

IT could be the strangest love story ever written — the book that David Muller, an East London man, recently completed about the 49 days he and his family spent in Mozambique as prisoners of Renamo bush fighters.

Mr Muller sent the manuscript of his book to a Cape Town publisher this week, 11 months after the family was released and brought back to South Africa by the naval vessel, Tafelberg.

Provisionally titled *Singing in Chains*, it is based on a diary Mr Muller painstakingly kept on scraps of paper given to him by the family's captors during

their enforced stay in Mozambique.

It tells how the family's dream sailing holiday turned to a nightmare when their yacht, Arwen, ran aground and the family was captured by Renamo.

"It is a story of contrasts: of men who could stick a bayonet into others without flinching, and yet could show us such great love and attention," said Mr Muller.

He was referring to the family's Renamo captors, men about whom both he and his wife, Sandy, still speak with emotion.

"It is a known fact that for some reason or other prisoners often learn to love their captors ... and we did," he said.

"In one way, they took everything we had. But in another they gave us back so much," Mrs Muller said.

"They gave us back our lives when they could have killed us. They gave us friendship. They cared for us.

"I feel no ill-feeling towards them. In a strange way they moulded me into a better person."

Mrs Muller said people of the so-called First World could learn much from "these simple bush fighters".

And her husband agreed: "When somebody has something just a little better than nothing and is willing to give it to you, then you realise there is something sick about the society in which we live."

He spoke of the long weeks they spent as prisoners in Mozambique, of the monotony of sitting day after day at the mud but in which they were kept captive.

"I welcomed anything that broke the monotony, even being shot at," he

'They gave us back our lives when they could have killed us - they gave us friendship'

# Our strange love story!

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Dave Muller, his wife, Sandy, with their children children Tammy, nine, and Seth, five.

## TERRIFIED FAMILY FEARED THEY MIGHT BE OFFERED AS HUMAN SACRIFICES

FOR some terrifying moments an East London family thought they were about to become human sacrifices to the dead ancestors of a band of Renamo fighters deep within the bush of Mozambique.

A Renamo leader seemed to be sizing up the Muller family for slaughter at a ceremony that left many of his followers in a trance-like state.

The Mullers — David, his wife Sandy, and their children, Tammy, then eight, and Seth, five — were captive in the camp. They were caught when their yacht, Arwen, ran aground on the Mozambique coast.

Their capture and 49-day stay as

prisoners of Renamo last year has now been chronicled in a book by Mr Muller, an East London architect.

This week he described the capture of his family by Renamo. He said the hut in which they were held captive was close to another which the rebels called the chapel — it was used almost daily for ancestor worship.

"One Saturday all the officers gathered at that hut, and there was a lot of shouting and shaking of rattles," he said.

Mr Muller said none of the Renamo men had "raised a finger" to harm them but the leader of this ceremony

was a stranger.

"He led a procession of the worshippers around the camp, wearing a blindfold and holding a flyswisk in front of his face," Mr Muller said. "Then they went back into the chapel."

He said the ceremony continued for another half hour while two oxen, a goat and a sheep were tethered nearby for sacrifice.

"Then there was a flurry at the door of the chapel and the stranger, a small guy, came out carrying a white cloth almost like a matador.

"He walked strangely sideways and was carrying a knife with a 300mm

blade. He moved towards us and I thought he was going to slaughter one of the cattle.

"I didn't want to watch so I started to move away. Then he made a beeline for me, holding the dagger in front of the cloth.

"He stood in front of me and I could see that he was in a trance. But even more frightening was the fact that the officer commanding the camp was next to him and looking at me with eyes like saucers.

"The situation was clearly out of his control. He had obviously been told to look after us at any cost, and now he

didn't know whether to protect us and dispense his ancestors.

"The little guy just stared at me, running his eyes over me. I have never in my life felt so naked.

"There was a moment of silence, and then he stuck his hand out and shook mine. Then he did the same with Sandy. He patted the children on their heads and walked off."

Mr Muller said the ceremony carried on throughout the night and the next day with much feasting and, he suspected, "much emphasis on fertility".

His family stayed in their hut and did not look out.

said, referring to two rocket and mortar attacks on the rebel camp while they were prisoners there.

"The monotony is unimaginable. Even the thrill of violence gets you going, seems to give a meaning to life."

He said that through it all, they were cared for by a Renamo rebel called

Patrick, who had been seconded to them as a translator and companion.

Patrick was 42, an old man in the rebel camp, where most people died young. "He would have given anything for us, including his life," said Mr Muller.

"We made a pact with Patrick that we would

one day go back to visit him. I will do everything in my power to keep that pact."

And Mr and Mrs Muller really would like to return to Mozambique.

"I would like to give something back in exchange for all the kindness we were shown," said Mrs Muller.

She would even like to

see again the apparently tough second in command of the Renamo camp, a man they called Captain Hook because he had lost an arm in an engagement with Frelimo.

"The Captain Hook who seemed so tough had tears in his eyes when the time came to say goodbye to the Muller children. "There were a lot

of tears about that day," said Mr Muller.

He told of how, when the Tafelberg arrived, the rebels built three fires on the beach so that a landing party would know where to find the Muller family.

The Mullers were then taken to the naval ship and soon they saw the three fires on the beach

fading out of sight.

"That is the saddest image in my mind: seeing those three little dots fade away," said Mr Muller.

"Within 30 minutes we were back in this life of unbelievable luxury. We had moved from that basic existence to one of pandered hospitality. And our friends from the

camp had gone back to their mindless fighting."

Mr Muller believes the scars of the Mozambique war will last for many years after the last shot has been fired.

"How do you put all these things right? What do you do with eight or 10-year-olds who have learnt to do their shopping with an AK47?"