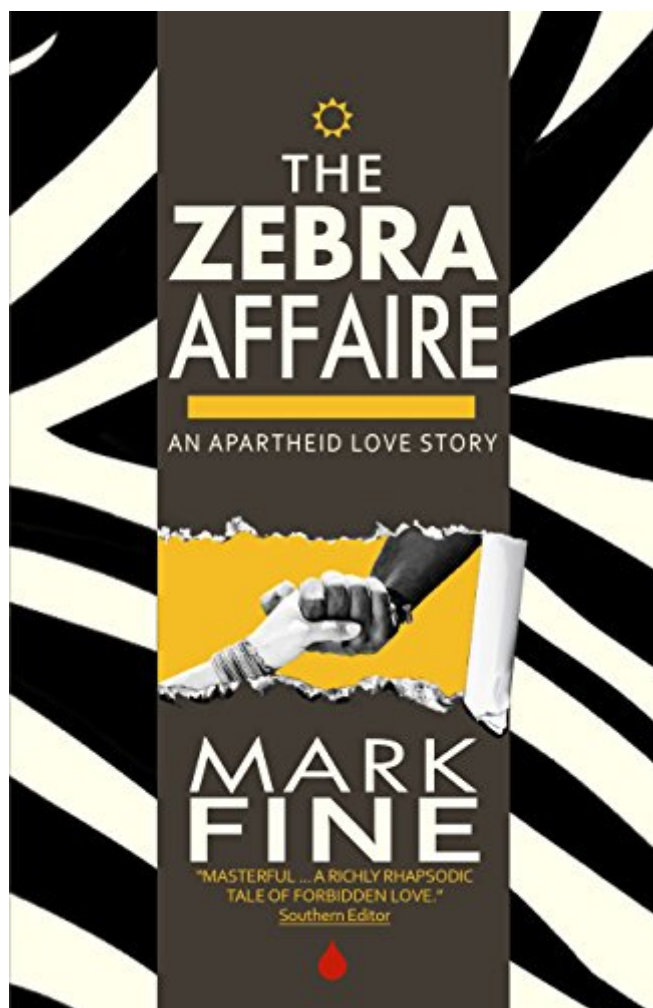


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# THE ZEBRA AFFAIRE: An Apartheid Love Story



## Synopsis

When affairs of State battle affairs of the heart, ordinary people become heroes! The critically acclaimed novel set in 1976 apartheid South Africa. It tells of the courage of love across the color divide – especially in the face of an unyielding racist police state, and the extreme lengths a man and a woman must go to remain together. When Stanwell Marunda, a proud descendant of the Zulu, meets the beautiful Elsa, the daughter of a white farmer, he is certain his bad luck has just begun. She has just rescued him, bloodied and hurt, from a car wreck. As the two of them recklessly begin an intense affair, Stanwell hopes his deepest fears are not realized. First, he must recover from his injuries. This forces him to depend on her. Then he gets a surprise visit from the state's security branch, the obsessive and brutal Malan Zander. Secrets and suspicion begin to follow him. As intimidation and adversity strike his friends and loved one, Stanwell is forced to confront the frightening truth – Is Elsa really the girl of his dreams – or could their forbidden affair be fatal?

*The Zebra Affaire* is a cautionary tale, a gripping story of a forbidden romance that shocked a nation – and the cruel powers used by an intolerant regime determined to stop it. *The Zebra Affaire* is a thrilling fusion of romance and suspense – placed with rich South African history. Reviewers rave about this intimate, yet dangerous love story; that it's set against a literary canvas that is both vividly authentic and powerfully provocative.

"The story of Stanwell and Elsa really touched me. Racial discrimination was so dehumanizing. It was a real privilege to read the history, a period of pain and hope, as seen through Mark Fine's eyes." – Thandi Lujabe-Rankoe, Former ANC Freedom Fighter & Senior South African Diplomat

"Fine doesn't merely craft a story of unbidden romance, but a historical lesson touched with rhapsodic prose. More than a fiction story, *The Zebra Affaire* is a treatise against racial discrimination." – Southern Editor

"Many years ago I found myself literally immersed in Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*. Fate took me to the farm she spoke about and an indelible memory was born. I thought that instant of my life would never be repeated. I was wrong; *The Zebra Affaire* sparked a similar sentiment. This book sits proudly alongside Blixen's autobiographical tales." – Eric J. Gates, bestselling author of *Outsourced*

"A book to savor slowly...appreciating each moment...such was the quality of the writing. One of the best books I've read this year." – Jean Gill, author of 'Song at Dawn'

"The Zebra Affaire grips your soul and won't let go. Never mind zebras, think lions, raw and roar." – Geoff Nelder, author of 'ARIA: Left Luggage'

**INTENSELY DAZZLING...NOT A BLACK AND WHITE STORY, A RAINBOW STORY WITH THE RICH**

COLORS OF LIVES IN TURMOIL." -â œ Elizabeth Newton, author of 'View from the Sixth Floor'

