

A SIX-DAY WAR

Written by

Lauri Donahue

Based on a True Story

Me@lauridonahue.com
310-929-7361
972-54-911-0254

For Esther Arditi Bornshtein

(1937-2003)

"The Angel in White"

<http://www.iaf.org.il/4392-40444-en/IAF.aspx>

EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY (1967) (ARCHIVAL AND NEW FOOTAGE)

The city's divided by a no-man's-land marked by tank barriers and razor wire.

The Jordanian flag flies above snipers' nests atop the walls of the Old City; the Israeli flag flies above West Jerusalem.

Nuns on foot, and cars with UN plates, cross at Mandelbaum Gate -- the only access point between east and west.

We hear snippets of pop music from transistor radios -- Hebrew and Arabic, British and American and European.

And we begin to hear a marching band, coming closer, playing a patriotic Israeli tune.

Kids run toward the music, clutching paper Israeli flags.

ESTHER ARDITI BORNSHTEIN (30, Italian) holds the hands of her two young children (YOSSI, 7, and ALIZA, 5).

Young men and women in Israeli army uniforms hurry toward the music, machine guns slung casually across their backs.

SUPER: West Jerusalem. May 15, 1967. Israel's Independence Day.

EXT. HEBREW UNIVERSITY STADIUM - DAY (ARCHIVAL)

Soldiers and jeeps pass to the music of the marching band.

REVIEWING STAND

VIPs and military officers watch the parade: SHIMON PERES, MENACHEM BEGIN, GOLDA MEIR, UZI NARKISS, ARIEL SHARON, MOTTA GUR, and others. (We'll meet them later.)

Among the VIPs is PRIME MINISTER LEVI ESHKOL (71). He's balding and heavy, with dark-framed glasses.

Next to him is CHIEF OF STAFF YITZHAK RABIN (45), red-headed, chain-smoking, exhausted, preoccupied.

Someone among the VIPs watches as a Soldier makes her way through the crowd and hands a note to Rabin. He reads it, his face darkening, then says something to Eshkol. Eshkol's jovial expression turns grim.

The unseen observer watches as the two men talk, their words drowned out by the noise of the crowd.

INT. JERUSALEM CONVENTION CENTER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The unseen observer makes his way down an aisle, shaking hands, getting to his seat next to RUTH DAYAN (50).

MAYOR TEDDY KOLLEK (54) comes on stage as the crowd quiets.

MAYOR KOLLEK
(Hungarian accent)
It is my pleasure to introduce...
Private Shuli Natan.

SHULI NATAN (20) comes out in her uniform, carrying her guitar, and takes a seat on a stool.

She strums the opening chords of "Jerusalem of Gold."

The unseen observer watches her intently.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREET - DAY

The song continues quietly, from an unseen transistor radio, as we see the city prepare for war.

Military couriers ring doorbells and deliver call-up notices.

Soldiers come out of apartments in uniform -- some pressed, some rumpled -- carrying rucksacks and trailed by spouses and children. They hug and kiss before the soldiers board buses.

Yeshiva students dig trenches in the parks.

Esther walks her kids past a news kiosk. A headline reads:

"Reserves Mobilized in Face of Egyptian Threat"

A radio in the kiosk announces call-up codes:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The following units must report to
their bases immediately: Wedding
March... Alternating Current... Men
at Work... Close Shave... Open
Window... Good Friends...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Esther and her classmates (women and a few older men) sit at desks facing a screen.

The TOUR GUIDE INSTRUCTOR (50s) is at the front of the room.

TOUR GUIDE INSTRUCTOR
 We have a very special guest
 joining us today. He's a member of
 the Knesset, a former Chief of
 Staff, and our country's most
 famous amateur archeologist...

The students murmur with excitement.

The instructor opens the door with a flourish.

TOUR GUIDE INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
 Please welcome... General Moshe
 Dayan!

MOSHE DAYAN enters to the students' applause.

He's 52 and bald and wears a patch over his left eye. He's
 dressed in khakis and a pressed white short-sleeve shirt.

