geniet hierdie openhartige, erg eerlike weergawe van 'n ware Afrikoon.

Press Release

"Meisie van Nigel"
the lifestory of Sonja Herholdt
Author: Carel F. Cronjé

If the popularity of Sonja Herholdt is any measured indication, "Meisie van Nigel" is sure to be an overwhelming bestselling success! In the wake of Global Creative Studios' (GCS) other bestselling novels like "The Hansie Cronjé Story" and "The Choice", we are confident that this true, compelling story will grab public and media attention alike.

"It's a special relationship, the one a woman has with her mirror... What she sees is what is there even though she doesn't always want to see it." "Meisie van Nigel" is like looking in Sonja Herholdt's life mirror. It's candid, it's clear and it reflects a human story, one which every woman will relate to. The reader gets to page through the metaphoric scrapbook of Sonja's life, follow her overnight rise to fame with her 1975 hit song "Ek Verlang na Jou", feel the heartache of her traumatic marriage, the crippling guilt of having had an abortion and share in the pressures of volatile media opinion. The story is written in a wonderful story-tale form with beautiful descriptions and conversations that capture the moments perfectly.

The book is full of the insights of writer Carel F Cronjé, the person who worked most closely with Sonja in writing the songs for her album, "Reconstructing Alice". It shows us that we have the power to choose our approach to life. It shows us that we, like Sonja, can decide whether to cope with what life throws at us or whether to stop feeling, stop caring and stop believing in our futures.

Combined with the highs of fabulous career successes, including eight Sarie Awards, the Papillon Rising Star Award, for one of the eight most successful women in South Africa, an honorary award from the Afrikaans Department of Pretoria and an appearance before the President of the USA, Sonja also experienced extreme lows that included: an abortion, a marriage to a man who was continuously unfaithful to her, a terrible accident, a child that went deaf and her own fluctuating self esteem. All these factors had both positive and negative impacts on her life over the years.

'Die Meisie van Nigel' is not only for those who were there in 1978, when her first hit single was released. It is for everyone who is interested in the life of a celebrity. South Africa has few 'divas' and Sonja Herholdt is one of finest. Enjoy this open hearted, truthful account of a true South African.