



The Bungalow

Lynn Freed

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In 1975, Ruth Frank, married and living in the United States, returns to South Africa to visit her aging parents. There she resumes an old liaison with Hugh Stillington, liberal man of Africa, who lives in a bungalow overlooking the Indian Ocean. Hugh's world is a South Africa Ruth has never known — lush, wild, comfortably dilapidated, socially and politically courageous. Intoxicated, she begins to feel at home there, setting herself beyond the pale of her own society, and in the way of danger.

"Ruth Frank, the child-narrator of Freed's critically acclaimed *Home Ground*, has grown up in this appealing novel. Having married and settled in America, she returns to South Africa after her father suffers a heart attack. There, she resumes her youthful romance with Hugh Stillington, a reform-minded landowner from a prosperous family of sugar barons. Both a member of the South African diaspora with unshakeable ties to her homeland and a Jew, Ruth is an outsider belonging neither in America nor in the country of her birth. Only in Hugh's bungalow does she experience the "keen sense of being in the right place." But when Hugh is murdered, leaving her pregnant, Ruth is forced to confront her sense of displacement. Ruth is a compelling heroine whose experiences shed light on white South Africa and its assumptions about race, class and belonging. And while the political turmoil of that country occasionally surfaces in a passing reference to Sharpeville or when an Indian writer is imprisoned for his views, the real story--like that of the biblical Ruth--is one of personal alienation and belonging. Though Freed's prose tends toward the heavy-handed, her main character's placelessness is powerfully rendered and profoundly felt."

—Library Journal

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