

ONE LAST MISSION

SYNOPSIS

Written by
Chris Lakeman Fraser

Registered with
The Writers Guild Of America, West

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Israeli jet fighters destroy a dam being built by Syrian engineers in the Lebanon to divert water from a tributary of the Jordan River. Shortly afterwards, Michael Kravitz who runs a Marine Biology Research Lab in Central America, has his arm twisted by an old colleague from the US State Department, George Levin, to head a UN mission to find ways of sharing water to avert war.

An old bureaucratic antagonist, Dr Simon Grant tries to muscle in on the project but Mike heads him off. He puts together a highly eclectic but innovative team consisting of David Horowitz, an Israeli desert ecologist; Saud Ahmed, an engineer from Jordan; Sophie Gerstein, a German Green Party member; Birgit Nielsen, a Norwegian Social Psychologist; and Joanna Lam, a Seattle-based Chinese entrepreneur who has just sold her social networking company.

They set up base close to the University in the Negev Desert as disputes between the Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, Jordanians and Syrians become increasingly heated. Mike sets about identifying individuals within the warring parties including Russians who have an investment in a peaceful solution. He is aided by Joanna who organises logistics and acts as a lightning rod for tensions within the group. In the thick of the action, strong emotions are stirred up. Joanna and Mike become progressively closer as they share experiences of the loss of their former partners. David is very touchy about what he perceives to be criticisms of Israeli policy but he makes a major contribution to the project by revealing an ancient system of rainwater harvesting invented by Nabataean Arabs which makes it possible to farm in the desert.

Saud and Sophie travel to Jordan to assess the political situation and visit Petra, the capital of the Nabataean Arabs. There they have a one night stand but Sophie is more interested in an Israeli army officer who manages to secure their passage back into Israel after the border is closed by the Israelis. Saud and David are drawn to Birget but she rebuffs both of them since she is focused on her job of looking at ways in which Israeli and Palestinian children can meet through music and dance. Visiting a village on the West Bank with David to see a Palestinian choir practice, she witnesses the destruction of newly installed Palestinian water pump by an Israeli Tank Bulldozer. She is pulled to safety by David. They are later abducted by a Syrian army unit. After two weeks of frantic negotiations, Mike manages to secure their release through an old friend and Russian Embassy official Yuri Orloff.

Half way through the project the team's investigations are brought to an abrupt halt. Dr Grant has wormed his way onto the Finance Committee as chairman and pulled the plug. The project faces an ignominious end. Initially they are distraught. Yet, one by one they decide to stay on, including Joanna who offers to finance the rest of the project with money from the sale of her company. Tired of hostility from politicians of all sides, they turn themselves from a fact-finding group into an action-oriented NGO. They set about contacting local and international environmental, feminist and peace groups to put pressure on governments to find ways of ending hostilities. After the group makes a presentation to the United Nations, the groundswell of public opinion from around the world forces politicians back to the negotiation table.