



Mirage

Monica Burns

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A sheikh without a country. A woman without fear. A love hotter than the Sahara.

In his heart, Viscount Blakeney will always be Sheikh Altair Mazir, but a deathbed oath to his English grandfather forces him to divide his time between Britain and his beautiful Sahara. A victim of prejudice from both cultures, he has learned a bitter lesson. Trust no one.

Yet when he witnesses firsthand the British Museum's rejection of Alexandra Talbot's request for assistance in finding the lost city of Ramesses II, he finds himself not only compelled to help, but donning his desert robes to hide his identity.

Alexandra is all too familiar with men who equate her sex with a lack of intelligence. But the mysterious Altair isn't like other men. He never questions her ability to find the lost city, only her resistance to the sinful pleasure of his touch.

Bound by a Pharaoh's prophecy, desire flares between them under the desert stars. But murder and betrayal turn their quest into a deadly game, pushing their fragile trust to the breaking point. A trust that must be reforged if they are to survive.

This book has been previously published by Samhain Publishing.

Warning: Contains a half-blood prince of the desert whose tortured Bedouin heart beats beneath a proper English cravat. And an American archaeologist who'll go a long way to fulfil her dreams.

Mirage Details

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Author : Monica Burns

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From Reader Review Mirage for online ebook

Carol *Young at Heart Oldie* says

After a friend recommended this book to me, I had high expectations of it. Did it live up to those expectations? A resounding YES! I was totally immersed in the sensual and erotic world that Monica Burns created.

How I imagine Alex...

Independent, headstrong, stubborn and forthright, Alex is determined to prove that she is equal of any man in the field of archaeology. Although her father and uncle had actively encouraged her and respected her achievements, she knows that, because she is a woman, she will always be regarded as inferior. Finding the location of the ancient city of Per-Ramesses is her chance to prove herself just as capable as any man.

I love how strong and determined Alex is and I understood why she had no desire to marry if it meant the loss of freedom to pursue her dreams.

How I imagine Altair...

Viscount Blakeney/ Sheikh Altair Mazir is caught between two worlds – the aristocratic world of his father and the Bedouin world of his mother. After his grandfather pleads with him not to give up the Blakeney title and holdings, Altair agrees to spend half the year in England out of love for him. As a half-breed, he has become accustomed to the prejudice and scorn heaped on him by London society but the betrayal and public vilification by his fiancée has left him with a deep mistrust of women. He only truly feels happy in the Bedouin world where he is accepted by his desert family despite his English blood.

Altair is definitely a drool worthy hero especially when he first appears in desert clothing.

No longer the English lord, he was as lean and predatory as a leopard. A utility belt filled with rifle cartridges crossed his chest, while a pistol was tucked into a belt around his waist.

His entire appearance emanated a sense of danger and excitement. Beneath his eyes, Mazir tribal symbols stained his brown cheeks. His wavy brown hair, no longer restrained by a ribbon, tumbled down over his shoulders.

I love how Ms Burns describes Alex's reaction.

If she were to open her mouth, she was certain more than a dozen butterflies would flee their captivity in her stomach.

Altair has never met anyone like Alex before and is totally fascinated by her. However, past experience has taught him to tread warily where women are concerned, and he's afraid to be open and honest with her and Alex feels she can't trust a man who constantly lies to her. This conflict creates a volatile relationship which only serves to heighten the sexual tension simmering between them. I like how the threats to Alex's life bring out the protective instinct in Altair and we are introduced to Zada, the mongoose he gives her for protection against snakes. Zada is a born scene stealer.

Ms Burns' love scenes are explicit, passionate and scorching hot and the one in Alex's tent was definitely the

stuff of fantasises!

The top of her bent leg almost brushed his lips, and he leaned forward just a hair and kissed the inside of her leg. The sharp hiss of air she dragged into her lungs assured him she liked what he was doing. "Tonight, emîra, I'm going to show you how my body craves you."

I enjoyed the element of danger and intrigue that runs throughout the story. Although I didn't find it hard to guess the identity of the villain, the depth of his hatred for Altair came as a surprise.

Ms Burns' vivid imagery creates a real sense of mood and atmosphere. I could feel the heat of the desert sun, see Alex's tent with its jewel-toned amber, emerald and ruby pillows and smell the woody fragrance of cedarwood and scent of sweet fennel that teases Alex's senses whenever Altair is near.

I appreciated the extensive research Ms Burns must have undertaken. The Egyptology aspects and the Bedouin culture and traditions, that form an integral part of the story, are fascinating.

My hankering for a leave-me-with-a-warm-fuzzy-feeling Epilogue was more than satisfied...

