



Maps

By Nuruddin Farah

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This first novel in Nuruddin Farah's **Blood in the Sun** trilogy tells the story of Askar, a man coming of age in the turmoil of modern Africa. With his father a victim of the bloody Ethiopian civil war and his mother dying the day of his birth, Askar is taken in and raised by a woman named Misra amid the scandal, gossip, and ritual of a small African village. As an adolescent, Askar goes to live in Somalia's capital, where he strives to find himself just as Somalia struggles for national identity.

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Maps By Nuruddin Farah Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Maps and Gifts (see below) are the first two volumes in Farah's second trilogy, *Blood in the Sun* (after the acclaimed, three-volume *Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship*), but they stand as prequels to the previously published, award-winning third volume, *Secrets* (1998). This pair of works by Farah, a chronicler of modern Africa's sociopolitical turbulence and growth who has lived in exile from his native Somalia since 1974, are being released in hardcover in the U.S. for the first time, though they have been available abroad for several years. Of the two novels, *Maps* is the richer in concept and execution, beautifully worked in the dense, intricate prose for which Farah is known. Askar, orphaned as a child, is rescued from his dead mother's side and raised in a small village by Misra, an older woman who develops a mysterious, protective bond with him. Even when he moves to the capital to live with his prosperous Uncle Hilaal, Askar's origins continue to preoccupy him, and he grows into a serious, introspective youth fixed on the urgent question of his identity. Hilaal, the cook and nurturer in his city home, is able to provide some answers for his baffled nephew on the subjects of African tradition, Somalian manhood and selflessness. Employing a poetic, imaginative style, Farah skillfully juxtaposes Askar's emotional turmoil and the struggles of his beloved Somalia under siege, as the characters try to understand why blood must be shed for territorial gain. In the end, Askar must choose between avenging his soldier father's death by joining the army, or pursuing his academic studies, but the choice is taken out of his hands by powerful external forces. (Aug.)

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From Library Journal

Intended as the first two books in the author's "Blood in the Sun" trilogy (the third being *Secrets* (LJ 5/1/98)) these novels are a moving study of life in Somalia before the civil war. *Maps* is the story of Askar, found as a newborn beside his mother's dead body and raised by Misra, an outcast in the village because of her Ethiopian heritage. Years later, during the war with Ethiopia, Askar must choose between his country and the woman who raised him when Misra is accused of betraying their village to the enemy. *Gifts* tells the story of Duniya, a nurse trying to raise three children alone in the capital city of Mogadishu. When she decides to accept responsibility for an abandoned baby, she must confront the patriarchs of her family, Somalia's male-dominated bureaucracy, and her own fierce independence. In both novels, Farah has eloquently woven dreams, memories, and folklore into modern tales of ordinary people trying to live their lives with dignity in the midst of famine, colonialism, and longstanding ethnic hatreds. With their own unique styles and engaging characters, each novel easily stands on its own. Recommended for all libraries, even those that do not own the third novel. --Ellen Flexman, Indianapolis-Marion Cty. P.L.

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From Kirkus Reviews

Maps (\$23.95; Aug.; 272 pp.; 1-55970-485-3): Originally published in 1986, this is the first installment in Farah's abovementioned trilogy (its concluding volume, *Secrets*, appeared here alone in 1998). One senses autobiographical resonance in the story's concentration on Askar, a Somalian boy orphaned by his mother's death when she bore him and the loss of his father, a combat soldier serving in Somalia's (1977-78) war against Ethiopia. Askar's dilemma--whether to belong to his loving (Ethiopian) foster mother Misra or join the Somalian Liberation Front and emulate his father's selfless courage--is subtly explored in a tense narrative alive with local color that's both an affecting character study and a dramatic allegory of the confusions still plaguing a wounded and deeply conflicted society. One of the best novels out of Africa in some time. --

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Heidi Fritz:

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Sheila Messina:

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