



The Unlikely Secret Agent

Ronnie Kasrils

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Winner of South Africa's top literary prize, the Alan Paton Award, *The Unlikely Secret Agent* tells the thrilling true story of one woman's struggle against the apartheid system. It is 1963. South Africa is in crisis and the white state is under siege. One August 19th, the dreaded Security Police descended on Griggs bookstore in downtown Durban and arrest Eleanor, the white daughter of the manager. They threaten to "break her or hang her" if she does not lead them to her lover, "Red" Ronnie Kasrils, who is wanted on suspicion of involvement in recent acts of sabotage, including the toppling of electricity pylons and explosions at a Security Police office in Durban.

But Eleanor has her own secret to conceal: she is, like Ronnie, a clandestine agent for the underground ANC and must protect her handlers and Ronnie at all costs. Astutely, she convinces the police that she is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and, still a prisoner, is relocated to a mental hospital in Pietermaritzburg for assessment. It is here that she plots her escape.

This remarkable story of a young woman's courage and daring at a time of increasing repression in apartheid South Africa is told here for the first time with great verve and élan by Eleanor's husband, Ronnie Kasrils, who eventually became South Africa's Minister of Intelligence Services in 2004.

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