He's the smartest person in any room -- and he radiates
 charisma.

MOSHE DAYAN
 Thank you.

He looks around, studying his audience and drawing them in.
 He spots Esther and his face lights up.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 Esther Arditi!

Esther's embarrassed but also pleased he recognizes her.

ESTHER
 It's Esther Bornshtein now...

MOSHE DAYAN
 (to the Instructor)
 I didn't know you had a hero in
 your class.

The other students turn to stare at Esther.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 It was... 1954?

Esther nods.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 This... girl. Seventeen years old.
 Right off the boat from Italy,
 looking like Sophia Loren's little
 sister...

The students giggle. Esther blushes.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 ...pulled two pilots out of a
 burning plane. Then threw herself
 on top of them when it exploded.

The students murmur their admiration.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 She was awarded the Medal of
 Distinguished Service -- the only
 woman to ever receive it. And I'm
 proud to say I gave it to her
 myself.

He claps, and the students follow suit.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 After that, I'm afraid my own
 adventures will sound tame.

He signals to the Instructor, who goes to turn on the slide projector at the back of the room.

Dayan turns off the lights and the image of a barren desert wadi (canyon) appears on the screen.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 Six thousand years ago, the people
 here lived in caves burrowed in the
 hillside...

CLICK. White stones embedded in the wall of the wadi.

CLICK. A cave opening.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 ...with narrow openings to make
 them easier to defend...

CLICK. Dayan tying a rope to the bumper of his jeep.

CLICK. Dayan lowering himself down the face of the wadi.

CLICK. The cave interior, illuminated by flashlight. An ancient cooking circle, surrounded by small rocks.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 In one corner I found the hearth.
 In the ashes I found potsherds...
 part of a milk churn... a cup...
 and a cooking pot...

(MORE)

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
flint blades... an axe head...
animal bones from their last
meal...

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. Close-up shots of his finds.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
On the pots, I could still see the
fingerprints of the potters...

An extreme close-up showing the fingerprints in the clay.

The students gasp.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
These cave dwellers lived here two
thousand years before our father
Abraham. They could neither read
nor write, but they drew and
painted on rock and stone and
decorated their pottery with deep
red stripes.

CLICK. Pottery fragments with faded red stripes.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
This was their home, the center of
their lives. From here they would
go out to hunt in the Negev and in
the Sinai, and they knew every
wadi, every hill, every fold in the
ground.

CLICK. Wadis and hills in a desert landscape.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
This was their land, their
birthplace, and they must have
loved it. When they were attacked,
they fought for it.

CLICK. A spear-head in the palm of his hand.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
I crouched by that ancient hearth.

CLICK. Dayan crouching by the stone circle.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
It was as though the fire had only
just died down, and I didn't need
to close my eyes to conjure up the
woman of the house --

He looks straight at Esther in the dark.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 -- bending over to spark its embers
 into flames....

He holds her gaze for a moment.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
 ... as she prepared the meal for
 her family. My family.

Esther's mesmerized.

INT. THE KNESSET - COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

Rabin's chain smoking and haggard.

Dayan's working on a limerick and looks bored.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN
 (deep baritone voice)
 On May 15, news reached us of the
 movement of Egyptian military
 forces into Sinai. Cairo claimed
 this was in response to Israel's
 preparations to attack Syria, and
 concentration of our military
 forces on the northern frontier.

He indicates the map showing the Israel-Syria border.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN (CONT'D)
 In fact, neither of these
 allegations are true.

SHIMON PERES (43) has a humorous, kind face.

SHIMON PERES
 (Polish accent)
 So we're not massing forces on the
 northern border?

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN
 Not at all.

MENACHEM BEGIN (53, balding, intense) looks suspicious.

MENACHEM BEGIN
 So where are they getting this bad
 intelligence?

Head of Military Intelligence MAJOR GENERAL AHARON YARIV (56) is cool and meticulous and has a slight Russian accent.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV
The Russians.

Murmurs of unease from the Knesset members.

PRIME MINISTER ESHKOL
(Yiddish accent)
I invited the Soviet ambassador to tour the northern border and see for himself... but he declined. Truth doesn't seem to be a Russian priority at the moment.

