



Dark Waters

Chris Goff

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Goff combines cultural detail, rich geographic description, and countless plot twists to create an engaging and satisfying thriller.

Dark Waters is the first thriller in a planned series by award-winning mystery author Chris Goff. Raisa Jordan is the United States' newly assigned assistant regional security officer in Tel Aviv. Before she has time to unpack her suitcase, there is a terrorist attack in Dizengoff Square, and one of the bodies is the officer she is replacing—who is supposed to be in Washington, DC. Jordan must unknot the tangled ties between radical Jews and radical Islamists before they doom peace talks forever.

The characters in *Dark Waters* represent all sides of the issues involved, with credible backstories: Jordan is a smart, independent woman with a mysterious past, embattled by the politics of her department; Ben Taylor, a stubborn but vulnerable US federal judge, is caught in the crossfire with his young daughter; Batya Ganani is another clever, fearless woman, more than a little scary, and a member of the Israeli internal security service, Shin Bet; Hadid, the reluctant terrorist, is a Palestinian caught between loyalty to his brothers in the Palestine Liberation Committee and his conviction that peace is necessary. Polarized politics and religion create strange bedfellows.

Goff's story is intricate but not as complicated as the numerous characters and subplots—involving the judge's daughter's illness and Jordan's father's shadowy past in the former Soviet Union—make it appear. Deftly plotted, the action moves swiftly and smoothly, ranging from the Judaeen desert of the West Bank to the Herodian remains of Caesarea to Lake Tiberius.

An understated humor runs throughout: "She needed a stick. But you needed trees to have sticks, and trees needed water to grow, so sticks were in short supply." The dialogue, on the other hand, is intermittently awkward, with a penchant for stating the obvious: "If only they could gain access to the information he wanted to hide."

Goff successfully tackles ambitious material: religion, history, cultural clashes, terrorism, espionage, Middle East politics, and global security. *Dark Waters* is recommended to thriller and espionage aficionados as well as those interested in the turbulent politics of the Middle East.

MICHELLE NEWBY (Fall 2015)

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