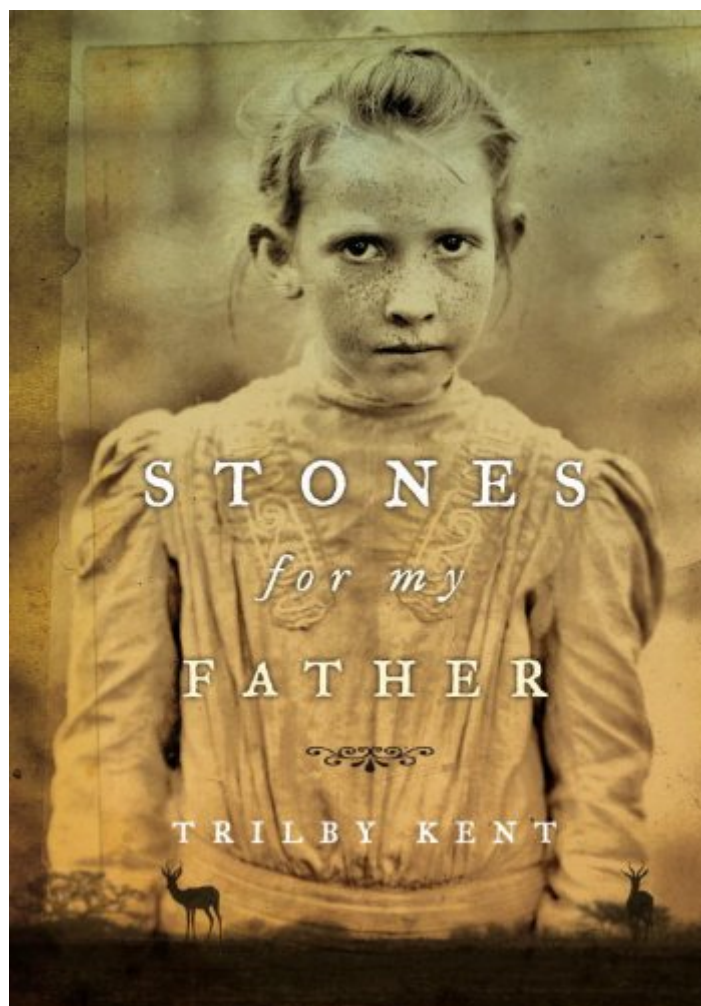


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# Stones For My Father



## Synopsis

Corlie Roux's farm life in South Africa is not easy: the Transvaal is beautiful, but it is also a harsh place where the heat can be so intense that the very raindrops sizzle. When her beloved father dies, she is left with a mother who is as devoted to her sons as she is cruel to her daughter. Despite this, Corlie finds solace in her friend, Siphos, and in Africa itself and in the stories she conjures for her brothers. But Corlie's world is about to vanish: the British are invading and driving Boer families like hers from their farms. Some escape into the bush to fight the enemy. The unlucky ones are rounded up and sent to internment camps. Will Corlie's resilience and devotion to her country sustain her through the suffering and squalor she finds in the camp at Kroonstad? That may depend on a soldier from faraway Canada and on inner resources Corlie never dreamed she had.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A bit of history, but with the personal trials of people who must endure the hardships and loss of conflicts that go on in the name of power.

Reason for Reading: In my love of all things Victorian, I enjoy reading historical fiction about the Boer War, especially when it involves the Canadians who fought in the war. This is a haunting story of the Boer War (fought in what is now South Africa) between the Afrikaners (of Dutch descent) and the British. Told through the eyes of a young girl, we are told the behind the scenes side of the war, that of the Boer women and children left alone on the veldt to fend for themselves. Often their homes are burnt to the ground so that they cannot help their soldiers hiding out in the bush and many turn to joining together and forming laager's with their wagons to protect themselves against the British. But eventually, in this losing war, woman and children are rounded up and placed in internment camps for the duration. Corlie's father died of sickness before the war started, so she is left with a mother who hates her for some secret reason and two little brothers, one four years younger and the other a babe in arms. Quite a tragic tale as we learn of Corlie's life, where the only love she's known came from her now deceased father. She is close to her younger brother and to the African servant boy, but she is getting to an age where her playing with him is now frowned upon. A harsh, mother who obviously loves her brothers and not herself takes them along on their journey away from the British but only to end up under their guard in the interment camp. Corlie does make a secret friend along the way though of a Corporal who looks British only he has a small maple leaf on his uniform to distinguish him as being Canadian. This man pops up several times in Corlie's life and through him we learn the British side of the War. A well-written, intense story. Tragic, harsh and bittersweet it shows the side of war of those who are not fighting but simply living in the war zone. A quick read, I found quite gripping and enjoyed the character of Corlie who had a rough life yet was a friendly, loving girl with an imagination and a fondness for storytelling. A good read.

Trilby Kent's latest novel, *Stones for My Father*, is an intense and poignant read. We watch the story through the eyes of 12-year-old Corlie Roux, whose world as she knows it is shattered by the effects of the Anglo-Boer War (1899 - 1902). The story begins after Corlie's father has died from scrofula, and she is left with a mother who has nothing but scorn and bitterness towards her: "My mother once told me of a dream she had as a young girl... She had dreamed of a child, a boy, with ruddy cheeks and blue eyes like my father's, and a gurgling laugh... I was not that child... Eleven months later, Gert arrived... When my mother laid eyes on him for the first time, the look on her face told me that this, this was the child of her dream." We experience the grief and isolation that her father's death has placed on Corlie's young life, and are catapulted into the story of her survival. As a protagonist, Corlie is intelligent, strong, and has feminist tendencies that she must restrict herself from revealing,

as this was a time where a woman's identity was based on the home she kept and the children she bore. We feel her fire as she and her family escape from their home just before it is destroyed by the British, and they find the laager, a group of refugees consisting of women, children, and men who are too old to fight in the war: "I knew that the women moaned like this because they were afraid, frustrated, and exhausted, and all too aware that their hands were tied. If that is what it meant to be a Boer woman, I wanted none of it. I'd stay a girl forever... or else I'd disguise myself as a boy and run away to join the men on commando as a girl guerrilla..." We are mesmerized by Corlie's resilience as she is shunned by the prisoners in the concentration camp she and the refugees are eventually taken to, including her own mother. Corlie soon discovers the reason behind her mother's hatred towards her, revealing her true identity. It is then that she is able to begin rebuilding her life and shed the restraints of what it is to be a Boer woman. As the war against her country comes to an end, so does the war within herself. With poetic imagery, vivid characters, and a truly inspiring female protagonist, Trilby Kent's *Stones for My Father* is a novel worthy of shelf space.

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