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Outline - 2nd draft

RUN ON ICE

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Prologue: An English girl walks along a Paris street. Twenty-three years old, she is tall, with a pretty face and long, dark, wavy hair. She wears a colourful cotton dress and high-heeled sandals, and her legs are bare. The sun is shining. It is spring.

She is JANE LAMDEN, a professional interpreter. She studied French and Russian at London University and is teaching herself Farsi (Persian). She is cheerful, affectionate, sexy, compassionate and impulsive. By nature completely honest, she can sometimes be devastatingly frank. She is the eldest of three children. Her father is a dedicated doctor, her mother a cultured and thoughtful woman: they are good-hearted people of liberal political views, and - as so often happens - their children are much more radical in their politics. Jane holds extreme left-wing views and is highly idealistic.

She moves in radical and artistic circles. Here in Paris she has had two lovers. The first was ELLIS THALER, 33, a not-much-published American poet who scrapes a living giving English lessons. He is a cynic, rather world-weary, and something of a bum; but despite that he is madly attractive - tall and muscular, with short curly hair, blue eyes, rugged features and outdoorsy clothes - a very macho poet. Their love affair was very physical. Then, just when she thought she was beginning to get to know him, he ended the relationship, rather abruptly.

Her second and current lover is JEAN-PIERRE DEBOUT, 25, a

French medical student, handsome, dark-bearded, bespectacled, intense, and ^askilful (rather than passionate) lover. Jean-Pierre holds views similar to Jane's but he is a real zealot, a hard-liner, the kind who ends up planting bombs or kidnapping businessmen.

Jane loves Paris but feels she is wasting her life. She has always intended to make the world a better place and she is still determined so to do. As she says to her left-wing friends: All we ever do is sit around and talk - when are we going to do something? She is also discontented with Jean-Pierre. She loves him, she thinks, but she wonders why he won't make a commitment to her.

She has had a particularly tedious day translating insincere speeches about international friendship. Now she goes to a private view of an exhibition of worthless abstracts by a friend of Jean-Pierre's. (Ellis is there. She chats with him briefly. Then the background music plays Jimi Hendrix, and Ellis leaves abruptly: he always hated Hendrix.) Then Jane and Jean-Pierre go to dinner with another couple who publish an avant-garde literary magazine. During dinner Jean-Pierre rants entertainingly about capitalism and decadence. Jane has the oddest feeling that she is being inspected.

That night, after they make love, Jean-Pierre tells her that he is going to Afghanistan to work as a doctor on the rebel side (as some of his friends already have). He asks Jane to marry him and go with him. She is shocked, frightened, and excited. By morning she has said Yes.

1: Eighteen months later, Jane and Jean-Pierre are in the rebel stronghold of the Five Tigers Valley, in the foothills of the Himalayas,

tending the sick and wounded and dodging Russian air-raids. There is no sanitation, nor any electricity, nor any roads. Nevertheless Jane is happy with her dangerous but worthwhile career. She is well liked by the Afghans, with the sole but ominous exception of the mullah, who occasionally mutters into his red-dyed beard about Western whores. Jane is an amateur botanist (the only ladylike pursuit she learned from her mother) and she delights in the flowers of the Hindu Kush. But the marriage has not worked out. She had looked forward to ever-deepening love and intimacy with Jean-Pierre, but somehow he still seems like a boyfriend.

They also have a three-months-old baby girl, Chantal. Jane decided to have a baby, knowing Jean-Pierre would not want her to, because she was lonely, because she hoped the baby would draw her and Jean-Pierre closer together, and just because she wanted a baby. Jean-Pierre was so furious that he wanted to perform an abortion himself. When Chantal was born he was absent, in a distant village.

The local rebel leader is Gulai, a spirited and bloodthirsty tribesman in his forties. His army basically consists of all the able-bodied young peasants in the Valley. However, his fame is widespread, and he is the only tribal leader yet to emerge with a chance of uniting the scattered independent armies of the Afghan resistance.