"Home is where the heart is, yâ maHabba, and my heart is wherever you are."

My Verdict: If you enjoy a well-written, passionate and steamy love story, compelling characters, danger and suspense combined with fascinating history, then I can definitely recommend *MIRAGE*.

REVIEW RATING: 5/5 STARS

This review has also been posted on my Rakes and Rascals Blog:

<https://rakesandrascals.wordpress.com...>

Debra Parmley says

Mirage is a sensual, steamy book set in Egypt amid the pyramids.

The heroine's drive to fulfill her fathers last wishes tugged at my heart and the Indiana Jones type adventures kept me on the edge of my seat.

Sex scenes were lush and exotic and fit well with the plot rather than the plot seeming forced to showcase the sex scenes as some erotic romances do.

The hero lies to the heroine and then lies again and again. I found myself wondering how much of this she would put up with and how much she would forgive. He says some incredibly cruel and disrespectful things to her when he is angry. She also lashes out at him. Their interactions are full of passionate exchanges and misunderstandings.

This was an incredibly sensual book, full of adventure, which I enjoyed.

Elle says

Alex Talbot is a woman on a mission--she's determined to complete her father's work and discover the ancient Egyptian city of Per-Ramesses. She storms the hallowed halls of the British Museum to get a look at the Rosetta Stone, in order to verify her translation of certain hieroglyphs. There she encounters Lord Altair Blakeney, a/k/a Sheikh Altair Mazir, who it happens has been corresponding with her father and who has agreed to guide her expedition in the desert.

Here's the problem: Altair is instantly attracted to her, and he's suffered humiliation and rejection at the hands of English who despise his half-Arab heritage. So he decides to pretend he's just Blakeney, and the resulting deception gets more and more elaborate.

A major plot point revolves around fictitious history of a pharaoh marrying a Bedouin girl, so the story departs a bit from history and goes a little Indiana Jones on you about 3/4 the way through. Also, I don't get as much of a sense of tribal life among the Bedouin this time around, so this one loses a point. But it's a good enough read that I'll check out more of Burns' work.

Kiltsandwords says

Mirage by Monica Burns

Overview by Amazon:

A sheikh without a country. A woman without fear. A love hotter than the Sahara.

In his heart, Viscount Blakeney will always be Sheikh Altair Mazir, but a deathbed oath to his English grandfather forces him to divide his time between Britain and his beautiful Sahara. A victim of prejudice from both cultures, he has learned a bitter lesson. Trust no one.

Yet when he witnesses firsthand the British Museum's rejection of Alexandra Talbot's request for assistance in finding the lost city of Ramesses II, he finds himself not only compelled to help, but donning his desert robes to hide his identity.

Alexandra is all too familiar with men who equate her sex with a lack of intelligence. But the mysterious Altair isn't like other men. He never questions her ability to find the lost city, only her resistance to the sinful pleasure of his touch.

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Recently I have seen a lot of discussion on twitter about diversity in romance novels. This was in the back of my mind while I was reading this book. The main character is of mixed race and his experiences are a large part of the story. The author delves into the racism and difficulties the character has experienced and how they have shaped him as a person. I think I really connected to this book because I am also half Arabic and I understand what it is like to be treated poorly because of ignorance and discrimination. His defensiveness and fear is so well explored in the book and was completely relatable.

When I first started reading historical romance I often picked up Johanna Lindsey books – mostly because they were what was on the shelves of my mother and grandmother. I remember one book she wrote called

Captive Desire. It was about an English woman kidnapped by a half Arabic/Englishman and basically held as sex slave in the desert. As a young teenager, I didn't really understand what was so wrong about the context. I just liked that it took place in the desert and featured a portrayal of the Arabic culture. Now as an adult, I look back and realize that there are serious issues with the sexual relationship between the two characters. Mirage by Monica Burns is the version of Captive Desire I SHOULD have read as a teen. The female lead is strong, smart and determined. Alex doesn't let her gender control her. She demands equality and I adored this character. Not only does she own her intellect and her abilities, but she is in control of her sexuality. Honestly, this character was better than most female leads in contemporary novels. Alex is an Egyptian scholar who has travelled from America to dig for Per-Ramses in the Sahara. She must rely on the Bedouin to help her find her way and to excavate. There is a lot of mysticism with ancient prophecies, but it feeds so well into the plot. Alex's adventure is like a blend of Indiana Jones, Cleopatra and the Mummy.

From the descriptions of the desert and the dusty streets of Cairo, the imagery that Monica Burns creates take you as the reader to a foreign world and time. The story is so well told that you completely feel like you are bouncing around on a camel or wiping the soft sand off your face. It is these intricate details that make a story so believable. When you feel that you are there, you believe in the story.

