

SAHARA ADVENTURE SERIES

9. THE TRACKS ARE CALLING

Meiring Fouche

Translated by Andelene Brits

SAHARA - ADVENTURE SERIES

NO. 9
THE TRACKS ARE CALLING



Meiring Fouché

Translated by
ANDELENE BRITS

THE TRACKS ARE CALLING

by

MEIRING FOUCHE

and

translated by
ANDELENE BRITS

Published by:

**TREASURE CHEST BOOKS -
PUBLISHERS**

Strand Mews

Strand

2023

THE TRACKS ARE CALLING

The sketch on the cover page was generated with AI software. This book is the third edition (updated version) and the first edition translated into English.

Copyright in this work is strictly reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the publisher's written permission. All the characters and the events in this story are fictitious and do not relate to any person, living or dead.

THE TRACKS ARE CALLING

by Meiring Fouche and translated by Andelene Brits

ISBN 978-1-928498-86-5

Published by:

Treasure Chest Books - Publishers, Strand Mews,
Strand, 7140
South Africa

Copyright @ Pieter Haasbroek (2023)

Online Store: <https://panther-ebooks.com>

Website: <https://www.softcoverbooks.co.za>

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

“Andelene Brits was born in Paarl in 1966, the youngest of three daughters. I attended Paarl Gymnasium and matriculated there in 1983. After that, I worked in financial institutions. I got married in 1989, and I have three sons. I do not have grandchildren yet, only a lot of dogs! For the last twenty years, I have been a housewife. I have written many stories over the years but have never published anything, although writing is my passion. I love books and have a whole library in my house. I go and browse second-hand bookstores for treasures. My other passion is people, and I do charity work for those in need. There is not much more I can say about myself, just that what I am doing now is something I have been waiting for all my life to do. Deal with the written word. Words are power. Thank you.”

SUMMARY

A blazing sun beats down on the vast and treacherous Sahara desert as Sergeant Catroux leads his small band of French Foreign Legion soldiers on patrol. Boredom and fatigue set in after weeks of wandering through endless seas of sand dunes without encountering a single soul. However, a startling discovery is about to awaken the men's thirst for adventure.

Spotting a swarm of vultures circling in the distance, Catroux orders his men to investigate. What awaits the patrol is a horrific scene. They discover over a dozen mutilated Arab bodies scattered across the dunes. Shocked and confused as to who would commit such an atrocity against their own people, the Legionnaires begin searching for clues. That's when Teuns Stegmann, a tall and cunning South African member of the patrol, makes a stunning find half-buried in the sand. It is a pure gold powder compact engraved with the initials "J.T." Determined to uncover the mystery and motivated by the prospect of encountering a woman after so long without even seeing a camel in this desolate landscape, the patrol presses on. More clues begin to emerge, including feminine perfumes and expensive accessories that suggest a European woman of high society was involved. But who is this woman? And why would she be traveling with Arabs through such a dangerous part of the Sahara?

The tracks lead the Legionnaires to the small Harba oasis,

but the constant winds have erased any sign of where the attackers went next. However, the remote oasis outpost of Harba brings another twist. Just when all hope seems lost, a miraculous discovery provides a trail to follow once more. They discover a strange, dying man who mentions an automatic rifle before succumbing to his wounds. The plot takes a dangerous turn as it becomes a race against time to rescue J.T. and uncover the secrets surrounding the mysterious weapon. To make matters worst a member of their own patrol suddenly goes missing overnight.

Teuns finds himself separated from the others and disguises himself as one of the elusive desert tribesmen. He manages to infiltrate the enemy's camp, intent on solving the mysteries surrounding J.T.'s abduction. There he comes face-to-face with the stunning Jenene Trenchard, daughter of the British Consul, who has been taken captive. With keen cunning and nerves of steel, Teuns navigates the hidden dangers of the enemy camp, risking his life to gain critical intelligence. Between the watchful eyes of the tribe and the ever-present threat of being exposed, Teuns plays a dangerous game of deception. But Teuns's true identity is soon uncovered and he faces unimaginable horrors at the hands of the sadistic Berber tribe holding Jenene hostage. Communicating in secret, they hatch a daring plan of escape. Will Teuns and the mysterious Jenene find a way to outwit their captors? Or will the desert claim more lives? What other secrets lie buried beneath the sands?