Jane and Jean-Pierre are close to Mohammed, Gulai's son and heir, a charismatic young guerilla fighter who was a helicopter pilot in the Afghan regular army until the Russian invasion, when he deserted. Jane never ceases to be amazed and moved by the bravery of Gulai and Mohammed as they go out with their Victorian rifles to do battle with Russian tanks and helicopters. For his part Mohammed

is half in love with Jane, but he is too devout a Moslem to do anything about it.

The guerillas are crucially dependent upon supplies of arms and (especially) ammunition which come from Pakistan in horse convoys. Mohammed is at the 'clinic' with Jane and Jean-Pierre when news come through that a convoy they have been waiting for has been ambushed by the Russians and wiped out. Mohammed and Gulai immediately plan another.

2: The head of the KGB in Afghanistan is Colonel Anatoli Yakushenko, 53, a decent, patriotic Russian, married with two grown-up children. Anatoli is a determined and tough-minded man who lives happily within the Soviet system, but he never quite had the killer instinct to make it all the way to the top in the KGB, and he was posted to Afghanistan back in 1977, when the country was an untroubled and relatively unimportant ally of the USSR.

Anatoli has little doubt that the rebels are (a) bandits who terrorise the population and (b) American surrogates, completely dependent upon the CIA for finance and arms. However, he is sensitive to the brutality of many of his colleagues, and realises - as they do not - that bombing villages and mining mountain trails will generate support for the rebels. Consequently Anatoli is involved in a power struggle between those who, like him, want to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, and those who would prefer to bomb them back into the Stone Age.

Anatoli's main job is to establish networks of informants in rebel territory, a very difficult task. However, he has one good agent in Five Tigers Valley, and this man has now given him

details of the planned route and approximate timing of a second convoy from Pakistan. Anatoli passes the information to Major Sinitski, creepy leader of a special hit squad known, unofficially, as the Animals.

3: Ellis, the American poet in Paris, is in fact working for U.S. Intelligence, his mission to locate terrorist leaders close to the French left.

The eldest son of a construction worker, Ellis is bright, tough, patriotic and unmanageable. At the age of nineteen he was thrown out of college and went to Vietnam, where he served for six years and collected a chestful of medals. Then he joined the CIA - because he wanted to serve his country, because he believes espionage (like war) is too important to be left to the psychopaths, and because he could not think of any other occupation that would not bore him to distraction. Now, age 33, he is no longer energised by subterfuge and danger in alien cities - but what else is there to do?

His mission in Paris is over - the terrorists are about to be arrested - and now Ellis is given a new assignment. The CIA in Moscow has learned that the KGB in Afghanistan has an agent close to the most important of the rebel leaders, Gulai; and this agent has already betrayed two ammunition convoys. Someone must go there, find out who the traitor 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 in Paris have gone to Afghanistan to help the rebels it will not look odd if he goes too. His cover role will be to instruct the rebels in the use of explosives - a skill which, he will say truthfully,

he picked up as a conscript in Vietnam. He will continue to use the pseudonym Ellis Thaler.

All this makes perfect sense and Ellis accepts the assignment without demur. However, as he shops for cold-weather clothes and mountaineering boots, he wonders whether he should have refused to go. He ended his brief affair with Jane because he found himself falling in love with her. He was enchanted by her grace, warmth and vivacity; he wanted to encircle and protect her; and, most important, while he has made love with several women and has been in love with one or two, never before has he known sex to be such an intense emotional experience as it is with Jane. Had he continued to see her he would have had to tell her the truth about himself or - equally unthinkable - to continue deceiving her.

But, of course, he cannot tell his boss that he will not go to Afghanistan because he might meet a girl with whom he used to be in love. Anyway, he tells himself, it is all over now - she married Jean-Pierre.

He gets a plane to Pakistan. Meanwhile a runner is sent into Afghanistan to tell Gulai that he should welcome and trust Ellis Thaler who has an important message for him.

4: Jane mostly acts as Jean-Pierre's assistant, giving injections and changing dressings; but she also stays at their clinic, dispensing First Aid, while Jean-Pierre visits outlying villages. Jean-Pierre is so insistent on making these trips that Jane suspects he may have a lover. It was during one such absence that Chantal was born. During another, a wounded man is brought in, gangrenous, and Jean-Pierre has the drug the man needs.

