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## Bit of a bombshell today (1)

by Lesley Dawson

All the kids on our block, in fact in the whole of the town marched down to the no-go area between us and Israel. You wouldn't have believed it. I usually hear whispers, especially from the boys, when they are intending to do something dangerous. That gives me time to tell their father who can try to knock some sense into them. I tell you they won't listen to me I am only their mother. This time we were all taken by surprise.

Up in Jerusalem that crazy man Donald Trump decided to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Surely, he knew what mayhem he would cause? Maybe he didn't care. We watched the early morning news on Israeli TV. We can get their programmes as we live near the border. I turned to my husband and said "Young men on both sides are going to be hurt as a result of this." He sighed and opened his mobile phone to call his medical team to ready their emergency equipment, but we didn't realise that the children would go as well as their elder brothers. Young women went, even the really religious ones, who cover their faces, which is unheard of.

My husband told me to stay at home but he went off to the hospital to drive the ambulance out to the sand dunes and set up first aid tents. Imm Walid (my next door neighbour) and I decided that we would take food and drink to our families and see what would happen. I had heard that the Shabab, the young men, intended to march to the fence and cut through the barbed wire to enter Israel and reclaim our old villages. I wondered how they would fare armed only with slings and stones against the IDF with their tear gas and weapons.

My heart sank as I saw the burning tires and excited young people edging closer and closer to the line of Israeli soldiers.

It was almost as though they thought it was a game daring each other to get the closest. At this point there was the sound of gun fire and I saw young men at the front fall down suddenly, howling that they had been hit in the leg. The paramedics, wearing their distinctive waist coats emblazoned with a large red crescent, rushed forward to carry the injured away to the first aid tents. I saw my son, Musa, doing his duty treating the injured and my heart swelled with pride at his bravery.

As the day wore on things got steadily worse as more young men and women were rushed from the fence to the first aid centres. As we peered through the smoke Imm Walid gave a gasp and cried out "NO, please God, no". There in front of us outlined against the sky on top of one of the sand dunes was her fourteen year old daughter Basma. The girl seemed unconcerned about the Israelis as she filled her pockets with stones for her brothers to put in their sling shots. I held my breath as she stood there, seemingly oblivious to her situation and prayed that no sniper on the other side had her in his sights. Sadly, her time was short. She fell to the ground and was rushed to the first aid tents and then to Al Ahli Hospital where she was pronounced dead, shot in the head.

As the sun went down there was a stream of young men, women and children returning to their home, faces streaming with the effects of tear gas and tears of frustration that they had failed in their attempt to cut through the fence.

## Bit of a bomb shell today (2)

My platoon was called back from leave. There was a panic on. I was not pleased as I had arranged to take my brothers and sisters to the beach at Ashdod. My mother kissed me as I set off and whispered "Stay safe my son"

We found ourselves lined up along the fence we share with Gaza. We were told "You snipers have instructions to shoot if you see anyone at all breach the barbed wire." We looked at each other and some brave soul said "Even if they are unarmed Sarge?" He looked round at us all "Anyone who attempts to cut the wire is trying to invade us, so yes"

We swallowed our misgivings and settled ourselves to await the onslaught. "Here they come" someone muttered. With that we saw a column of people walking down the road from Gaza as though they were put for a picnic. Looking through my binoculars I said "They look so young, some of them are just primary school kids"

“Never mind that” growled Amos “Remember what sarge said. They must not be allowed to enter Israel. Remember your kid brothers and sisters in school just over that hill”

“Oh my God” whimpered Boaz “there are women and children coming towards us. How can I go home tonight and tell my mother that I shot a girl?” He was told to pull himself together and remember that girls were our enemies too.

Everything started to happen at once, old tires were set alight and the smoke irritated our eyes and interfered with our vision, the chanting of “Allah Akbar” got louder and stones began to whizz through the air, some of them reaching to where we were kneeling.

We started firing cannisters of tear gas and could see the effects from where we were deployed. I do not know who fired the first actual shot but shots were fired and two teenagers who were closest to the fence went down with howls of rage and pain clutching their legs. By this time older men and women had joined the march and two men dressed as paramedics rushed forward with stretchers to take the boys to safety. We saw them carry the boys to large first aid tents that had been set up out of range of our shots.

The young boys kept coming closer then moving back when they saw us look down our gun sights. It seemed like a game where they were daring each other to be the first to the wire. As more and more people gathered on the sand dunes inside the no-go area things became more confusing. We did receive instructions from spotters in the so-called War Room about who we should aim at. Nevertheless, I can't be sure where my bullets and tear gas went as I saw both males and females fall to the ground and then be rushed away.

Eventually we were stood down and another platoon took our place We were told to stand by in case we were needed again but as darkness fell, we were released to go home. We trudged wearily back to our headquarters, none of us able to string two words together. I don't know about anyone else, but I felt a heavy burden on my shoulders that had nothing to do with the gun I carried.

All our mothers showered us with kisses and cooked our favourite food that night but those who were able to eat it probably didn't enjoy it as much as usual at the end of a shift.