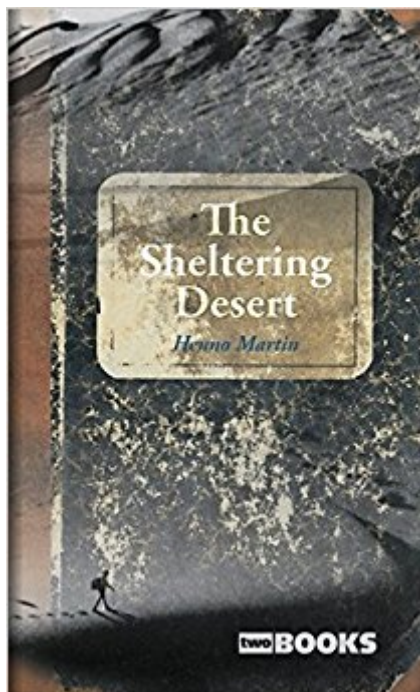


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# The Sheltering Desert



## Synopsis

Brand New in Shrink Wrap

## Book Information

Paperback: 372 pages

Publisher: Two Books (2002)

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## Customer Reviews

Brand New in Shrink Wrap

The book's text content by the great geologist Henno Martin is a spectacular piece of desert writing, but this particular edition (with the clock on the cover) is VERY disappointing--the photographic plates are highly pixelated scans of the original sketches and basically worthless. It would be comical if one had only paid a few dollars, but at the over-\$20 list price here, it's farcical. If you're thinking of buying this book in advance of a trip to Namibia, it's much better to wait until you arrive in southern Africa, where you can find good editions on sale in all major bookstores.

"The magic of the desert is hard to define. Why does the sight of a landscape of empty sand, rocks, slab and rubble stir the spirits more than a view of lush green fields and woods? Why does the lifeless play of light, colour, and distance have such an invigorating, fascinating and elating effect? Perhaps because no limitations are imposed by other forms of life; perhaps because the mind of the beholder is presented with a fata morgana of unlimited freedom. And on such far horizons the outline of a mountain draws the eye like an island in the endless ocean." Henno Martin  
This book is magical. Whether it was in the simple straight forward story telling or in my immediate captivation by a most unlikely undertaking into a forbidding landscape I don't know, but I was hooked right off. This is an inspired account of two friends and a dog escaping from a war they did not want to participate

in, and to avoid imprisonment by the German army, they drove their lorry into the most inhospitable terrain imaginable, the Namib desert, where they lived for two and one half years. Imagine as your eyes confront a bleak wasteland of gullies, fissures, gorges and barren expanses of flat, chalky soils of salt, sand and rock that stretches limitlessly toward dark distant mountain ranges. What kind of adventures could anyone expect in such a forlorn place. A good place to hide though if you possess at least some rudimentary survival skills."We stared down in fascination. It was an impressive and intimidating sight, a landscape inconceivable under a more temperate sky and in milder latitudes. Barren cliffs fell away steeply into deep ravines all around the main canyon like a wild and gigantic maze. They had a name, the "Gramadullas", and as someone had aptly said, they looked as though the Devil had created them in an idle hour."So these men and their dog lived like the bushmen; hunting, searching for water, cooking, storing, preserving , often starving but....surviving. They were both geologists with a knowledge of the land, a surplus of down home imagination, ingenuity and an indomitable spirit. I often wished I were there with them even"when the sun rose we were half buried. Our hair, eyes and ears were full of sand and at breakfast the springbok meat crunched between our teeth. The wind had become noticeably warmer and on the chalk plateau it was so strong that we could lean against it. A red veil of sand rose from a small dune into the blue sky. To the south a sand storm was raging and the dunes were covered with a reddish mist."I read about their experiences at waterholes where animals I had only seen in picture books or at a zoo were gathered to slake their thirst, sometimes communally, with natural predators next to them. Gemsbok, springbok, klipspringer, herds of zebra, ostriches, leopards, jackals and hyenas are sympathetically and adventurously described under exotic skies and shadowy rock formations. The author and his friend fabricate houses out of meager resources: mud, rocks and tamarisk. They live in caves and fashion their own tools. Together they speculate about the geological transformations in the topography. They philosophize about the evolution of Man and reasons behind war. There are stories describing their strenuous adventures following, sometimes for days, the spoor of the indigent animals in their search for water.Mr. Martins narrative is poetic. His words tapped into my unconscious as their adventures unfolded and the telling so descriptive and amicable I often wanted to be there."Our hair began to stand on end and with long bounding strides we ran from the plateau. We were hardly under the rock face when a blinding, hissing, stone-splitting fork of light dazzled us for seconds and the first great drops fell on our heads. We laughed and danced with delight--the first rain for nine months."Even if the day by day existence were totally monotonous and exhausting and there were virtually no tomorrow but just a repetition of the day gone by, I would at least be far from the chaos of war and its machine. And I would know it as sure as the silence enfolded me and the

