

HAMZA KOUDRI

SAND ROSES

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Runner-up to the Island Prize for Debut African Novels 2022

Tourists know it as the City of Joy. For Ouled Nail dancers, Bousaada is a city of horrors.

It is 1931 when two sisters arrive in Bousaada bursting with dreams of becoming successful dancers. But the city, occupied by the ruthless French colonial army, changes their lives forever.

When they kill a soldier in self-defense, Fahima and Salima must outsmart the French Colonel who will stop at nothing to uncover the truth. The sisters are driven further into a cycle of violence with every attempt to hide their crime. Risking their lives and the lives of their loved ones, the dancers find themselves at the heart of a civilizational clash.

SAND ROSES is a tale of resistance, sisterhood and the shameful past of two colliding nations. This extraordinarily immersive narrative thrusts its reader into the Algerian city of Bousaada during the 1930s and the story of the Nailiya dancers.

HAMZA KOUDRI has an MA in English Literature and Civilization and has been working in education and international development since 2008. Research for his novel took the better part of a decade, seeking traces of a muted past between the folds of visual documentation and oral histories. In 2022, Sand Roses was shortlisted for the Island Prize for unpublished African authors. Currently serving as the Country Director with the British Council in Algeria, he oversees a portfolio of English, STEM, higher education and cultural programmes, working closely with public sector teachers and institutions. Over the years, he has created and led courses and projects for youth and educators across the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and beyond.

FICTION / NOVEL

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