Jane sets off to find Jean-Pierre. She could send a messenger, but there is no one reliable to hand, and anyway she is half hoping to catch Jean-Pierre in flagrante delicto.

She reaches the village where he is supposed to be and locates the house he uses. She creeps in, thinking that if all is innocent she will creep away again and return noisily.

She hears voices. Jean-Pierre is with somebody - a man who speaks French ...

5: The man is Anatoli, and Jean-Pierre is his informant.

Jean-Pierre's father, a lifelong communist, was a hero of the French resistance, whose first wife died heroically during the war. After the war Jean-Pierre's father was jailed for subversive activities. In the late fifties he married again, and Jean-Pierre is the son of this second wife. Jean-Pierre's father at 40 was a bitter, disappointed and betrayed man, and he brought Jean-Pierre up to be ruthless, dogmatic, single-minded and deceitful. The old man is dead now, but his influence lives on: Jean-Pierre wants to be a war hero.

He sincerely believes that the world would be a better place if it was all run on the Soviet system: authoritarianism appeals to him. So, when he was approached in Paris and asked to go to Afghanistan to spy for Moscow, it was an opportunity to work for world socialism, be a hero like Father, and practise the unscrupulous guile which his ageing father taught him was the only way to beat the system.

Anatoli despises Jean-Pierre.

Jean-Pierre has a small battery-operated radio transmitter which he uses to send a coded message to Anatoli when he wants a

meeting. The message is coded, not because the rebels listen in - they have no radios - but because the untrustworthy Afghan army listens in. And the two men meet, rather than conversing in code on the radio, because the kind of radio (and battery pack) needed for prolonged conversation at that distance would be too big to conceal. When Anatoli gets Jean-Pierre's message he waits three days then walks from behind Russian lines to this village, dressed as a peasant, with an Afghan guide, and waits like any sick peasant for Jean-Pierre to see him.

Jean-Pierre now gives Anatoli details of the third convoy. It will be ambushed within hours. Anatoli gives Jean-Pierre new batteries for the radio.

While they are talking a horse is heard. Anatoli covers his face with his scarf. Jane comes in. Jean-Pierre gives her the drug she needs, and she leaves.

6: She has put on a terrific act but she is distraught. She is married to a traitor and she does not know what to do. She realises Jean-Pierre must have come to Afghanistan with the intention of spying. She recalls that for a long time Jean-Pierre used to argue that the Russian invasion of Afghanistan was justified; then he appeared to change his mind. The change must have been faked. Was his love for Jane faked? How could she have been deceived about such a thing?

She is almost as agonised over the fate of the convoy, for Mohammed is leading this one. But there is nothing she can do, for a runner would take days to reach the convoy, and it is clear from what Anatoli said that the Russians will attack within hours.

She reaches her village, treats the wounded man, and is devastated to learn from Gulai that Ellis Thaler is with the doomed convoy.

7: Having spent some time with the CIA support group in Peshawar, Pakistan, Ellis is convinced that none of them is the traitor. Now he travels with the convoy through the Khyber Pass, his explosives and ancillary equipment loaded on a scrawny horse. For geological reasons the Himalayas are peculiarly prone to landslides, and Ellis can see that the rebels are going to have fun when he has taught them to use dynamite to maximum effect.

He persuades young Mohammed to deviate from his planned route as soon as they are inside Afghanistan. Soon afterwards they see, from a distance, a fleet of Russian helicopters swoop on the route they had planned to take and wipe out a small caravan of traders.

8: Major Sinitski complains that Anatoli has given him dud information. Anatoli learns - and reveals - that Sinitski deliberately slaughtered innocent traders. Sadly, Moscow is unimpressed by this counter-accusation and Anatoli loses points.

9: Jane tells Jean-Pierre that she wants him to take her and Chantal home to Paris. He refuses. She contemplates threatening to expose him as a traitor, but she is frightened of what he might do to her.

