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Outline

RUN ON ICE

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1. Jane is a pretty, middle-class English girl of 25. She is a professional linguist, fluent in French and Russian and learning Farsi (Persian). She is idealistic, romantic and warm-hearted.

Two years before our story begins she was living in Paris, working as an interpreter and moving in left-wing artistic circles. During that period she was interested in two men. The first was Ellis, a not-much-published American poet. He was a cynic, rather world-weary, and something of a bum; but with his rugged good looks and macho clothes and penetrating blue eyes he was madly glamorous. Their brief affair was ended, rather abruptly, by him. Then Jane fell for Jean-Pierre, a French medical student as idealistic as she. Jean-Pierre was planning to go to Afghanistan to work for the anti-Soviet rebels, as some other French doctors had; and he asked Jane to marry him and go with him. She agreed.

Now they tend the sick and wounded, and dodge Russian air raids, in the rebel stronghold of the Panjsheer Valley, in the foothills of the Himalayas. They have a three-months-old daughter, Chantal. They are close to the rebel leader, Gulai, a charismatic young guerilla fighter. Gulai is a worried man: he depends on supplies of arms and ammunition from Pakistan, and his last two convoys have failed to get through.

There are no roads, nor electricity, nor sanitation. Nevertheless Jane is happy with her dangerous, fulfilling career and, being an amateur botanist, she delights in the flowers of the Hindu Kush; but she is disappointed in her marriage. She had looked forward to ever-deepening love and intimacy, but somehow Jean-Pierre still seems like a boyfriend. And she will never forgive him for having been absent when Chantal was born.

2. The head of the KGB in Afghanistan is Col. Anatoli Yakushenko, a decent, patriotic Russian. He was a high-flier in the KGB until, in the mid-seventies, an entire network of agents he had set up in Central America proved to have been turned, and he was sent to what was then a backwater - Afghanistan.

Anatoli has little doubt that the Afghan rebels are (a) bandits who terrorise the population and (b) completely dependent upon the CIA for support and finance. He is trying to establish a network of informants in rebel territory but it is proving very difficult. However, he has one good agent, who has given him the routes and timings of the last two convoys. Anatoli passes his intelligence to Major Sinitski, the creepy leader of the special hit squad that has wiped out both convoys.

3. Ellis, the American poet in Paris, is in fact a CIA agent in deep cover, his mission to locate terrorist leaders close to the French Left. He found himself falling in love with Jane, which was why he ended the relationship so suddenly.

The terrorists are about to be arrested, and Ellis gets a new assignment. The CIA in Moscow has learned that the KGB in Afghanistan has an agent very close to the rebel leader Gulai. Ellis must find out who the agent is and neutralise him. The CIA support team in Pakistan is of course under suspicion so an outsider must investigate. As several young people from Ellis' circle of friends have gone to Afghanistan to help the rebels it will not look odd if Ellis does the same. His cover role will be to instruct the rebels in the use of explosives - a skill which, he will say (truthfully), he acquired as a conscript in Vietnam.

Ellis gets a plane to Pakistan. A runner is sent across the border to tell Gulai that he should welcome and trust Ellis Osborne who has an important message for him.

4. Jane mostly acts as Jean-Pierre's nurse, working alongside him, but also she stays at their base village, dispensing first aid, while he tours outlying villages. It was during one such absence that Chantal was born. Jean-Pierre is so insistent on making these trips that Jane suspects he may have a lover somewhere.

A wounded man is brought in, gangrenous, while Jean-Pierre is away, and Jane does not have the drug the man needs. She goes to find Jean-Pierre. She could send a messenger, but they are unreliable, and anyway she is half hoping to catch Jean-Pierre in flagrante delicto.

In fact she overhears him giving details of the next convoy to a man who speaks French with a Russian accent. (It is Anatoli.)

Jane has the presence of mind to creep away then return noisily, giving the Russian time to hide and herself time to get calm.

She is living with a traitor but she does not know what to do about it. She cannot even save the convoy, for it is several days away, and it is clear (from what Anatoli said) that the Russians will attack the convoy within hours.

Her anguish is doubled when Gulai tells her that Ellis is coming with the convoy.

5. Having spent some time with the CIA support group in Peshawar, Pakistan, Ellis is sure none of them is the traitor - their information is not sufficiently up-to-date. Now he travels with the convoy

through the Khyber Pass, carrying his explosives and ancillary equipment. For geological reasons the Himalayas are peculiarly prone to landslides, and Ellis can see that the rebels are going to have fun once he has taught them how to use dynamite to maximum effect.

As soon as the convoy is inside Afghanistan, Ellis persuades them to take a different route.

Major Sinitski, frustrated, wipes out a small caravan of traders instead.