The archeology is fascinating and a huge part of the story. Another element is the Bedouin politics that abound with the Mazir tribe that is helping Alex. Her guide Altair, also known as Lord Blakeney, is part of the tribe that is escorting Alex. Altair is amazing! Sexy as hell, suave as an Englishman and deadly as a Bedouin. I loved the character and the internal battles he struggles – between his nationalities, between his attraction to Alex and his loyalty to Mazir and the discrimination he has faced and his future. Altair is so entranced by Alex and wants her unlike any other. The description of Altair when he dons his Arabic robes and henna tattoos literally blew me away. The cover of this book actually matches my internal image and it's pretty hot!

The attraction between the two is off the charts hot. From the start, they can barely be in each other's company without getting physical. It was like they were magnets – attracted to each other no matter what. There is no mention of Alex's virginity, which didn't really matter, as it allowed her to explore her sexuality as she chose. The love scenes between the two were exactly what you would hope for if you were in a beautiful tent with thick carpets, satiny pillows and the cool desert nights blowing. Really, really well done! This is a great story! Full of excellent research, interesting history, politics and love. I really recommend checking out this book as it's a unique and fascinating story!

Julie says

We're in the Arabian desert for this 1880's romance. I enjoyed it very much. The plot line has the heroine, Alexandra Talbot, an American archeologist, searching for a legendary lost tomb with the help of Viscount Blakeney, who prefers to be called Altair once they arrive on Egyptian sands because unknown to her he is half-Bedouin and also carry's the title Sheikh Altair Mazir.

Alexandra is very tenacious in her search, her uncle and deceased father were obsessed in finding the tomb and have left her plenty notes to help her.

Since they had first met they'd been attracted to each other and with their close proximity now a physical relationship is on the cards.

But Altair still decides to keep his identity a secret and Alexandra is finding it hard to trust him completely.

I did like the story. There was a lot of falling out and making up. Sometimes I didn't think they would ever make it, I would like Altair then not much and then they'd make up again until the next stupid thing he'd say

or Alexandra would change her mind again about something, or fate would just get in their way. This did make the story a little repetitive but I did enjoy it nonetheless.

There is intrigue, hot romance and suspense, interesting characters and a very unique setting which makes this novel a very entertaining read.

Pam says

Mirage by Monica Burns is a wonderfully rich historical romance filled with intrigue, suspense and betrayal, all capped off by a well executed and fast-paced plotline that kept my interest as I raced from beginning to end. This one is definitely a page-turner. While I love the subject of history, I rarely read historical novels, so I was ecstatic when I discovered this jewel of a book. For a lover of history in general and Egypt in particular, this book is a treasure and it shows that Ms. Burns did her research and did it thoroughly.

Her use of vivid period details, already discovered archeological truth and her fictional slant of the 'mythological' city of Per-Ramesses makes for a winning combination. Then add the well-rounded, interesting characters of Alex and Altair (Lord Blakeney), mix in their own personal mistrusts and emotional demons, sift in blistering hot attraction, and finish with intriguing secondary characters who round out the plot. What you get is a story worthy of being read again and again...a new classic for the genre. I can't say enough good things about this story. Buy it...read it...but most importantly, enjoy it!

Victoria Roberts says

This was an enjoyable read. It takes us from a brief glimpse of late 19th century London all the way to the height of the Egyptian archeological period. We have intrigue, love, sex, and best of all adventure! We meet Alexandra Talbot American archeologist trying to find her place in the male dominated field. Then we have Lord Altair Mazir half Bedouin half English. The descriptions in the book were very on point on I could feel myself transported to each scene as I read it. On the bad side I felt in some ways that the attraction that the two main characters felt was very over the top. From almost the very beginning they basically wanted to rip each others clothing off and for the time period that just wasn't done. Then the first time they do finally give in she is very knowledgeable in what to do and I find that very unlikely. But, over all I did enjoy the book the extremely steamy scenes between the lovers and the story itself regarding the hunt for the lost city.

This was provided by Netgalley in return for an honest review all opinions are my own

Kathryn says

I very much enjoyed this book and recommend it to anyone who wants a steamy, exciting historical. Unfortunately I could not read it in one sitting because life intervened, but I did not want to put the story down.

I actually picked this book up because I had met Monica Burns at a convention and I enjoyed the way she could turn a phrase. When I saw that Mirage was being released I bought it because the blurb interested me.

The heroine wants to succeed in a man's field and the hero is of mixed blood. I work in a man's field and

issues of race have been much in the news lately, so I thought this book would be interesting.