Then the convoy arrives safely. Jane is (i) overjoyed that Mohammed and Ellis are alive, (ii) intrigued and disturbed by Ellis, who has shed the affectations which were part of his cafe-society persona, and (ii) emboldened, by the presence of another European in the village, to threaten Jean-Pierre. She does so, and

Jean-Pierre has no choice but to assent.

10: Ellis meets Gulai. Having saved Mohammed's life, Ellis can do no wrong. Ellis explains that there is a traitor somewhere. All rebel operations are therefore vulnerable. However, if Gulai ceases all activity then the traitor will simply lie low. Ellis suggests that Gulai announce that he has called a conference of rebel leaders from all over Afghanistan. The traitor will have to pass this information on. Ellis has a short list of people who have the opportunity of contacting the Russians: it includes Jean-Pierre, Mohammed, the mullah, and various itinerant traders. Ellis will be watching them all to see who moves.

Meanwhile, Ellis starts giving dynamite lessons. They are generally successful, despite one accident when Ellis is wounded by a flying rock. Jean-Pierre dresses the wound and no further damage is done.

11: The Russians launch a major offensive, and the way to Pakistan via the Khyber Pass is closed.

Jane is defeated again. She does not know that the conference is a ruse, and she imagines that if Jean-Pierre passes the news to the Russians then they will be able to wipe out the entire leadership of the Afghan resistance at a stroke. But if she warns Gulai, then Gulai will certainly kill Jean-Pierre, who is, whatever else he may be, Chantal's father.

There is, however, another route, northward through the remote province of Nuristan - which though impenetrable in winter is accessible, with difficulty, in summer - and along the Butter Trail, the route

used by the dairy herdsmen of Nuristan to take their produce to Chitral in north-western Pakistan. Jane now insists that Jean-Pierre fulfil his promise by taking them home via this route.

12: Jean-Pierre has an emergency method of contacting Anatoli, of course. There is a reclusive and half-mad shepherd who regularly takes sheep to market in Kabul, and who will carry a written message to Anatoli, who rewards the man with marijuana. Jean-Pierre now uses this conduit to tell Anatoli about the conference. He also mentions Ellis.

Anatoli is most intrigued by Ellis - so much so that he disguises himself as a leper and walks to Jean-Pierre's clinic. He gets from Jean-Pierre a full description of Ellis, including birthmarks (which Jean-Pierre knows about since treating Ellis for that wound). Anatoli sends this description to Moscow.

13: Jane's intuition tells her that Jean-Pierre has found another way to contact Anatoli and betray the conference. She decides she will write a note to Gulai, warning him, and somehow have the note delivered after she and Jean-Pierre have gone. She asks Ellis if he would be prepared to deliver a note for her. Ellis agrees.

14: Of course this arouses Ellis' suspicions. He searches Jean-Pierre's room and finds the radio with its Russian batteries. But what should he do? If he tells Gulai, Jean-Pierre will be killed, and Chantal will be fatherless. Jean-Pierre is leaving anyway: he can do no more harm. Ellis decides to let him go.

15: Jane writes the note but Jean-Pierre sees it. She refuses to go with him without leaving the note. Maddened, he tries to take her away by force. They fight. Ellis intervenes. Jean-Pierre flees, taking the horse and the supplies.

16: Anatoli learns from Moscow that Ellis is a secret agent. Anatoli realises that if he can catch a genuine American agent in 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's Animals to get Ellis.

16: That night, Jane leaves Chantal - for the first time ever - in the care of a babysitter, Fara, a village girl who works as maid for her, and goes with Ellis to a grove on the mountainside where they make love in a down-filled sleeping bag.

The sound of helicopters wakes them at dawn. From their vantage-point they can see the village - although they are a rocky 30-minute climb away - and they watch as Sinitski's Animals land. Ellis prevents Jane running down the mountainside to Chantal.

The young men are all away fighting. Sinitski rounds up the old men, the women and the children. Fara is led out of Jane's House - without Chantal. Sinitski appears to be questioning people.

A villager points to the house where Ellis has been staying. Soldiers search it. The people who live there are beaten, then shot.

