

March 25th 1987

NOTES ON THE FIRST DRAFT SCREENPLAY - LIE DOWN WITH LIONS

General

On the whole it is very pacey and exciting. A well-developed storyline, very visual, with lots of action and good production values. Compulsive.

The action sequences are the most successful, the twists and turns of the plot are well-handled. Some of the set-pieces are, perhaps, a little repetitive because of the nature of the struggle, the terrain and the use of helicopters.

The dialogue is sometimes flat, sometimes verbose, tending to make the characters less credible and certainly less than heroic. Several scenes could be tightened and it could do with losing twenty-five pages. Tone is rather too sentimental. It would be better either tougher and more throw-away or darker and more atmospheric.

The set-pieces work very well. The areas of the script without dialogue are the most successful.

The 'love triangle' is intriguing, especially because Jane seems to be deceived in the same way by both of the men in her life.

The Characters

Ellis seems to work, though he could have more depth and more mystery. As written, he's a straight-forward, action-oriented 'company man'.

Should like to see more of Ellis between Paris and his arrival at the guerilla stronghold, in a way that would give him more stature.

Jane seems stupid, gullible and hysterical. One feels neither sympathy with nor attraction to her. Improved dialogue could help with this problem, though her easy switching from Ellis to Jean-Pierre and, later, back again and her flirting with the handsome Afghans seem to justify the Mullah's verdict that she is a "Western whore".

Jean-Pierre should appear a more complex character to explain his apparently contradictory actions in helping the guerillas medically but having no compunction about betraying them

The Opening

The beginning works well and makes you want to read on. Excellent cross-cutting creates tension and excitement. The characters

NOTES ON LIE DOWN WITH LIONS/2

are introduced and their relationships established, preparing the ground for future developments but without giving the game away.

Early Afghanistan Scenes

Good establishing scenes of majestic countryside. Sudden invasion of jets and the explosions bringing drama and menace. Good to see Jane in action and caring for the child.

The confrontation with Abdullah is important, it is the first intimation of the divide between the two cultures.

Dialogue between Jane and Jean-Pierre should reflect the state of their relationship.

Birth Sequence

No. { Serious reservations about the birth sequence. The fact that Jane is pregnant/gives birth and then is saddled with a young child, too young to have a personality of its own that the audience would warm to, compromises her sexuality. Consider dropping the baby.

This sequence does, however, give us more local colour in the behaviour of the women and provides strong roles for them. Find alternative?

Anatoly/Jean-Pierre

Their voices over the Peshawar scenes a good device. Would it be possible to introduce Ellis into these sequences, even if it is not explicit who he is?

Jean-Pierre's "ritual washing" is a good metaphorical image.

Important to establish **Masud** for the audience through the exchanges between Anatoly and Jean-Pierre.

No. { Not sure that Jane's overhearing the Russian oath and starting to suspect works. The flashback to the Paris scene with the student's explanation is painfully contrived.

Ellis arrives at the guerilla stronghold

Ellis is missing from the story for too long and when he reappears his entry is **hardly dramatic**. The dialogue here is rather **weak**. We need to believe in the importance of his mission.

Although Jane's preoccupation with her baby is understandable it is not something the audience can easily share.

Jane Smashes the Radio

Tension mounts during this development. Jane's frantic search

NOTES ON LIE DOWN WITH LIONS/3

Ellis/Masud/Jean-Pierre

Good plotting, with Jean-Pierre prepared to kill Ellis but changing his mind when he realises the significance of the deal Ellis is discussing with Masud.

Reverse Ambush

No. Ellis helps the rebels to fight back and becomes a hero. The action sequences are excellent, but, again, the **dialogue** is inadequate, with no good, memorable lines.

Ellis/Jane Love Sequence

Dialogue here is **banal** and **embarrassing**. This could be a really passionate and compelling sequence, with moments of great tenderness, too. The audience has to sympathise with these two principal characters and believe that what they are doing is right so that the sympathy stays with them all through the long trek to safety.

The Escape

Ellis has to escape from Afghanistan with the treaty signed by the leaders of the tribes. If the presence of Jane and the baby is delaying him, this is cause for mounting tension. He is placing his personal wishes above his duty. Is he unaware of any internal conflict? Wouldn't Jane, knowing how serious it would be for him to fail, urge him to go on without her? More **depth of character** needed.

No. When Jane fails to pull out the safety pin, it is, in a sense, an act of betrayal on her part. Would prefer her to become a woman of action and pull the pin. The audience would be on her side. Then it would be even more crushing to be caught, after all, by Anatoly.

The Ending

Altogether too **glib**, what one would expect from a **TV film**. A disappointing and frankly incredible end to a fine action drama.