And can Catroux's patrol prevail against enemies wielding the lethal power of the automatic rifle? With hope fading fast, the Legionnaires battle against seemingly impossible odds to solve the mystery and free Jenene before it's too late. Dogged by danger at every turn, they draw closer to a stunning truth that will change everything.

“The Tracks are Calling” thrusts the reader into a heart-pounding adventure across the perilous and unforgiving Sahara desert. Mystery, action, and drama abound in this gripping tale of bravery, desperation, and hidden secrets as a small band of French Legionnaires fights the elements and a savage tribe of Berbers to save an alluring captive and uncover buried truths. The story will keep you turning pages late into the night, immersed in a vivid world of scorching desert heat, earth-shaking planes roaring overhead, and heroic soldiers battling against the odds to survive another day. With vivid adventure and captivating characters, Meiring Fouche spins a story that will leave you breathless until the climactic conclusion. If pulse-pounding escapism through the exotic sands of the Sahara is your perfect adventure, “The Tracks are Calling” delivers an unforgettable experience you won't want to end.

EXTRACT

The Arab looks at him, his eyes burning with disdain and fury, and it is just the reaction and the moment Teuns has been waiting for. He moves at the speed of a cheetah. The Arab had not even begun to turn his head away again before Teuns Stegmann's hands were locked around the automatic rifle, and even before the Arab had moved, the South African had plucked the deadly weapon from his hands.

He stays low on the ground, rolling over to get some distance between himself and the lot of them. He presses the small safety clip, which he had seen hiding under the magazine's mechanism of the rifle, and the next moment, his finger is on the trigger.

Rifles bark, Arabs scream fearfully, and sabres flash in the last sunlight.

And then, the automatic rifle starts stuttering through the hot silence of the desert.

The first line of Arabs storming Teuns is nearly cut in half before they have advanced two steps. The chief had fallen in time, and the bullets sang over his head into the desert. But there are around thirty Arabs here, and after the first salvo, they have immediately spread out over the area, and now they are storming Teuns one at a time. He strikes them down with short bursts, but this is something he never expected to happen. In this scenario, an automatic rifle is not very effective.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1. Strange Discovery
2. A Voice in the Night
3. The Night has a Secret
4. A Shot in the Silence
5. Danger as a Companion
6. The Truth is an Enemy
7. Woman in the Sun
8. An Unexpected Guest
9. Dangerous Search
10. Man on a Rock

9. THE TRACKS ARE CALLING

Chapter 1

STRANGE DISCOVERY

Teuns Stegmann, the tall South African serving in the French Foreign Legion, looks with narrowed eyes at the movements of the man in front of him. He might have laughed if not for his fatigue and the burning hot Sahara sun above them. Teuns, and the other members of the small patrol, are lying edgeways on the crown of a high dune in the heart of the turbulent world between the Legion's front post, Dini Salam, and Dutra, the capital of the rebellious Dulac Arabs.

“Are you going insane, big guy?” Teuns asks the man, who is executing the strange movements in front of them. “That is how we drink the cold Müncher, South African,” Fritz Mundt, the German, says. He has the reputation of being the strongest man in Africa. “So and so...” He lifts his elbow high in the air, swings his hand smartly, brings it to his mouth, tilts his head back, and pretends to enjoy a beer. He smacks his lips enjoyably, and it looks like he has just swallowed a glass of foamy beer. Then he looks resentfully down at his water flask, removes the cap, and takes two swallows of the lukewarm water.

“And, we do it like this,” says Petacci, the little Italian man. He is lying next to Teuns in the hot sand. He makes rotating movements with his fingers.

“Spaghetti,” Teuns guesses.

“That is correct,” Petacci replies and narrows his eyes. He

puts his left hand up, his fingers widened. “Right now, I would offer this precious left hand of mine, and trade it for a scrumptious plate of spaghetti, served to me in one of the back streets of Rome.”

“Interesting tour this,” Jack Ritchie, the blonde Englishman, declares. He is lying on his back with his hands on his head and moves his kepi over his eyes to keep the sun out of them. “Very exciting. We have been roaming around here for nearly two weeks and have not even seen a camel yet. How much longer is Catroux going to drag us through the sand?”

“Maybe you are in for some excitement soon, Englishman,” Fritz says, drawing lines in the sand with his boot. “In the Sahara, you can never tell.”

