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Beau Geste

P. C. Wren · *1924 · original English text*

A French officer finds the Foreign Legion's Fort Zinderneuf in the Sahara manned by dead men propped at their posts. The mystery goes back to England and to three brothers, Michael, Digby and John Geste, raised at Brandon Abbas. A great sapphire, the Blue Water, disappears, and the brothers run away and join the Legion. Their story ends in the fort and in a letter to Lady Brandon.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What will brothers do for honor, for a woman who raised them, and for each other?

Wren's answer is a code of loyalty. Michael takes the blame for a theft, the brothers share one fate, and the book honors courage, silence and self-sacrifice, with a doubtful boyish romance about the Legion. It is a story of men of honor in a hard place, and Michael's letter shows that his gesture was meant to shield someone else's secret.

KEY CHARACTERS

John Geste
The youngest of the three brothers and the narrator of the second part.

Michael "Beau" Geste
The eldest brother, a gentleman of great charm.

Digby Geste
Michael's twin.

Lady Brandon
Aunt Patricia, who raised the three brothers.

Isobel
A young woman of the household whom John loves.

Sergeant Lejaune
The brutal and greedy commander of Zinderneuf.

Major Henri de Beaujolais
The French officer who finds the fort.

George Lawrence
An English civil servant in Nigeria who loved Lady Brandon.

Hank and Buddy
Two American legionaries.

Grades 8–12

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01

The Silent Fort

PART I, CHAPTERS I–II

Major de Beaujolais finds Fort Zinderneuf in the Sahara with dead soldiers propped at their posts and the commandant dead of a bayonet wound. He tells the mystery to George Lawrence.

- The relief column finds the fort silent.
- Dead soldiers stand at the walls.
- The commandant lies dead of a bayonet wound.
- George Lawrence takes the tale to Lady Brandon.

02

The Blue Water

PART II, CHAPTERS I–II

At Brandon Abbas, where Lady Brandon has raised the three Geste brothers, the great sapphire disappears. Michael is caught with it, confesses and leaves, and Digby and John follow in turn.

- Lady Brandon has raised the three brothers.
- The Blue Water sapphire vanishes.
- Michael is caught with it and confesses.
- Digby and John follow him.

03

The Legion

PART II, CHAPTERS III–IV

The three brothers join the French Foreign Legion at Sidi-bel-Abbes, make friends with the Americans Hank and Buddy, and are posted to the desert under Sergeant Lejaune.

- The brothers enlist at Sidi-bel-Abbes.
- They befriend Hank and Buddy.
- They are sent to the desert.
- The sergeant Lejaune is brutal.

04

Zinderneuf

PART II, CHAPTERS V–VI

The Tuareg attack the fort, and Lejaune, John and Michael hold it with the dead at the walls. Michael is mortally wounded, and John kills Lejaune in self-defense. Digby gives Michael a Viking's funeral.

- The Tuareg attack the fort.
- The dead are propped at their posts.
- Michael is mortally wounded.
- John kills Lejaune in self-defense.
- Digby burns the fort as a Viking's funeral.

05

The Long Road Home

PART II, CHAPTER VII

A fleeing Arab rider shoots Digby dead. John, with Hank and Buddy, crosses the Sahara to British West Africa and home.

- An Arab rider shoots Digby.
- John, Hank and Buddy cross the desert.
- They reach British West Africa.
- John goes home to England.

06

The Beau Geste

PART II, CHAPTER VII

John brings Michael's letter to Lady Brandon. It tells how Michael took the duplicate jewel to shield her secret sale of the real one. Lady Brandon calls it a beau geste.

- John brings Michael's letter.
- Michael took the duplicate jewel to shield Lady Brandon.
- She had sold the real sapphire in secret.
- She calls it a beau geste.

Brotherly loyalty | Honor and self-sacrifice | The desert | A secret kept | Courage under command

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

1. The fort with dead men at the walls.
2. How the Blue Water disappears and who takes the blame.
3. What the brothers face in the Legion.
4. What Michael's letter says at the end.

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