

*A 26-year old Stanford geologist and his team travel from Tripoli, Libya to Alexandria, Egypt during the Arab month of Ramadan. The team helps a Sicilian family smuggle their people, dollars and gold from a dictator's persecution.*

## **Egyptian Gold and the Wages of Love**

By Dan Feltham

**Order the book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13448.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

The poster features a woman in a blue belly dancer outfit standing in a desert landscape. In the background, there is a map of the Mediterranean region with labels for Italy, Albania, Malta, and Libya. An airplane is flying over the map. A sign for 'Dance EGYPT Club' is visible. In the foreground, there are stacks of gold bars.

# Egyptian Gold

AND THE WAGES OF LOVE

DAN FELTHAM

Copyright © 2024 Dan Feltham

Print ISBN: 978-1-958892-86-2

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-746-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the author. No part of this story is true, although small portions are based on the author's past experiences. All personal names are imaginary: the historical inserts are based on printed fact and are intended to provide a reference for time and place. Geographic locations are real.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2024

First Edition

**Cover Custom Designed** by JudithS Design & Creativity

Follow Judith's Artistry at '[www.judithsdesign.com](http://www.judithsdesign.com)'

# *Egyptian Gold and the Wages of Love*

By Dan Feltham

## Contents

Introduction .....	11
Chapter 1 – Some History and an Explanation .....	13
Chapter 2 – The Plan .....	24
Chapter 3 - A Better Understanding .....	43
Chapter 4 – Time To Go.....	64
Chapter 5 –Sicilian Circus.....	74
Chapter 6 – Loading and Lasagna .....	88
Chapter 7 - Flight Across the Med. ....	102
Chapter 8 – The Sicilians .....	110
Chapter 9 – Waiting.....	129
Chapter 10 – More Gold.....	136
Chapter 11 – Leg Five and Sicily .....	140
Chapter 12 – Home To Tripoli .....	163
Chapter 13 – Camilla.....	176
Chapter 14 – Alchemy – Gold to Cash.....	192
Chapter 15 – Side Trip .....	208
Chapter 16 – Re-united.....	218
Chapter 17 – Cairo Happenings .....	229
Chapter 18 – Ahmad & Salem.....	233

Chapter 19 – On the Road.....	240
Chapter 20 – Troubles In the Sandbox .....	250
Chapter 21 – A Night of Surprises.....	264
Chapter 22 – A Week in Paradise .....	277
Chapter 23 – A Change of Heart?.....	286
Chapter 24 – The Search.....	293
Chapter 25 – Peace and Permanence .....	302
Epilogue .....	321
Bibliograpy .....	327
Acknowledgements.....	329
About the Author .....	331

**Previous Books Written by Dan Feltham**

When Big Blue Went To War, 2010 (non-fiction)

The Catalina Connection, 2011

Mount Rushmore's Legacy, 2012

The Edge of Time, 2013

Terror in the Gulf, 2014, (San Diego County Award Winner)

Trade Winds Calling, 2015 (Revised Edition)

Mexican Standoff, 2016

Sahara Sands, A Memoir, 2017

Copper Canyon, 2018

**Dan's Web Site - [www.dansstories.com](http://www.dansstories.com)**

## Chapter 6 – Loading and Lasagna

Alex and I stood at the plane's door – Alex checking inventory against the list provided by the Lombardi's and me tallying estimated or known weights as it went through the door. Jack became loadmaster, directing placement according to sizes and weights up and down the aisle. The Lombardis made a good team; they were so used to working together that I thought that explained their financial successes over the years. Leo monitored the loading from my side. Pierro and Camilla were directing from inside the tents. The first things in the door were the lighter leather satchels and suitcases containing the previously mentioned jewelry and cash money of all denominations and from surrounding countries. Next came two heavy wooden crates, each marked with small xxx's. Alex stopped the loading.

“Hey Leo, what's this; any explosives in here? Why the xxx's?”

His answer, “I don't know?”

“We gotta know! We need to look, now!”

