



Love on the Wings of War: For the Love of Egypt

John Livingston

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Romantic tension and political unrest create a robust narrative that never has a dull moment.

Lovers from two different worlds must navigate a cultural divide as well as political unrest and war in John Livingston's appealing *Love on the Wings of War*.

Nadia Kemal, a young Egyptian student, finds excuses to meet Mark Adams, an American professor. While the young woman captures Mark's curiosity and later his heart, the two seem to be star-crossed lovers.

Mark is divorced while Nadia is a good Muslim girl, promised to another man through an arranged marriage set to help her politically ambitious family. Nonetheless, the two continue their relationship in secret. When war suddenly breaks out, Mark knows he needs to leave, but not without Nadia. Can their forbidden love survive a war and political unrest?

Love on the Wings of War is a historical romance, set in dynamic 1960s Cairo, about trying to find balance between polar opposites. The Beatles movie *A Hard Day's Night* may be playing in theaters, and young Egyptian women may be attending college, but proper Cairo women like Nadia must stay away from Westerners, enter arranged marriages, and keep the Quran around their necks.

In this setting, Nadia and Mark are dazzling yet realistic characters. At first, Nadia is impetuous, storming out of Mark's apartment as easily as she sashays back in. Mark is smitten by both Nadia and Egypt, but he is also frustrated when the culture keeps them apart. As their relationship grows, Nadia and Mark evolve into seasoned adults whose love knows no boundaries.

But it isn't just Nadia and Mark who are strong characters. Mark's boozy colleague Shaughnessy serves as comic relief. Even minor characters, like Mr. Mulukian, Mark's landlord, are crafted with rich details, despite only appearing briefly in the plot.

This eye for detail is apparent in action, too. In one early scene, an ecstatic Nadia grabs a sheet from Mark's bed and "twirls like a whirling dervish." In another scene, Mark and Shaughnessy watch as a mob of Egyptians storm the square outside the hotel where they are. The volatility of the situation is captured in brief descriptions as Shaughnessy jokes that the jostling crowd may tear them apart.

The real triumph of the story is its pacing. Nadia and Mark's relationship begins with a gentle persistence and, like most young love, unfolds with will-they-or-won't-they romantic tension. The story ups the ante by coupling this tension with growing political unrest and war. The result is a robust narrative that never has a dull moment.

Love on the Wings of War is historical romance with sure appeal. It illustrates Rumi's saying, "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along."

KATERIE PRIOR (November 8, 2016)

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