

Screenplay Treatment of
HOW HIS BRIDE CAME TO ABRAHAM

by Karen Sunde & Thomas Hoover

Dark. Huddled shape in a tunnel is a wounded soldier carried on the back of his enemy. Delirious from the explosion he's survived, his present danger tangles with traumatic images in his memory—

Yesterday... ABE, a bright Israeli Defense Forces 2nd Lieutenant worn by grueling duty in South Lebanon, 1992, was home in Jerusalem for the funeral of his “best pal” Gramma. Just as Abe's sister and his buddy BEN tell him they're engaged, a suicide bomber explodes nearby; the boys race to aid the victims. Their combat duty may be safer than home.

Meanwhile, up north in Beirut, SABRA, a Palestinian named for the refugee camp where she was born (and as a child, witnessed her family's massacre and lost her foster brothers – one fighting Israelis, the other by torture), now dresses as a male fighter, wraps her head in a *kaffiyeh*, and takes leave of her foster mother for a quest on their behalf. Her eyes glow with the thrill of it. She's determined to go “home” (though she's never been there) to Jerusalem.

On a lonely road in the rugged no-man's-land of Israel's Security Zone north of the border, Abe and Ben patrol with a small squad in search of mines. But Ben, joking, stumbles on a trip-wire and an explosion engulfs them, taking Ben's leg off and severely lacerating Abe's foot. Amid that screaming terror, Abe orders the squad to stop Ben's blood flow and rush him back to base, while Abe remains hidden in undergrowth in searing pain, fighting a losing battle for consciousness.

Nearby, terrified by the explosion, is SABRA, her face still hidden in her *kaffiyeh* like any Arab infiltrator sneaking toward the Israeli border. She hides, then darts from cover to cover. Abe awakens to see this masked Arab looming above, drinking from a canteen, unaware of him. When he challenges “Halt,” clicking his rifle to ready, instead of freezing, the Arab dives on the disabled Israeli; they fight ferociously until Abe yanks the *kaffiyeh*, finding, instead of a battle-hardened male, a long-haired beauty.

On the most horrifying day of Abe's life, who is this vision?! Sabra revealed, feels naked before her life-long nemesis – an Israeli with a gun – swiftly kicks his bleeding foot, then leaps down a sharp ravine. But a yowling Abe slides after her, landing in pain, breathless, still aiming his weapon at her. Stand-off. She is like the trapped fox; he, the wounded lion. She taunts him,

flaunting her upper hand by revealing a hidden door in the hillside. Startled and uncertain, Abe nevertheless orders her to open the door, and, when nothing explodes, throws himself across her back, demanding she carry him into this earth womb.

Will it provide a safe haven? It's wondrous and strange, a cave with a spring. It seems like a field hut, but Sabra says it's her home, that she's "come for the apples," since he left her "no brothers to do it." but, in fact, it's a way-station for infiltrators near the border. Abe is dizzy, his vision wavering, and he fears what Sabra will do if he loses consciousness. His radio crackles, terrifying Sabra, but Abe learns his home base is under siege from artillery and rocket fire; they cannot mount a rescue.

Abe, though near delirium, must hold Sabra there – to aid him, since he cannot walk, and to prevent her bringing others to attack him. Sabra begs him to let her go before more soldiers come, but he warns that in darkness, heat-seeking Israeli rounds find and kill anyone moving toward the border. She'd be crazy to go out there. Dashing quicker than Abe can fire, Sabra makes a run for it, but is swept back by severe, perhaps mystical, wind and lights, and when she returns, she bears an odd trophy fallen upon her from a breaking tree branch: Abe's blasted, bloody boot.

Through the night – until bombardment from the on-going battle blasts a hole in the cave's roof and he shields her from falling rock with his body – Abe and Sabra fling bitter Israeli/Arab accusations at each other. Still, when Sabra bathes his foot, Abe is mystified by this "Shabbat Angel" he prayed his Gramma to send him. Is she real, or is she an hallucination born of his shock? Though every ounce of him fights it, he falls deep asleep.

At dawn, preparing to escape, though sorry to abandon the enemy who shielded her, Sabra finds and takes a hidden revolver, is frightened when she finds a suicide belt, and hides it again. She's about to run when a beam of sunlight reveals, peaking from under the fallen rocks, Abe's radio, crushed and silent. Sabra is relieved and delighted.

Abe awakens with a start – she's gone! – then finds three breakfast apples by his head. Sabra, her fear calmed by the crushed radio, helps Abe into sunlight, where she bandages his foot. She wonders why she cares for his wound no differently than if he were her relative. When he questions her, saying "You've done this before?" she's annoyed at his naïvete, but their stark hostility melted away in the dangerous night they shared. At dusk, as Abe works to repair his lifeline radio, Sabra's returning with gathered fruit when shots ring across the clearing between them. He yells at her to drop, then crawls out to help her to safety. Twice he has kept her from harm. Cut

off, for the radio's battery is destroyed – they huddle by firelight, sheltered from night firing, and Abe admits: except for wanting news of Ben, he's as glad as she that the radio is silent. Then, while a violent storm overwhelms the night firing, Abe tells her his waking nightmare - landmine explosion - and urges bits of Sabra's story from her, until their appreciation of one another's vulnerability creates the aura of a hidden Eden.

When Abe looks at Sabra's palm lifeline, declaring hers "a good hand to build a strong life," she suddenly weeps uncontrollably. Dismayed, he comforts her, kissing her hair. Startled, she looks up, and as he's apologizing, she leans in and quickly kisses his face. He's stunned. It's a child's thanks for his caring words to a girl whose life is filled with horrors, then, danger forgotten, she runs laughing to stand in the rain's downpour through the hole in their roof. They sleep through this night like babes.