The book was originally published in 2009 but her handling of these issues is not dated. The chemistry between the protagonists is off the chart as they struggle to resist the attraction between them and also solve the puzzle of who is trying to kill Alex. All this while searching for a lost palace of the Pharaoh Ramses.

There are false leads so just when you think it is safe to go back into the excavation there is another attempt on her life. The problems and solutions do not seem forced to advance the plot, but are plausible.

Of course they get their "happily ever after". Even knowing it wouldn't be much of a romance without the HEA, the plot pulled me through to the end.

MelissaB says

****Actually 3 1/2 stars****

This story had a very interesting setting - the Arabian desert in the 1880's. The lead characters were searching for a lost tomb, so there were a lot of Egyptian tomb references that reminded me of the movie The Mummy (which I really like).

The two main characters were interesting, especially the half-Bedouin, half-English hero Sheikh Altair Mazir who goes along on the quest into the desert with the heroine. Alexandra Talbot is an American woman who has studied archeology with her deceased father and is intent of finding the tomb her father and uncle were obsessed with. The pair is attracted to each from the time they meet in England when Altair decides to accompany her into the desert, since he corresponded with her father and was supposed to escort him. He decides not to tell the heroine who he really is because he is afraid she will reject him for his half-Bedouin blood. They set out for the desert and begin the task of finding the hidden tomb that plays a big part in his tribe's history and is guarded by an ancient prophesy.

While I really enjoyed the setting, I was very annoyed with how the romance played out. The book was full of misunderstandings and the hero lying and betraying the heroine for one dumb reason after another. It felt very contrived and became pretty annoying because every time they started to grow closer, something would pop up and push them away from each other for another few weeks.

The author created a very neat setting and some pretty interesting characters but lost points with me for too many misunderstandings between the lead characters.

Patricia says

Ms; Burns' description of life on a 19th century archeological dig in Egypt is fantastic. The characters are very well written, and you understand all of the emotions they are going through. The plot was great - had me constantly wondering and re-thinking, trying to determine who the villain was, and the reasoning behind his actions. Great book.

Jeannie Zelos says

Mirage, Monica Burns

Review from Jeannie Zelos book reviews

Genre: Romance, Historical

A bit out of my normal style this one, but I like a dip into history or the East so this sounded a fun read.

Sadly for me it was just an ok read, nothing special. There were some steamy encounters between Altair and Alex, but they didn't make up for the fact that for me the story just wasn't engaging enough.

There were lots of misunderstandings, deceptions, intrigues and fallouts from them. It was clear fairly quickly to me who was behind things, and that wouldn't have been a problem if the story was enough to keep me interested in how things played out. It wasn't though, I kept losing patience with the main characters and flipping forward to see if things got better.

Sadly I didn't get the sense of history or of life in the East that I was hoping for. Its a bit like a love child novel of Barbara Cartland and E L James IMO – saccharine romance meets erotica on speed. Like when you drink a coffee that's been over sweetened, its still coffee, still good but it makes your teeth ache a bit.

Still, as always this is just my feelings and this novel is perfect for many, many readers and thankfully we all want different things.

Stars: Three , an OK one off read.

ARC supplied by Netgalley and publishers

Wendy says

I can't explain why this novel struck such a chord with me but it did. I'm not normally a lover of romantic stories involving sheikhs and the desert, but this story went straight to my heart and I absolutely loved it!

Altair Sheikh Mazir/Lord Blakeney is the most gorgeous tortured hero with the added little-boy-lost quality that will make most women want to mother him in lieu of being able to do anything else! He has been reared in two completely different worlds and cultures, being both the grandson of an English Viscount (on his father's side) and a Prince of the desert (as descended from his maternal grandfather). Not fully at home in either role, but more comfortable with his Bedouin tribe, there he transforms from the suavely handsome Lord Blakeney to the gorgeous and dangerous Sheikh Altair Mazir who, complete with tribal robes, henna face markings and his hair loose to his shoulders sounds good enough to eat.

Alexandra, too, is a likeable and attractive character. Innocent but liberated, strong-minded, confident and brave, she survives a number of threats to her life without falling apart. She has been treated as an equal by her father, a renowned American Egyptologist who has taught her everything he knows. Sadly Alex's father dies before he can realise his dream of finding the tomb of Nourbese, beloved wife of Ramesses II.

Alex first encounters Altair at the British Museum. Even though he is dressed as a proper English Lord, Alex knows something is different about this stunning man and is very attracted to him. Altair knows all about Alex's father, having had years of correspondence with him, although his failing to reveal this fact proves to be a big mistake in their burgeoning love affair.