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am thrilled I found this splendid novel, "The Zebra Affaire" by Mark Fine. He has so eloquently captured the horrors, the decadence and the conflicts of a society governed by a powerful police state. The setting is very real: South Africa in the 70s under the brutal racist apartheid government. I see in the author's profile in the front of the book that he's a music record executive, but in his story telling he clearly has an artist's eye. Like a word painting he has captured the colors and images, of not only the country (the cities and wilds) but also the people (in all their hues); and scored the movements and events of the era with truly brilliant nuances. The interior design of the book has a unique feature I've never seen before. Rather than conventional footnotes, the author has inserted fascinating information within

the storyline (where it's most needed and convenient). He has delineated these sections from the main plot with specially italicized paragraphs and in the preface invited the reader to skip over these sections if they interfered in the plot. I expected to do just that. To my amazement I found the research and contextual historical information to be riveting, I read every segment. And in a painless way I learned so much about the related government laws, tribal differences, and the contrasting experiences and emotions in the lives of both the black and white peoples of South Africa. Rarely is one taken back in time to revisit 20th century history through an interracial love story. And to experience neighborhoods and communities that at the same time feel so familiar, yet also so primitive and remote. But with such a potent, romantic story (often gentle and sometimes violent) this novel reads like fiction, however, it also cleverly captures life's gritty reality through the eyes of history.

"The Zebra Affaire" is a must-read novel for those of you who don't know enough about South Africa in the 70's. Within the 350 odd pages one can get a true sense of what it must have been like for both people of color and their masters. For an ex-pat, a former South African, it will take you back to a time when South Africa was the world's pariah. Though the nostalgia will overwhelm you; the places, the foods, even the local vernacular will tug at your heartstrings. But once reminded of those bleak days you will be thankful you chose to leave. Today South Africa has no apartheid but it still has a way to go in order to unite its entire people. In many ways it is now similar to the Deep South in the United States. Change does not come easy. And that is why "The Zebra Affaire" is really significant, and why I'm so glad I discovered it. I sincerely hope to find this book in the Museum of Tolerance bookstore and other venues that champion human rights and dignity. Yes, it's that important! I believe the author to be a gentle genius as Mark Fine spared us the gratuitous histrionics, and instead wrote a book.

"The Zebra Affaire" should be a must on everyone's reading list. I enjoyed it, I couldn't put it down (I read it twice!) and I highly recommend it. I for one can't wait to read Mark Fine's next book.

It is not often a book as intensely dazzling as "The Zebra Affaire" by Mark Fine comes along. A forbidden love story takes place against the dramatic background of 1970's South Africa and apartheid. Fine draws you into the story cautiously, laying the groundwork for the eventual affair between Elsa and Stanwell. By gently educating the reader with the background of the conflicts in South Africa, awareness of the difficulties faced by the star

crossed lovers is enhanced. This is more than a racial segregation issue; there is a deeper issue brewing in South Africa. Tribal conflicts cause significant damage to a country beset by violence and political unrest. As the love of Elsa and Stanwell grows deeper and more intense they are assisted by some to strengthen their bond. While segregation forbids open encouragement of their union, friends support them quietly. But the strict Afrikaner regime stands against them if not publicly at least in a behind closed doors attack on their union. While they flaunt their affair the government seems to stand in stunned silence as the world looks on. But the fanatics behind the scenes are both appalled and disgusted by their obvious sexual relationship and strive to expose and punish them for breaking hundreds years old laws. With vibrant descriptions of both the beauty and ugliness of South Africa the story weaves its way to an intense climax. Waiting for the resolution of the love affair the reader will also wait for the resolution of apartheid. Knowing the eventual outcome of South African politics and the rise of Nelson Mandela it is easy to anticipate the same result for Stanwell and Elsa. I highly recommend this lush and beautifully written story. Fine's use of words is akin to an artist's use of the palette; this is not a black and white story, this is a rainbow story with the rich colors of lives in turmoil. In a word, it is brilliant. If I could rate it higher I would do so.

I enjoyed this book the deeper I dove. The characters and context make for a compelling read. In the best tradition of historical fiction, Fine has woven the story of several intriguing individuals into the larger fabric of a troubled time. In this case, a biracial couple's story is at the center of late 1970s apartheid South Africa. Fine has a flair for detailed descriptions, whether it is the local 1976 Formula 1 race or the local record shop. In the latter instance, Rodriguez is tipped to become the most important musical artist in South Africa (although the author and astute readers know the Detroit native was virtually unknown everywhere else for decades). In order to explain the complicated and often inscrutable laws and customs of the region, Fine uses an alternative to the footnote. He sets out in italics an explanatory paragraph or two in the midst of the narrative. Although this would seem to disrupt the flow, the explanations further explain the context. Indeed, this technique avoids the dreaded exposition of having the characters explain to each other that which they already know. Fine shines a light on the pernicious effects of tribalism, which may ultimately cause more damage across the African continent than colonialism. The lovers at the story's center do not move through Johannesburg in isolation; the supporting cast of characters range from a nightclub singer to the head of a large record company. Whether describing the region's introduction of the 45 RPM single or the horrific conditions

in the mines, the author's descriptions remain compelling. Fine's first novel brings his experience of growing up in South Africa to the page with clarity and conviction.

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