“There has to be something in the weather to justify this patrolling,” Teuns says. He looks away over the tall sand crowns of the dunes in the direction of the pale blue Atlas Mountains to the south, which are shimmering in the heat. “What could it be?” Podolski, the Pole, asks angrily. “The Arabs are very peaceful right now, like us...”

“Like vultures,” Teuns corrects him.

“I am more than happy to walk around doing nothing,” Petacci declares. “I would rather walk around here in the desert than be trapped in that fly-infested nest they call Fort Laval. At least a man can freely breathe here...”

“Who says there is no excitement?” Podolski asks and looks up at the sky. “Look there.”

They all look up, even Jack Ritchie, who reluctantly removes his kepi from his eyes.

A heavy vulture slowly glides over them to the south, its wings spread wide and its neck pushed out far to the front. "Maybe he spots a desert rat, which had died of boredom," Teuns reckons.

"Or maybe it sees a beautiful woman, lost in the desert, who right at this very moment is staggering in our direction," Fritz tries.

"Private Stegmann." It is the voice of Sergeant Catroux, sitting a little way off from the others. He is sitting on the sharp crown of the dune, spying over the land with his binoculars. Teuns rises and saunters over to the sergeant. "Do not tell me we are going to see something, Sergeant," the South African sleepily says. "In the last two weeks, we have hardly seen as much as a camel spoor."

"Come and look here. Your eyes are strong," Catroux says. "I cannot make it out."

Teuns crouches down next to the sergeant and takes the binoculars from him. He follows the direction in which Catroux is pointing with his scrawny, swarthy hand. "Do you see that gradually sloping hill to the south?"

"I see it, Sergeant. It is very far away. It would be difficult to determine anything from this far off, but it looks like vultures."

"There is something," Catroux states, "but it is difficult to see. It is nearly just over the crown of the incline..."

"Yes, there is something," Teuns agrees and squints his eyes behind the binoculars. "There are indeed vultures over there, but I cannot make out anything further."

"We have to go and take a look," Catroux says.

“It would be interesting. If we do not see something weird right now, we might die of misery,” Teuns figures. He returns the binoculars to the sergeant, walks to his backpack and rifle, and rejoins the others.

“Arabs?” Fritz Mundt asks. There is more life in his blue eyes now.

Teuns shrugs.

“No, not Arabs, but vultures.”

“Sometimes vultures can be more interesting than Arabs,” Podolski reckons.

“We have to go and take a look,” Teuns says, picking up his backpack. He swings it over his back, bends down, and retrieves the long Lebel rifle.

“Go and take a look? We are on our way back to Laval, and now we have to retrace our steps for kilometers to check out what the vultures have found,” Jack Ritchie complains, squinting his eyes against the sharp sunlight reflected by the sand.

“Who knows what we will find there,” Teuns says unenthusiastically and looks at the Englishman.

“I do not feel like this nonsense,” Jack says. “We have been wandering around for too long. It is time for us to return.”

“We march out in one minute,” Catroux orders, who, in the meantime, had joined the men.

Lazy and reluctantly, the men rise from the sand. They stretch and pull down the flaps of the kepis in their necks to keep out the sun. They swing the backpacks over their backs and hang the rifles from their shoulders. The men

start walking, but Jack cannot hide his annoyance.

“What are we supposed to do if we see something?” he asks Teuns while walking, “We are only six men strong.” “Actually, we are seven,” Teuns replies, “as Fritz Mundt counts as two. Have you forgotten so quickly?”

The huge German turns around partially and glares at the South African. He turns around once more and spits into the sand.

“And, you count for half a man,” the German retorts amicably, but he knows he sounds stupid, as everybody knows this South African. He has a slim build and broad shoulders. He is quick on his feet, highly intelligent, and a dangerous man with his fists. They all know how many predicaments they have been saved from by Teuns’ sharp brain. They know his incredible and calm courage very well. But, as they shuffle through the burning sand, they are all aware that the tall, blonde man knows no fear.

The men lurch up the one dune and down the other side, over and over. Catroux makes them move at a slow pace. This is a hellish spot in the Sahara. Here the dunes are high and sharp, and when you look over them from far away, many crowns seem as sharp as blades. Yet, behind the highest peaks are spots of black shadows, and the slippery sides of the dunes are intact. Not one track can be detected. Only the soft wrinkles in the sand, shaped by the last wind, break the smooth glimmer along the flanks of the massive sand mountains.

Every time they reach the top of a dune, the men look away far to the front of them. It is a nearly involuntary