



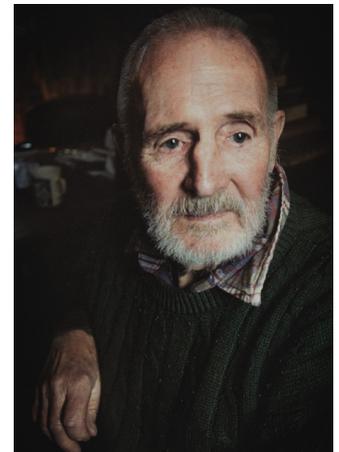
# BITTER EDEN

## HAUNTING WORLD WAR II NOVEL TO BLUE MARK BOOKS

Toby Fountaine of Blue Mark Books has acquired UK and British Commonwealth rights (excluding Southern Africa) to a haunting autobiographical novel which Elizabeth Gilbert describes as 'a jewel of a tale'. BITTER EDEN is based on the late Tatamkhulu Afrika's experiences as a WWII prisoner of war after being captured in North Africa after the fall of Tobruk and its quiet power has touched many readers – from its first publication by Arcadia in 2002, shortly before the death of its octogenarian author, through its US debut and European translations, most recently Presses de la Cite's French edition last year.

As Andre Aciman wrote: 'This book will haunt you, and stay with you, and won't ever let go.' US publisher Stephen Morrison returned to the book time and time again over a decade before being in a position to acquire it for Picador US, where it was published to many accolades in 2014. He wrote an eloquent essay on his journey with the book for *Publisher's Weekly*, which also forms part of the introduction to the American edition. *The San Francisco Chronicle* Review praised the 'gorgeously written' BITTER EDEN as 'a small masterpiece' and *The New York Times* described it as 'a gripping study of the dehumanising effects of war and an empathetic portrait of illicit love'.

This frank and beautifully written novel deals with three men who see themselves as 'straight', but must negotiate the emotions that are brought to the surface by the physical closeness of survival in the male-only prison camps. The book reveals the complex rituals of camp life and the diversion of the POW theatre (in which, in real life, the author played Lady Macbeth and frequently shared a stage with fellow prisoner Denholm Elliot). It lays bare the terrible cruelties, but also the strange loyalties and deep bonds the men know will never be replicated on civvie street. BITTER EDEN is a tender, bitter, powerful book, of lives inexorably changed, of a war whose ending does not bring peace. More than simply 'war' literature, or 'gay' literature, this is a deeply moving, human work about the meaning of love, what it is to be a man.



Blue Mark Books will publish in hardback in November 2016 and publisher Toby Fountaine says: 'The unequalled bonds formed between fighting men has been explored in great literature before; but this story, about how that bond becomes a deeper love, has not. It is hauntingly written and unforgettable.'

Isobel Dixon of Blake Friedmann remembers how the near-blind writer's handwritten letter arrived by post, along with the photocopy of a manuscript typed by a friend: 'I knew Tatamkhulu Afrika's name then as a poet and anti-apartheid activist, but nothing could prepare me for the enduring impact of this slow-simmering story. It is one of the great pleasures of championing an author to see others fall in love with a book too and BITTER EDEN is a novel so many people become absolutely passionate about. I am glad that Toby is one of that discerning number.'