The loading stopped and both crates were crowbarred open. Under a layer of straw was a neat collection of M1 Gerand rifles, several Colt 1911s, two Canadian Lee Enfield rifles and miscellaneous cartridge belts; underneath was a box of German WWII stick grenades known as ‘potato mashers’. In the other crate were similar WWII weapons and a box of US Mk 2 Frag pineapple grenades, some slightly rusted but pins intact.

“Get these dangerous things outa here!” yelled Alex pointing to the grenades. “Damn it, you call that trust Leo?” Somebody in there needs to sit on one of these little toys while I pull the pin and run like hell!”

I had never seen Alex so angry and I believe Leo was honestly embarrassed. After Leo ran inside the tent, there was a great deal of Italian shouting. A red faced young man came and took the two boxes to an old nameless car and sped away.

Leo returned and a calmer Alex explained, “There’s a good chance we would have made it fine, but if something would set one of those off, I picture gold dust flying through the clouds and airplane parts falling into the sea – us with it playing harps. Let’s make sure there’s no more of that.”

“He said they were collector items,” explained Leo. “I told him to leave us and get rid of them here in Egypt.”

Loading resumed.

Alex turned to Leo. “I have a question that I’ve got to ask. I have never seen this much gold in one spot. Maybe I don’t need to know since I’m just the delivery man, but where in the hell did it all come from?”

“Hah, an interesting question; nice isn’t it,” answered Leo.

Loading of the ingots stopped as he explained and as Alex, Jack and I listened.

“This gold has actually been mined twice – eh, perhaps three times – originally from Mother Earth in its native form and then again much of it from Egyptian tombs. I won’t give you specifics of how it came to us. Much of Egypt’s raw gold was originally sourced from ancient placer mines along the Nile and that was probably flushed down river over millions of



years from the high mountains of Uganda, Ethiopia and beyond. Another source of the gold has been hand mined for centuries from what is called the Nubian Shield – a large area of Pre-Cambrian crystalline, igneous and metamorphic rock well south of here on the east side of the Nile along the Red Sea. The Family has employed a hard-rock geologist for many years and we have copies of papyrus maps dating as far back as 1160 BC that clearly show the early mines.”

Leo paused, probably to think about what he wanted to tell.

“When King Tutankhamun’s tomb was opened by Carter in 1922 they found fabulous treasures and that set off a new round of tomb robbers, some of whom may have been on our payroll. Understand that not all of the gold taken from the Pharaoh tombs are in museums. Many ancient mummified remains contained precious gold and jewelry items that 3000 years ago were intended to accompany the rich and famous on their voyages throughout their afterlives; such a terrible waste that would have been. That type of gold has been collecting within our family treasuries from different sources – some fairly traded, some stolen, some coins melted in our furnaces, and some borrowed from those Egyptian tombs and also melted. Obviously, the source of a priceless golden idol once melted cannot be identified, and much that was originally only thin gold leaf wrapping temple images is now contained within these ingots. Every known source, including the Valley of the Kings, the temples of Abu Simbel and the temples at Karnak have now been stripped or are in guarded protection for tourists and archeologists to study. By today’s standards, those Pharaohs were perhaps the world’s first multi-millionaires.

The gold referred to in the Bible is supposed to have come from King Solomon's mines, a place referred to as Ophir, in the geologically related shield areas of southwestern Saudi Arabia. You might say that Egypt and our Lombardi family have rich and interesting histories."

"Probably more than I needed to know, but you said perhaps it was mined three times," said Alex. "How is that?"

"As I indicated, not all gold comes from the earth. Here in Egypt, gold from the tombs and temples technically belongs to the government. I'm sure you know that few governments are honest. Gold in many forms slated for Cairo museums has not always reached its rightful destinations."

"Hmm, I get the picture and it is not a pretty one," said Alex, looking at Jack and me. "We will keep your story to ourselves."

The plane was filling up fast, leaving space enough for six people and air. Those handling the gold did so with care treating each ingot as concentrated money, good anywhere in the world. My weight tally showed the following estimates.

Empty Lodestar	11,500 pounds
550 gallons avgas	2,850 "
Survey equipment not removed	500 "
Six people & personal items	1,000 "
Boxes of jewelry & Icons	500 "
USA, Italian & Misc. cash	600 "
143 gold ingots @ 28 lbs ea	4,000 "
	<hr/>
	20,950 pounds

When I showed the figures to Alex, he became concerned and turned to talk with Leo.

