



Song of Slaves in the Desert

Alan Cheuse

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The Legacy of Slavery

The Loyalty of Family

The Lure of Love

He has no history in the rice fields, no background in being a master. Plantations are as foreign to him as the African plain that birthed the slaves his uncle owns. Surely, though, he knows his own heart. She has no say in his decisions, his day, his life. She doesn't even have a say in her own. But when Nathaniel Pereira plunges into the murky mysteries of freedom and survival in the suffocating Southern heat, Liza can see how she might change her life forever.

Tracing the thread of slavery from sixteenth-century Timbuktu, *Song of Slaves in the Desert* explores one man's struggle to understand a world where honor is in short supply yet dignity cannot be sold. His mission in peril, his mind nearly undone, Nathaniel's obsession binds him to his fate more tightly than chains ever could.

"Cheuse shows that in one way or another, we all experience slavery, and that freedom is never given but must be taken at all cost. The book's epic vision is deeply human and humane."

Helon Habila, author of *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time*

"Alan Cheuse, one of our most respected men of letters, has written a daring, provocative novel. Some readers will be captivated by his depiction of the horrors of slavery and Jewish involvement in the peculiar institution, and others will be troubled and perhaps even offended, for the subject of race in America is always controversial, but no one who reads *Song of Slaves in the Desert* will emerge from its pages unaffected."

Charles Johnson, author of the National Book Award winner *Middle Passage*

"A novelist's dream is to conjure up a whole world, one the reader can tumble right into and inhabit. I fell into Alan Cheuse's *Song of Slaves in the Desert* like that. I confess I felt a twinge of envy at Cheuse's success, his fully imagined song and its people. But the envy immediately gave way to gratitude for having had the chance to enter and treasure the world he's made here."

Josephine Humphreys, author of *Dreams of Sleep*

"Cheuse passionately evokes a vanished world of master and slave, Jew and Gentile, all hurtling toward the tumult and destruction of war. The novel is full of the loss and longing that come with a world divided forever, people from their people and from their past. Fascinating."

Lynn Freed, author of *The Servants' Quarters*

A masterful writer skilled in both accuracy and nuance, Alan Cheuse grapples with the nether parts of our history, the murky boundary between right and wrong, and the wild tendency of love to break free.

For more than two decades, Alan Cheuse has served as NPR's "voice of books." He is the author of four novels, including *The Grandmothers' Club*, *The Light Possessed*, and *To Catch the Lightning* (winner of the 2009 Grub Street National Prize for fiction), several collections of short stories, and a pair of novellas. He is also the editor of *Seeing Ourselves: Great Early American Short Stories* and coeditor of *Writers Workshop in a Book*.

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