

Barbed Wire in Aphrodite's Garden—New Outline

Colonial Cyprus, 1955. Backed by EOKA militants, Greek Cypriots rise against British rule. Britain retaliates, exploiting centuries of Greek-Turkish hatred. Caught in this multifaceted conflict, exacerbated by British agent Alistair and Greek tycoon Sokratis, are three Greek boys: Stavros, Chris and Irakles.

We find carefree Stavros Ikonis, 18, and whiz-kid cousin Chris, 15, on an idyllic beach. Here, Chris spars with his English teacher and meets his new piano teacher, while Stavros barges in on Jane Simmons, 14—stunning daughter of a British official—and her stepmother, Claire.

Stavros's sister Stella is raped by British soldiers; agent Alistair McKay—who finds her raped—tells Stavros he'll flush out the rapists if Stavros will watch out for the Simmons. Stavros succumbs to an affair with Claire; Chris and Jane become buddies. During a stone-throwing incident, Stavros covers for Chris and is jailed. On his release, Jane expresses her affection for him; he resists.

Stavros sees his mother and Stella still suffering from Stella's rape; vows revenge. Alistair seizes the opportunity, raises the stakes: Stavros, in turn, must deliver EOKA extremists. Meanwhile, amid curfews, shootings, and riots, cousin Chris facilitates a taboo romance between Fulya, a Turkish musical prodigy, and Irakles, illegitimate son of tycoon Sokratis.

Jane learns that Stavros took the rap for his cousin and sleeps with him before being whisked into a British garrison for her safety. Stavros probes Alistair about Jane's whereabouts. In response, Alistair persuades Stavros to spy on Sokratis. Seen chatting with Alistair, a known enemy, Stavros allays EOKA's suspicions—he offers to kill Alistair. Not yet, he is told. Instead, Stavros assassinates a Greek traitor; identified, he goes into hiding.

When Sokratis uncovers Stavros's affair with his wife, and is informed of Stavros's movements, he betrays Stavros, and Stavros slams into an awaiting British ambush. Plagued by his mother's pleas about honor and the Greek cause, Stavros rejects surrender and plunges his truck into an abyss. Stavros survives, severely injured. Months later, now under EOKA orders to kill Alistair—Jane's guardian after her father's death—Stavros finds Jane in a village about to deliver his baby—a baby Sokratis wants to buy. Alistair and Stavros confront each other about their heel-dragging in naming names; they turn Jane and Stella into pawns in their game.

Into the open spills the romance between Fulya and Irakles. An EOKA renegade loses face to Irakles and threatens revenge; Sokratis orders retribution. Fulya hides in her village; Chris and Irakles seek her out. Alerted, Stavros hurries there too. When a shooting spree erupts between Turks and feuding EOKA guerrillas, Chris acts to save his friends—Irakles and Fulya—while Stavros kills Sokratis's hireling.

The British dragnet tightens. On a deserted beach, Stavros agonizes over the safety of his family, over his vows to EOKA, over Jane. He needs a list; Alistair needs a list; but EOKA needs Alistair dead. Jane—on her last day in Cyprus—arrives with Alistair on the beach. She recognizes Stavros and interposes herself in the deadly standoff.

In addition to the writer's lifelong connections with Cyprus, this political drama and love story draws on research, newspaper archives, and on-site interviews with teachers, writers, politicians, policemen and soldiers, as well as Greek and Turkish fighters of the 1950's and 60's—then enemies. Thus, *Barbed Wire in Aphrodite's Garden* remains true to geographical locales, public figures, and historical events. It explores the roots of a war that still divides the island, and the guerrilla culture that evolved into today's global terrorism.

—John Bandler, July 14, 2010