“Too much weight Leo; we need to remove 20 ingots and get them next time.

Twenty ingots weigh 560 pounds according to Don’s calculations. We’re pushing the limits even with that. I like a little safeguard. We’ll take off right around 20,400 pounds total – give or take a couple - and need all of this runway.”

And Alex mumbled something like, “Hope that give or take doesn’t put us in the Mediterranean.”

“I don’t like it but you know your airplane,” said Leo, and he ordered 20 precious ingots removed and returned to a safe somewhere.

“Hey Jack, that’s it, come on out and let’s lock her up,” yelled Alex.

Jack grabbed his two-day clothes bag, hardly enough for his two-week stay, and jumped on down; he was dripping in sweat. He had the bag in one hand and a roll of American toilet paper in the other.

Alex laughed and said, “Nice job in there. Hope ya left us one good roll.”

“Yeah, I did. I’m glad that loadings done,” answered Jack. “If you don’t make it, at least I’ll be comfortable here in Alexandria.”

“You and the toilet paper,” said I. “I think they probably have that here.”

“Nope,” laughed Jack. “It was rougher than a corncob in the hotel. I’m just covering my ass.”

“Oh, you Americans – you can joke about anything,” said Leo with a smile.

Alex locked the Lodestar’s door.

A medium evening breeze was beginning to stir the nuisance of sand in the air so we walked to the source of all the wonderful smells – inside the largest of the two tents. I was impressed and again realized the Lombardi’s were super organized. They had set up a cooking area using portable gas stoves at one side of the tent, bracketed by serving tables with dishes, glasses, and utensils. Iced down bottles of Campari, and San Pellegrino acqua minerale also waited. I was surprised to see bottles of Italian wines and a case of beer at one end of a table; alcohol must be okay here in Egypt. The temperature outside the tent had dropped to the high-90s. Inside the tent there was a good attempt at both cooling and lighting systems; several electric fans were strategically placed and half a dozen light bulbs dangled from the structure of the tent top. Everything was plugged into long winding electrical cords running outside to a truck mounted diesel generator.

Our hosts had gone to a lot of work to make us feel welcome and celebrate the event. Inside, it was at least ten degrees cooler. Most everyone was in the tent beginning to serve and eat, talking, laughing and a few young adults slow danced to an accomplished accordion player and violinist. They were playing the latest hits - *Ciao Ciao Bambina*, *Melodia D’amore* and *Volare*. The work was done; it was party time. We headed for the food.

Maria helped us select our food dishes as she had done several weeks before – she identified things like Trapani couscous, rice balls, pasta with sardines, panella, cuts of fresh swordfish, dishes of calamari plus spaghetti with clams, classic meatball soup, salads, loaves of homemade baguettes and desserts. *Typical Italians, this is how the captive Gladiators were fed the nights before their Coliseum guest appearances?*

Family members made table space for us with our dinner plates piled high – they wanted us to remember them kindly. Finally, Camilla came over and sat across the table between Alex and Jack. *Is she teasing me?* My male ego was so easily wounded. After a few minutes, she got up and announced that she had to go change, but would be back with a surprise. When she said ‘surprise’ she looked directly at me and winked. *Change to what and what surprise?* Those around us, started an enthusiastic buzz-a-buzza anticipating something special, but wouldn’t say what when I asked.

Darkness settled over the coastal desert, the evening cooled and lights came on assisted by a near full moon that helped illuminate the sandy world outside. The clear desert skies boded well for tomorrow’s flight. Tables and chairs were moved to clear a space and a richly decorated bongo-type drum called a Darbuka and a nervous tambourine started a slow soft beat. From the back of the tent, came a violinist playing more notes than there seemed to be time for on such a small instrument – the high mysterious squeaky harsh sounds that accompany Middle Eastern belly dancing. The crowd grew quiet and *dun-dun tek-a-tek dun-dun tek-a-tek* rhythms filled the tent. Some family members whispered to me that they had

watched Camilla before and loved her dancing. Initial applause ceased in lieu of the syncopated rhythms.