desert sheltered me as I fell asleep under a million stars."In our stone shelter we had left three narrow slits each about sixteen inches long. When we were sitting in wait early on the first morning a male ostrich came down the opposite side of the valley with a couple of hens. The cock-bird was still about four hundred yards or so away when suddenly it stopped and stared towards us. Was it possible that he had seen something at that distance?"....."During this inspection we sat as still as mice, but the ostrich remained suspicious and refused to come any nearer."

....."About an hour later five more ostriches came down the valley along the same track. Seeing so many springbok and gemsbok at the water they probably assumed that the coast was clear and that there was no need for special caution. But then suddenly the first cock-bird stepped into their path with out-stretched wings, obviously barring their way like a policeman halting the crowds. The gesture was unmistakable. The newcomers stopped and they too looked over towards our hiding place, whilst the first cock-bird joined his two hens sitting in the sand. Herman and I looked at each other, speechless. Not only had these strange birds incredibly sharp eyes but they also obviously had something like a sense of responsibility even towards strange birds belonging to other flocks. The ostriches did not come down to the water at all that morning, and at midday they all marched off."Henno MartinFrom "The Nabu Domain Reprints""This book may have occasional imperfections such as missing or blurred pages, poor pictures, errant marks, etc. that were either part of the original artifact, or were introduced by the scanning process. We believe this book is culturally important, and despite the imperfections, have elected to bring it back into print....."

This is an excellent, important, and valuable book. I am thankful to have been able to find a reprint, however, the quality of this reprint is very disappointing. The resolution of the photographic reproduction process is low, resulting in fuzzy, ragged-edged print and photographs that are absolutely undecipherable. A reprint of this quality would be reasonable at a lower price. Since the photos were taken by the author, they are an important, and missing, part of the experience. You may be better suited looking for an original print edition from your library system.

Rather than being put in a detention camp, two German geologists in Namibia during WWII, spent two and a half years surviving in the desert wilderness. They drove in an all terrain vehicle to a remote area, bringing with them flour, oatmeal, beans, jam, and dried fruit. They had a shot gun and a pistol to kill wild game, the preferred meat being gemsbok, now called oryx. It tells of learning survival skills, moving camp three times, worrying about being found by authorities. The author also

writes of the thrill of living in nature, the beauty of sunsets and stars, He and his partner also discuss evolution and question the survival of the fittest theory, believing that cooperation with others might be a more important factor in survival. I enjoyed this book very much. PH

Fun story about two men and their dog in the Namib Desert during WWII. Lots of interesting stories about animals and exploration.

I found this book to be very intriguing, and thought provoking. I like survival books, and wartime stories, non fiction. This book, however, mixed that with a certain degree of introspection by the author. Some of that was good, but sometimes it tended to get a little complex for me. Obviously written by a man of science.

It's a gripping tale, but none of the errors in the scanning in of the original text to digitize it have been edited out. There are quite a few, but most of them can be easily figured out, e.g., "dose" is clearly "close" and "dear" is clearly "clear." Some are a little harder or even impossible so you have to just gloss over them. Kindle edition at \$2.99--very affordable.

If you like real adventure, searching, and hardship then you will like this true story. It is about as barren living in the desert & understanding nature. Beautifully written and real.

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