6. Ellis and the convoy arrive safely in the Panjshah Valley. Jane likes him all the more now that he has dropped the cafe-society affectations which were part of his Paris persona.

But Jane has to do something about Jean-Pierre. The solution she devises is simple. She tells Jean-Pierre that she knows he is a spy and she will betray him to Gulai unless he agrees to take her and Chantal home to Paris immediately. Jean-Pierre has no choice.

7. Ellis tells Gulai that there is a traitor in their midst. All operations are vulnerable until the traitor is found, but if rebel activity is suspended the traitor will just lie low. Ellis suggest that Gulai announce that he has called a conference of rebel leaders from all over Aghanistan. The spy will have to pass this information on. Ellis has a short list of people who have the opportunity of communicating with the Russians and he will be watching to see who moves.

8. Jane does not know that this story is false and she is distraught. If Jean-Pierre betrays the conference the Russians will wipe out

the heroic Afghan resistance at a stroke. But if Jane warns Gulai, Gulai will surely kill Jean-Pierre - who is, whatever else he may be, Chantal's father.

9. Jean-Pierre has a tiny radio transmitter which he uses, not to talk to Anatoli, but to send a message asking for a meeting - which he now does. He tells Anatoli (who comes disguised as a sick peasant to one of those outlying villages) about the conference and also about Ellis. Anatoli is very interested in Ellis, and takes down a full description, including birthmarks, which Jean-Pierre knows about because he has treated Ellis for a minor injury sustained while instructing over-enthusiastic Afghans in the use of dynamite.

Anatoli also gives Jean-Pierre new batteries for his radio.

10. Jane and Jean-Pierre prepare to leave. However, a Russian advance has now closed off the Kyber Pass route, so they must take the much more difficult northerly route through Nuristan. This mountain region is totally inaccessible for most of the year but fortunately it is now summer.

Jane writes a note to Gulai warning him to call off the conference. She intends to ask Ellis to deliver the note two days after she and Jean-Pierre have left. But Jean-Pierre sees the note. Jane refuses to leave without warning Gulai. Maddened, Jean-Pierre tries to kill her. They fight. In the end Jean-Pierre runs off and leaves, taking the horse, the supplies and the radio.

11. Anatoli sends Ellis' description to Moscow and learns that not only is Ellis a CIA agent, but he is the agent who broke up Anatoli's

Central American spy ring.

Personalities aside, Anatoli realises that if he can catch a genuine CIA agent inside Afghanistan, it will prove to the world in general - and to sceptical nonaligned Moslem nations in particular - that the Afghan rebels are U.S. surrogates rather than genuine freedom fighters.

Anatoli sends Sinitski to get Ellis.

12. Sinitski lands in the village by helicopter at dawn. Most of the menfolk are away on a raid. Ellis and Jane escape and watch from a distance through binoculars. Sinitski rounds up all the women and children and demands the American. Then he orders them all machine-gunned.

When the Russians have gone, Jane - after she has calmed down somewhat - realises that she is a neutral international witness to an atrocity, and that by telling what she has seen she could do as much damage to the Russians as My Lai did to the Americans in Vietnam. She forces herself to take photographs of the bodies. Then she, Ellis and baby Chantal leave, heading north.

13. Anatoli launches a massive manhunt, led by Sinitski.

At the Khaiwak Pass Ellis and Jane just manage to evade the helicopter-borne search parties. Now they are in Nuristan, where they are almost impossible to track. For the same reasons their journey is a nightmare. The mountain paths are steep, rocky and iced up. Ellis carries the supplies and Jane carries Chantal. They have a horse but are afraid to use it except on level stretches, which are few. Their caution is vindicated when the horse slips

and falls over a cliff to its death.

They manage to stay ahead of Sinitski. In a village close to the Pakistan border they come upon Jean-Pierre, laid up sick. They help him all they can - he is, after all, Chantal's father - and go on.

14. Anatoli gets a radio message from Jean-Pierre, telling him where Jane and Ellis are.

Sinitski lands in the village where Jean-Pierre is, requisitions horses, and goes after the fugitives, taking with him Jean-Pierre, who was faking illness.

15. Ellis and Jane are walking along a dry river bed, within sight of Pakistan, when they see, miles behind, Sinitski's horses.

They realise that they cannot reach the border before Sinitski catches them.

Ellis goes back and up the mountainside, trailing cable behind him, and lays a dynamite charge. Then he runs back toward Jane, yelling at her to press the detonator. But she has seen Jean-Pierre. She hesitates. Ellis reaches her and is about to detonate the explosion. She prevents him - then does it herself.

The mountain begins to fall. Sinitski and Jean-Pierre and their men see it and turn back - too late. They are buried.

Ellis and Jane walk across the border to safety.

The end.