9. INT. Ellis's apartmentDAY

JANE turning the pages of the paper. There is a KNOCK at the door. She registers puzzlement. She gets off the bed and opens the door.

There stands JEAN-PIERRE, breathing hard after running.

JANE is surprised but steps back immediately, letting him in.

He bends down to kiss her. She offers her cheek. He kisses her lips. She pushes him away firmly but gently.

Throughout this scene JEAN-PIERRE is at his most attractive: charming, warm, smiling a lot, He is infatuated with JANE. She likes him and finds him attractive but right now she is just not available.

JEAN-PIERRE

Isn't Ellis here?

JANE

Would you kiss me like that if he was?

JEAN-PIERRE smiles but he does not like that remark. He sits down, still breathing hard. JANE regards him with fond amusement.

JANE

Does kissing always make you breathless?

JEAN-PIERRE

Depends who I'm kissing.

(a breath)

When will Ellis be back?

JANE steps to the window and looks out, saying -

JANE

Any minute now.

10. EXT. Ellis's streetDAY

JANE's PoV of the street seen from a high window. Across the road the BIG MAN is leaning against the hood of his car reading a newspaper. He glances up and meets our eye, but registers nothing and goes back to his paper.

Rather than reading the paper,
(~~seems~~ ~~stagnant~~) Jane could be doing
something to illustrate
her character a bit more.
Like maybe gluing pic-
tures of ~~the~~ and Ellis
into a photo album so we
can see the progression of
their relationship, and how
much in love they are. Or
maybe Jane could be doing
something that would show her
social conscience (other-
wise, Afghanistan seems
very abrupt)

Like breaking off a
chunk of bread and
tossing it down to an
old beggar who sits on
the street. (maybe too
obvious but you get the
picture)

11. INT. Ellis's apartment

DAY

JEAN-PIERRE

I need to have a serious talk with you.

JANE turns back from the window. Her reply is flip.

JANE

We had it, three days ago, remember?
You asked me to leave Ellis and go with
you to Afghanistan. Not many girls
could resist such a tempting offer, but -

JEAN-PIERRE

Please. I've discovered something
terrible about Ellis.

JANE looks sceptical but says nothing.

JEAN-PIERRE

Ellis is not what he pretends to be.

Now JANE drops her flip attitude and becomes warm.

JANE

Listen. You're a nice man and I like
you. ~~And I truly admire you.~~ ^{And I truly admire you.} ~~But what are you planning to~~
~~do with your medicine? Not many doctors would...~~ ^{do with your medicine. Not many doctors would...} ~~oh, hell, what I'm~~
^{saying is,} I could probably fall for you - if I
wasn't already in love, ~~heart and soul,~~ ^{heart and soul,}
with Ellis. ~~There (smiling) But now that you're here,~~
^{you can join us for lunch. I bought fresh strawberries,}
~~and there's plenty of~~ ^{and there's plenty of} ~~JEAN-PIERRE (interrupting)~~
Ellis works for the CIA.

A beat, then JANE bursts out LAUGHING.

JEAN-PIERRE

(hotly)

It's true! He spies on radical groups.
He's an agent.

JANE

It's not true. Ellis couldn't be a spy!
Don't you think I'd know? I've been
practically living with him for a year.

JEAN-PIERRE

It's all over town. Rahmi Coskun was
arrested this morning, and everyone
says Ellis betrayed him.

JANE

But Ellis is with...Rahmi...now...

Her voice tails off as she realises that this tends
to confirm Jean-Pierre's story.

JEAN-PIERRE
 Not any more. Rahmi is in jail. And
 his friends in the Turkish Freedom Army
 want Ellis's blood.

JANE is beginning to be bothered as the story becomes
 a little less incredible. She goes to the window again.

JANE
 (distractedly)
 Why was Rahmi arrested?

JEAN-PIERRE
 (a shrug)
 Who knows? Subversive acts.

JANE
 I can't believe you're serious.
 She is looking out of the window.

12. EXT. Ellis's street DAY

ELLIS is walking along the street carrying a bunch
 of flowers. He is a craggily attractive man of 30 or
 so. He wears jeans and a check shirt (by contrast with
 Jean-Pierre's suit and tie). He looks very happy
 and walks with a spring in his step.

JANE (V.O.)
 Here he comes, ~~at last.~~

ELLIS walks past the BIG MAN. The two men do not
 look at one another. We FOLLOW ELLIS to the entrance
 of the building.