To my mind, Camilla was soon the quintessential dancer – the best I had seen in my limited experiences. She came slithering out across the compacted sand floor barefooted, as if she were performing for royalty or the highest sheik of the land – head proud, arms and hands intertwining snake-like and entire body in Richter scale motion – the sound of golden bangles on her ankles and wrists clink-acgling to the percussion of the drum. Her costume was definitely not Sicilian and I realized - *of course not, she was born here in Egypt and probably grew up idolizing famous dancers. Wow. How do I describe what I am seeing without describing what I am thinking? It is true what they say about us men.*

Her sky-blue silken skirt swung low from her bare torso and then down to her toes to swishy sweep the sand – then a long slim leg came teasingly in and out of view. Her curvaceous mid-drift showed muscle tone – no belly fat like some older dancers – and she was somewhat lighter in skin color than her sun-tanned arms and face that I had noticed earlier. I couldn't pull my eyes away. Mesmerized might be the word. Someone whispered that each physical motion had a name to match a unique pattern of the drumbeats - the dancer and drummer perfectly synchronized. Jeweled tassels hung from her blue and gold bra; they swayed as she shook and shimmied, her breasts independent of her belly and hips. The beat of the staccato drum led her perfectly timed movements - shaking body parts sometimes independent from the others, sometimes fast and all together, sometimes slow and sultry.

Her long dark hair did dances all its own. Some in our dinner audience swayed with the constant rhythms. I vaguely remembered a passage in the Bible about a King Herod watching Salome dance – something about seven veils; he was so pleased that he gave her anything she wanted. However, I don't think that dance ended well.

Someone shouted to watch the hands. *Bullshit, I'll watch what I want to watch! The hips don't lie.* She was destroying my normal conservative stability.

I had been told that Egypt was the birthplace of belly dancing and now was its Golden Age – suddenly I knew what that meant. I had been to Hawaii and although those hula dance steps were somewhat similar, belly dancing possessed, in my opinion, more variation, more artistic design and is danced to ignite a viewer's thoughts of passion. It was definitely more athletically elegant. I would have to ask Camilla, but I didn't think she was dancing to a story as with the hula; she was more unrestricted, more free spirited and danced what she felt. Someone near me said in English so that I could hear that she danced in sad memory to a lost lover, even though she seemed to me so motivated and happy to entertain.

Camilla had converted from tough mafia boss to a seductive Arabian princess – a magical Salome herself emoting excitement with each teasing body movement. I tried to photograph her with my mind's eye so I could play her back later in time-stop images, each memory moment at my lonely leisure. I wondered if I would ever enjoy more of her than to simply hold her hand, and what serious task did she have to do here in Egypt before moving to Sicily. That worried me. I

didn't know then that she held a smoldering revenge in her heart.

The dance went on for ten minutes or so – but not long enough. *Clinkity-cling- dun tek-a-tek dun*. She made her last gyrations and bowed a deep and slow farewell – dark hair almost touching the sand - to her appreciative audience, then waved and skipped off from the makeshift stage – my desire followed her exit. At that point, Uncle Leo climbed atop a wooden chair, quieted the applause with raised hands and made his last speech as the group's Egyptian-born Godfather.

His first words brought laughter. “I wonder where my brother's daughter ever learned all that? Was that really our sweet demure Camilla?”

The same informer whispered, “She learned it as a girl from her mother and more recently in the most famous Cairo cabarets.”

Then Leo turned serious. “As most of you know, my brother and I fly to Sicily tomorrow for many of you to soon follow. It is time for a new beginning, an act of faith in a new future. Egypt has been good to us – very good up until recently. We go now with humility, pride and a load of considerable wealth intended to guarantee our mutual comforts and bargaining powers in a new land – this wealth will be safely guarded and parceled out fairly to those of you who have chosen to join us. I borrow a sentence from JOHN 14:3, “I go to prepare a place for you.” We should all pray to our blessed Mother Mary for safe travel. You have my word as your leader and I thank you all for your trust.”



My Italian was sketchy at best but I understood the general meaning. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught Camilla's return; she was still in dance attire and still perspiring from her efforts. Uncle Leo paused to let those around her to reach out or pass their thanks and acknowledgement, he then continued.