Morning woods, picking berries, Sabra is startled – by parts of an exploded body and, blown free, pieces of a radio. She finds its battery; it looks undamaged; should she bring it to Abe? No: she drops it, and moves off without it. Next shot: in the field, Sabra stops moving with her berries, turns back. Next shot: she's running with the battery across the field, and offering it to Abe. Later, when his radio springs to life, Abe switches it off – and when Sabra says "It's working?" he answers, "I'm not ready" (for the radio to work).

Leaning on her, in quiet possession of their Eden-valley, Abe and Sabra come to a pond, and as she enters the water, Sabra says she's grateful he came to her, but now he must not be afraid to leave. He longs to know her life, and as she ducks underwater and floats, she's able finally to relate the torture by Israeli soldiers that killed her foster brother as they tried to find his militant brother. Abe is doubtful of her story, but deeply troubled by it. There's so much she's still hiding from him. At sunset, Sabra quotes from the Bible where God calls Abraham, and Abraham says "Here I am."

That night, with the radio working, Abe learns that Ben has lived through surgery, and Abe's squad is about to come for him. But he balks. While Sabra watches, he puts off his squad— "Don't come now. Wait until morning." When they protest, he says "I've found shelter."

So the two have one more night together. As they star-gaze, Sabra tells Abe her story of the bird in a terrible desert who dreams of an olive tree and learns to fly. When Abe tells her he's from Jerusalem, Sabra shouts with joy. He describes the wonders she should see there. They seem in a child's dream of happiness. She asks if he's married. No? Good. She's going to make love to him. He hesitates, confused, but she assures him it's important to her; he doesn't understand it now, but he will. Thrilled, but alarmed, Abe still resists,

saying she'll shame her family. She says it's no shame; just once she wants life. Then, like innocents, they give way to their passion.

At dawn they are entwined as she stirs and extracts the hidden bomb belt, takes his rifle, then slips outside, dons the belt and fastens her jacket over it. When she returns to take one last look at Abe, he's awake, shocked by the bomb he thinks he saw, grabs her foot, exploding in fury as her revolver goes flying. She's a terrorist who's made a fool of him; she's planted a bomb to kill his buddies when they get there! His recent horror comes sweeping back. What sickness made her "hit" on him?! Limping, he drags her outside in search of trip wires. But as they grapple, he feels her belt and suddenly realizes *Sabra's the bomb*. Stunned, he lets go of her. Why is she strapped up to kill herself? Why?! As Abe falters, Sabra kicks his foot, grabs his rifle and radio, and is back in charge.

For the first time, Sabra admits she's Palestinian, on her way to Jerusalem, to touch her dream and make it live. He shouts – "When were you in Jerusalem?" Quietly she admits – "Never." While his radio insistently calls Abe, Sabra's story of her family's expulsion erupts from her and flows like lava up to the camp called "Sabra." Though Abe protests these "war stories" get told and changed and he has some too... he's afraid to hear the rest.

Still, he insists Sabra tell him the part she's afraid to tell, so she relives the massacre of her baby sister, her toddler brother, and her mother. When Sabra stops speaking and Abe can find his voice, he can only repeat his Gramma's prayer for strength from her concentration camp in Germany, then begs Sabra to stay with him. He is deeply in love with her, and she cannot deny her love for him, but an Israeli APC is racing toward their position and they have only minutes.

He'll take her to Jerusalem.

He can't!

She's going to kill people!

She won't if they let her pass. They'll know Jerusalem is her home; why else would she die just to get there?

She's insane!

Is she? If he were her, what would he do?

He'll marry her. They'll make a child. They'll find all the things she's dreaming of. She begs him to be still; he's talking magic! Does she believe he loves her? Then he can do anything.

Finally, as Abe's squad nears, they eagerly plan to meet later in Tyre, and he persuades Sabra to deactivate her belt. One shy moment: if she had not expected to die today, would she have made love with him last night? Her answer is swift: Of course not! And as Abe laughs, saying he doesn't know how to feel about that, Sabra hesitates— "It's no good, is it?"

If she doesn't go to Jerusalem on her own, as a Palestinian, she'll have failed her loved ones, who need their joy back. While fear seizes Abe- "It's too late to go!" Sabra pulls away, smiling... she'll run fast, she'll get there, she won't forget him, she married him here!

Then Abe's radio comes alive. His rescuers are closing in fast. Sabra bolts, climbing the hill as the sound of vehicles approaching grows louder. Abe stumbles after, screaming for her to come back.

As Sabra runs across the open field, Abe hears an Israeli soldier yell, "HALT. OR I'll SHOOT." Sabra keeps running as Abe screams "DON'T SHOOT, DON'T SHOOT!" But Abe's scream is unheard as a fusillade of bullets hammers out.

Miraculously not yet hit, Sabra slips her belt off into her hand and tosses it high as she runs. As bullets fly all round her, an explosion with a gigantic fireball erupts, illuminating Abe's stricken face. "SABRA...!" he screams, and startled birds keep rising from earth to the sky.

Abe collapses to his knees in total despair as billowing smoke and fire engulf the field. But unseen by Abe, at the far edge of the blazing field there's a tiny move; then a blackened figure stumbles up...and runs.

At sunset, when exhausted soldiers have still found "no remains," a glimmer pierces Abe's devastation – does he dare hope?

THE END



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