Muted chuckles around the room.

SHIMON PERES
So what're the Russians up to?

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV
We're not sure. It could be they want to increase Arab dependence on Soviet military aid. The Egyptian War Minister's meeting Kosygin in Moscow next week. He's bringing his shopping list.

A few chuckles.

A Soldier enters quietly and gives a note to Rabin.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (CONT'D)
Or, it could be they want Egypt to distract us from attacking their friends in Damascus.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN
(reading the note)
Two Egyptian MiG 21's just flew over Dimona.

Dayan looks up, interested for the first time.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN (CONT'D)
They entered at high altitude from Jordan. We launched intercepts but were unable to engage.

The mood in the room becomes visibly more tense. Dayan looks eager -- like he can smell the scent of war in the air.

CHIEF-OF-STAFF RABIN (CONT'D)
 Mr. Prime Minister? Can we speak
 in private?

Eshkol gets up and leaves the room with Rabin and Yariv.

Dayan watches them go -- frustrated that he's not "in the room where it happens."

INT. THE KNESSET - LOBBY - DAY

Magen David Adom (the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross) has set up a blood donation station.

Esther's among the volunteers, smiling at a nervous staffer as she prepares to insert a needle in his vein.

Dayan strides past with Peres, not noticing Esther.

INT. THE KNESSET - CAFETERIA - DAY

Dayan and Peres sit by the window, drinking tea.

MOSHE DAYAN

I have two possible courses of action. I can carry out my responsibilities as a member of the Knesset -- take part in debates on the budgets of ministries in which I can't claim a passionate interest...

SHIMON PERES

... and attend meetings of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee...

MOSHE DAYAN

... where the ignorance of the members is no bar to their delivering advice and long speeches.

He sips his tea.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)

Present company excepted, of course.

Peres smiles, not at all offended.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)

I can drink tea in the cafeteria
and drive home without having had
any impact on the major issues of
the day.

SHIMON PERES

You could join us in party
discussions.

MOSHE DAYAN

What's the point? As a minority
party we have no influence on
government policy or actions.

SHIMON PERES

So what do you want to do?

MOSHE DAYAN

I asked for permission to visit the
army units in the south.

SHIMON PERES

And what did they say?

MOSHE DAYAN

That they'd get back to me.

He sips his tea and stares moodily at the view.

INT. THE KNESSET - DAYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

The shelves are full of archeological finds and framed
photos, including one of Dayan with US soldiers in Vietnam
and one with his daughter YAEL in uniform.

Dayan sits at his desk, bored, restless, reading the paper.

The telephone in the outer office RINGS. After a moment, his
secretary, NEORA (32) sticks her head in the doorway.

NEORA

It's Major General Yariv.

MOSHE DAYAN

(picking up phone)

Aharon! What's up?

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (V.O.)

(on phone)

I understand you've requested
permission to tour the south.

MOSHE DAYAN
That's right.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (V.O.)
Look... Moshe...

His tone is patronizing. Dayan tenses.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (V.O.)
The men are busy right now.
They've just arrived. Why don't
you wait a few weeks... let the
dust settle?

MOSHE DAYAN
I don't want the dust to settle. I
want to see them WITH the dust.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (V.O.)
But Moshe...

MOSHE DAYAN
I'm not proposing a Cook's Tour. I
want to get my teeth into what's
happening in the line.

A long silence from the other end of the line.

MOSHE DAYAN (CONT'D)
I have to DO something, Aharon. I
can't just sit here.

Another longish silence.

INTELLIGENCE HEAD YARIV (V.O.)
I'll see what I can do.

Dayan hangs up, frustrated. He stares at the photos in the
paper: Egyptian tanks and troops.

Another RING from the outer office. Neora pops her head in.

NEORA
It's the Chief-of-Staff.

Dayan picks up the phone.

EXT. MOSHE DAYAN'S GARDEN - NIGHT

Dayan's lush garden is a private archeological park, with
massive sarcophagi, columns, and burial urns.