“There have been many human migrations since time began, many of them forced and under hardship. There will be many more. One of the first recorded began from our nearby Nile Valley and across the Red Sea led by a man named Moses. Those Israelites were under cruel hardship and bondage to a pharaoh. Today's pharaoh is a man named Abdel Nassar but my analogy shall stop there; we leave before any bondage and will not wander in a wilderness. Instead we will be welcomed by family in a land of relative plenty recently freed from a fascist dictator named Mussolini. Tonight I also ask for Saint Christopher's blessings. We go one by one, true to our own, voluntarily before and in recognition of hardships and racial persecutions beginning throughout Egypt and this Middle East Arab coalition. There will be more murders, jailing's, robbery, confiscations and cruel bloody riots in the streets for us if we don't leave here in the very near future; that sad fate awaits most foreigners and those of the Western world who are without Moslem beliefs and make the mistake to remain – such as the Coptic Christians and other religious minorities. There will be great turmoil in these Islamic lands.\* We have a choice – to remain and be absorbed by the Moslem world or go to protect our Catholic faiths and freedoms – two precious things that will soon be slipping through our fingers like fine sand in an huge hourglass without options to defend ourselves.”

There was applause and then the room turned briefly silent - people thinking about uprooting their lives in order to possibly save them. Could they really leave their homes, friends, businesses and reasonable comforts of upper class life styles? Could they leave their personal histories and establish new ones? Uncle Leo said a few more words.

“When you arrive, we will find good housing for you – initially along the southern coasts, perhaps Palermo later. Stay in contact so we know when you will arrive. My niece Camilla, whom you all have known since well before she learned to dance, will serve as the tutelage head of the Family for the next few weeks before she too follows – probably with plans of her own. God Bless our united family, God Bless Sicily!”

He stood down with more applause and then there came long discussions at each table. Volunteers began cleaning up; some soon returned to their homes, others would stay the night. It was time to retire. Cots and blankets had been set up near each big wheel of the plane for Alex and me. A Coleman lantern was lit and placed nearby. Jack and Maria disappeared; they wouldn't see each other after tonight for several weeks. I hoped I would see Camilla one last time.

About then a large noisy truck pulled into the dark area near the plane. It carried ten drums of aviation gas – much to my relief. That had been a worry since our arrival. What good was a loaded plane without fuel? Refueling could now wait until morning. It was now desert dark and whisper quiet throughout the area.

The next arrival was Camilla. I was still fully dressed, but needed sleep. I could barely see her with my surprised and

curious eyes; she had changed into what I would have called pedal pushers in California and a man's loose white tee shirt. *I loved young women in tee shirts; their femininity becomes so much more teasingly real.* She sat on the edge of my cot.

“Donny, I want to say ‘buona notte bello’ (good night handsome); we have not talked enough.”

“Camilla, I agree; I think we have only wished, but we do need to talk. Thank you for coming here so late. You danced so beautifully; I loved every move.”

“Without the rhythm of the drum there is nothing but false imagination. I dance to the music with mind, heart and body. Tonight I danced for my people and for you.”

I blurted out, “Someone said you danced for another.” Then I thought to myself, *Jeeze Don, like it's none of my business stupid.*

“I will tell you someday, perhaps in Sicily. I want to leave that rumor behind with my old life. It's a time for changes. And I also tell you that I look forward to that airplane ride, but some serious advice first. Listen to me carefully. You definitely must return only on Eid al-Fitr - the end of this holiest month of Ramadan. The date is marked by the sighting of the thin crescent moon to mark the next new month. In the cities it is ended by the shooting of a cannon – it means all fasting is over. That is the date that I must count upon. Those last few days are celebrations much like our Christmas only more so. They will not pay attention to an airplane landing here – not even one painted bright orange. It is their time for feasting, prayer, celebrations, presents and uncommon kindness to the poor. It will be my time to escape.”

“Escape from what?”

“I’m sorry. Ah, you heard my uncle. It is difficult to explain. Do not ask and don’t forget me.”

“Camilla, already I will never forget you.”

I couldn’t help but feel there was a special reason for what she said about an escape. Words failing, I summoned my nerve and reached across the two feet separating us, slowly took her lovely face in both my calloused hands and kissed her lips as tenderly but as firmly as I knew how.

