

Egyptian Gold  
Dan Feltam

This is a thoroughly engrossing novel.

Dan Feltham draws you slowly into his yarn, enticing you with his deep familiarity with times past in exotic places that most of us only vaguely know about.

Dan's nonfiction books, "Sahara Sands" and "When Big Blue went to War" are straightforward accounts of his experiences as an oil company geologist in North Africa around 1960 and Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

North Africa is the setting for the first three quarters of "Egyptian Gold." Dan offers a satisfying description of the transformation of Libya from a traditional society with a millennia – old history of nomadic tribes to a modern country as the oil majors relentlessly searched the Sahara. He describes the camel caravans, the medinas – the old quarters of Arab cities with their labyrinths of narrow streets and the cacaphony of muzzarin calls to prayer, hawkers' enticements and shoppers' bartering, set among the smells of meat, spices, metalsmiths and human and animal offal.

The protagonists of the book are employed as oil company geologists performing aerial surveys, just as Dan describes in "Sahara Sands." The Lockheed Lodestar airplane they use for aerial surveys is an asset that can be put to other productive uses by the right people.

It is a time of ferment in the Arab world. King Faisal of Egypt had been replaced by the brutal nationalist Abdul Gamel Nasser a few years earlier. The laissez-faire era in which Europeans and Arabs, Christians, Muslims and Jews lived in harmony had come to an end. The Sicilian Lombardi clan had done well in Egypt, but the handwriting was on the wall. It was time to leave. But how? That's where the geologists' Lodestar came into their plans.