The pair travels to Egypt, with Altair acting as Alex's escort and protector. She continues to be unaware that Altair is half Bedouin and an honorary Sheikh to boot. The attraction that began in London continues to grow, making the lie-by-omission harder to reveal. The sizzling sensuality between the two of them fairly jumps off the page and simmers throughout.

Monica Burns' descriptions are so thoroughly evocative of life in Egypt, I felt as though I could smell, feel and see the warm, soft sand of Cairo, and hear the cacophony of sounds, noise and bustle of life there. Having visited the area myself, I consider her depiction of the Pyramids of Giza to be stunning, eloquent, vivid and just as I remember. In fact it took me right back - I want to visit again. This is undoubtedly the sign of an excellent writer, one that paints such beautiful pictures that we, the reader can see what she sees.

This story really does have everything: murder, mystery, intrigue, history and the most sensual, steamy romance. The characters are incredibly well crafted; I loved Altair, admired Alex and adored the little mongoose - Zada - presented to Alex by Altair as an added protection against snakes. Even in this Ms. Burns does not pull back on the imagination - this sweet, chattering little creature is funny, loveable and endearing. The caravan of the Bedouin tribe escorting Alex is brought brilliantly to life, silk cushions, camels, and dancing with that background danger ever lurking, sinister and menacing. If I have one criticism - and it's minute when put against the myriad of pluses - it is that Altair has a brother by the same Bedouin Mother, which makes them half-brothers and not step-brothers as is constantly asserted.

Even so, **Mirage** is an historical romance of the highest calibre. A definite keeper.

Book Utopia says

While the setting and attraction between the two leads is fantastic, and I absolutely adored what a strong, feisty heroine Alex was, I hated all the lying and misunderstandings that provided the conflict for the romance. It fell into an easy pattern - act on attraction, argue, not speak to each other. Then at the start of the next chapter, one or the other would rationalize the last argument and it would all get swept under the rug, starting the whole process all over again. It got very tedious by 2/3's of the way through the story.

Cid Tyer says

From the moment I read the blurb for *Mirage*, I wanted to read it. The setting is awesome; there aren't enough stories set in the desert among nomadic people if you ask me. Alex Talbot is a strong willed, stubborn woman who meets her match and willing conspirator in Viscount Blakeney. The characters are searching for Pharaoh's treasure, but stumble onto much more than that. There is more going on than just finding a few dusty relics. From the beginning of their acquaintance, someone is out to stop Alex from finding the treasure her father knew existed in the desert. I liked Alex's spunk; she's an intelligent, stubborn heroine that has latched onto a dream and tries to see it through. She's not a bad-ass kind of woman, though she's more than capable of standing on her own two feet and it's her moments of vulnerability that endear her to you. It's the deception and lack of communication between hero and heroine that create half of the problems, and borders on the edge of monotonous. Okay, not really because there's so much else going on, but if the plot wasn't so rich and active, the lack of communication would seriously irritate me. I know this is a me thing, I'm a communicator by birth and I just don't get how people can't stop and communicate things. Bah! That said, the characters spark on paper is great; I'm a sucker for acceptance stories. One character with

a blemish or a bad history or something that makes them shrink away from others being loved and accepted – yeah, I'm a total sucker for THOSE stories, and Mirage has that element in play. The one thing I didn't like was towards the end where the culmination of several non-communicated issues comes to a head – if I were Alex, there would be a bit more of hell to pay for the silver tongued Viscount.

Jess the Romanceaholic says

As with other Monica Burns novels, this one was a scorcher! One thing I love about her books is that while they're hot, the story is enchanting. While many authors tend to rely on sex and skimp on the plot, MB never fails to blend them both.

What worked for me:

I love the plot device of the scholarly woman who has to fight to have her abilities accepted by her male counterparts. Add to that the whole "fulfilling her father's last wishes", and you've definitely got my attention. The sensuality of this book was through the roof without being raunchy, and the whole "secret identity" of our hero kept me turning pages long after it was time to sleep just because I couldn't wait to see her reaction when she discovered the truth.

What didn't work for me:

Our hero is a jack*ss. He's constantly cruel to the heroine, saying things like "American women whore themselves out just as easily as British women", and pretty much telling her during a fight that since she's a slut, she should sleep with another man to get the other man to do what she wants. {both paraphrased, obviously}.. That doesn't bother me nearly as much as the fact that she repeatedly forgives him just like that *snaps fingers*. I'm sorry, but if my man treated me like he continues to treat her, there'd be some groveling involved.

Overall though, I thoroughly enjoyed it. A solid 4 Stars :)