Clearly Sinitski is looking for Ellis, and now Ellis' instinct is to rush down the mountainside and give himself up before anyone else is murdered. But he is too late. Sinitski shouts an order

and the soldiers raise their weapons. Jane screams and closes her eyes. Ellis watches as the villagers are machine-gunned, recalling an exactly similar scene in Vietnam, which he watched while the music of Jimi Hendrix blared from a soldier's portable cassette player.

18: The helicopters leave. Jane and Ellis rush to the village. Chantal is in her crib, fast asleep. No one else is left alive.

Jane is now desperate to leave Afghanistan and Ellis decides to take her. They find a horse, load up with supplies, and leave, heading north.

19: At the next village, Shalnaiz, they run into Gulai and Mohammed. Jane tells of the slaughter of the villagers. Gulai says that Jane can ensure that those people did not die in vain by telling the world what she has witnessed. Ellis agrees, recalling the damage that the My Lai atrocity did to the U.S. Gulai assigns Mohammed to guide Ellis and Jane on the first leg of their journey.

Early the next morning, while Shalnaiz is asleep, they leave. Instead of continuing north up the Five Tigers Valley, the obvious route and the one Jean-Pierre took, they head east, over the mountains.

20: Anatoli has launched a massive manhunt, and this morning helicopters land at every village in the Five Tigers Valley. By midday he knows that Ellis has slipped through his net. He also knows that Ellis is travelling with a British woman who witnessed an atrocity. Studying maps, he guesses that Ellis has gone over the mountains into Nuristan. (He has a momentary feeling of admiration for the courage of the

fugitives.) The mountain trails are not mapped, neither are they visible from the air. The only way now to search for Ellis and Jane is to send a party on foot to follow their trail.

21: Mohammed brings Ellis and Jane safely to Achagaur at the end of a long day. He finds them a guide for the next leg then bids them an emotional farewell and sets off to travel, through the night, back to his father's army .

In the middle of the night he returns and wakes them. Over the mountain he came upon a troop of Russians camped on the pass. They must move out immediately. Mohammed will stay with them another day.

22. At the end of the second day they reach lake Mundul. Mohammed finds a new guide and sees them off on the Butter Trail. Then he waits behind, to tell the Russians that the fugitives have gone south.

23. Another day takes Ellis and Jane to Pushal, where they find Jean-Pierre laid up with dysentery. They give him drugs - he is, after all, Chantal's father - and go on.

24. They approach a high pass. This part of the journey is a nightmare. The mountain track is steep, stony and treacherous with ice. Ellis carries the supplies, Jane carries Chantal, and the guide leads the horse, which can only be used on rare level stretches. Their caution is vindicated when the horse slips and falls over a ledge to its death. But they make it through the pass, and the worst

is over.

25: Anatoli's search party, diverted by Mohammed, reports that Ellis has somehow evaded them again. Then Anatoli gets a radio message from Jean-Pierre, telling him where Jane and Ellis are. He sends Sinitski with orders to land at Pushtal, requisition horses, and follow the fugitives.

26: Ellis and Jane are walking on relatively smooth ground when they see horses behind them.

Ellis climbs the mountainside, trailing cable, and lays a dynamite charge. The horsemen come nearer. Ellis runs, yelling at Jane to press the detonator. She sees Jean-Pierre with Sinitski - hesitates - realises it must have been Jean-Pierre who brought Sinitski - and presses the plunger.

The dynamite explodes. A landslide begins. Sinitski and Jean-Pierre turn back to avoid the rockfall - too late. The mountain buries them.

27: As they look down on the next valley, Jane and Ellis see thousands of Russian helicopters. Their route is blocked. It is hopeless.

A lone helicopter comes over the pass behind them and lands close by. Ellis yells 'Run!' but Jane cannot, she is too weary. Ellis has no more dynamite. The guide flees, taking the horse.

Then the door opens and out steps Mohammed, who has stolen the helicopter and come to check on them. Ellis and Jane climb aboard. They fly over the next valley and into Pakistan.

The end.