“Mmmm,” she whispered. “One more please Donny and then I must go.”

I responded and her arms went around me; we kissed with passion and at length. I let her pull away before I got lost in the moment. I sensed it had been some time since she had been really sincerely kissed; there was a longing. I knew it had been too long for me.

“Ciao bello; see you soon.”

“Not soon enough ‘cara’,” I whispered, and she was gone. Up until then, this trip had only been about the money.

Before falling asleep I thought more about Camilla, why me? She could have any man in Egypt, but I figured she needed me with the airplane and I’d sure go along with it. I also thought about how difficult it must be for people to belong to two cultures and to totally renounce one of them like these Egyptian born Sicilians were doing. Once again I wondered, *what is the most powerful – freedom or love? The ultimate accomplishment in life must be to have both, but must it be a compromise?*

## About the Author

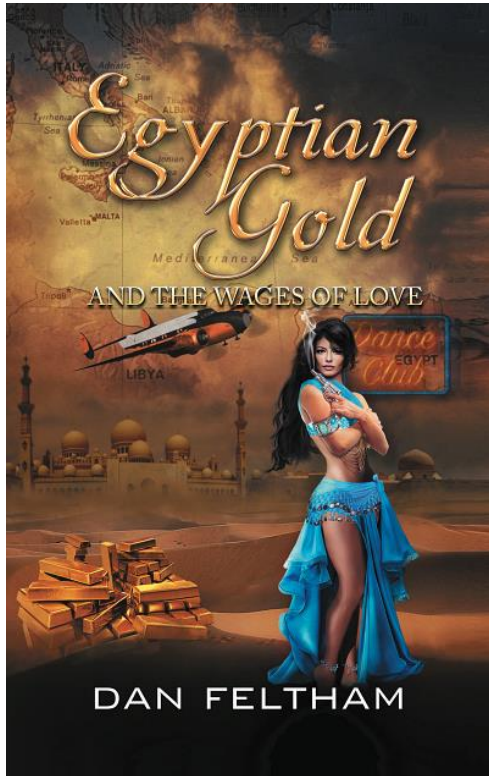
Dan Feltham is retired and living the quiet life in Southern California with his loving wife, Erika. He is a graduate Geologist of Stanford University. After working several years in North Africa in petroleum exploration, he switched disciplines and pursued an extensive career with the IBM Corporation in what I prefer to call ‘problem solving’ and management, including several years each in Hawaii, Southeast Asia, Saudi Arabia and Southern California. He has enjoyed international travel and also owned and raced sailboats most of his life. He is the author of eight other e-Pub adventure novels, *Trade Winds Calling*, *The Catalina Connection*, *Mount Rushmore’s Legacy*, *The Edge of Time*, a San Diego County award winner *Terror in the Gulf*, then *Mexican Standoff*, *Sahara Sands* as a Memoir, and *Copper Canyon*. As background material for sailing episodes within several of his books, Dan can refer to bareboat sailing charters in the Caribbean, Mexican, Tahiti and Fiji waters, extensive racing including the 1976 Olympic Trials and three TransPacific yacht races to Hawaii. Dan also self published a non-fiction account of his personal Vietnam experiences entitled, *When Big Blue Went To War*, *the History of the IBM Corporation’s Mission in Southeast Asia During the Vietnam War*. The book has been praised by many as a one of a kind look at war from the civilian contractor’s personal point of view living within a war zone – a life changing experience for many IBMers. Dan can be reached via e-mail at [danfeltham77@gmail.com](mailto:danfeltham77@gmail.com), and/or

*Dan Feltham*

his web pages [www.dansstories.com](http://www.dansstories.com). If so motivated, after reading this book or any of his others, your positive review will be sincerely appreciated.



The Author, Libya 1960 (magnetometer's profile hanging under Lodestar).



*A 26-year old Stanford geologist and his team travel from Tripoli, Libya to Alexandria, Egypt during the Arab month of Ramadan. The team helps a Sicilian family smuggle their people, dollars and gold from a dictator's persecution.*

## **Egyptian Gold and the Wages of Love**

By Dan Feltham

**Order the book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)**

**<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13448.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**