13. INT. Ellis's apartment DAY

JANE
 Now you're going to have to repeat
 this ludicrous story in front of him. *(giving him a chilly look)*
After that, I'd like you to go. I'm afraid I can't ask you to lunch after all.
 JEAN-PIERRE looks a little frightened but says -

JEAN-PIERRE
 I will. Why do you think I'm here?
 I came to warn him.

JANE looks at him. She is troubled. They both look
 at the door.

At last ELLIS looks at him.

ELLIS
Where did you get this notion?

JEAN-PIERRE
From Raoul.

ELLIS nods.

ELLIS
Jane, would you sit down?

JANE
(fast)
I don't want to sit down.

ELLIS
I've got something to say -

JANE
Then say it, and stop asking me
to sit down!

ELLIS
(to Jean-Pierre)
Would you leave us?

JANE
(shouting)
Ellis! Stop this! Tell me you're
not a spy!

ELLIS
It's not that simple -

JANE
It is! It's simple!

She grabs his jacket as if she is about to shake him.
There is a KNOCK at the door. JEAN-PIERRE reacts but
the other two ignore it.

JANE
He says you've been lying to me, ever
since we met ~~lying to me shamelessly.~~
Is it true? ~~(It is)~~ true or not? Is it?

ELLIS
(giving in)
I was going to tell you. Today.

JANE GASPS, horrified, realising that the whole thing
is true. She stares at ELLIS for a long moment. There
is another KNOCK. Again ELLIS and JANE ignore it.

MOUSA is lying on the ground unconscious. One hand is badly mangled and bleeding copiously.

JANE looks, horrified, then kneels down and feels his heart. She looks relieved: he is alive. She hesitates for a split-second, then quickly pulls off her shirt. The waist of her skirt is very high, covering her bump, but her breasts are bare. She ties the shirt around MOUSA's arm then picks up a stick and makes a tourniquet.

JANE

(murmurs) ~~voice breaking~~
 Damn it, ~~You silly boy,~~ you should have
 stayed with the others in the caves.

She finishes the tourniquet. The boy is still out cold. She looks up at the steep mountain path, and sighs. She gets her arms under him, picks him up, struggles to her feet, and begins to climb the path.

Soon she is breathing hard and perspiring. Mousa's eyes open but he looks blank. Unable to carry him any farther, JANE sets him on his feet and stops for a rest. After a beat, she HEARS AN ANGRY SHOUT. She looks up and is aghast at what she sees.

Her PoV: ABDULLAH STANDS GLARING AT HER. He is a tubby man of about 55 with a beard dyed red. His clothes are an odd mixture: he wears a turban and billowing black Afghan trousers with a fairisle sweater and a pin-striped suit coat that are obviously Western in origin. He is apoplectic with rage.

JANE

Oh, ~~no!~~ ^{Lord}.. the mullah.

She covers her breasts with her arms but it is too late.

He advances on her.

JANE

Peace be with you -

He raises his stick and SCREAMS at her in Dari.

She yells back, pointing at MOUSA.

JANE

(frightened)
 Look! Can't you see -

He hits her head with his stick. We HEAR the CRACK. JANE gives a SHOUT OF PAIN. She steps back, dazed and frightened.

He raises his stick again.

She pours the water into a bowl, finds a small piece of soap and a worn washcloth, and begins to undress. She takes off her skirt and her underpants. She puts her hand to her back and winces. The pain lasts for a long moment and when it goes it leaves her pale, drained and afraid. She kicks away her discarded clothes and then does a double-take. She picks the clothes up and looks closely.

We see a QUICK SHOT of a bloodstain.

JANE is puzzled and frightened.

~~JANE~~
Bleeding...?

She makes a decision. Abandoning the idea of a wash, she takes a pair of baggy Afghan trousers from a chest and pulls them on. She steps to the door then stops suddenly.

JANE
Oh, no....

She looks down. The trousers she has just put on are soaking wet, clinging to her legs.

JANE
(really frightened now)
It is the baby....

Now another contraction hits her, and this one is the worst yet. She closes her eyes and sinks to the ground.

MOHAMMED (O.S.)
Madame Jane....

JANE opens her eyes.

We SEE MOHAMMED. He is a very handsome Afghan man in his twenties. He is half in love with Jane. She is normally quite flattered by this. He speaks good English.

MOHAMMED
I came to thank you for saving the life
of my only son. Are you sick?

JANE
(strained)
I'm having a baby .

MOHAMMED
(startled)
Now?

JANE
Now. Get Rabia.

MOHAMMED goes out.

JANE closes her eyes. DISSOLVE to -

CLOSE on JANE's face, eyes closed, teeth gritted, sweating. She GROANS. Gradually, she begins to cry quietly, as if she just can't take any more. Then an arm goes around her and we SEE a wrinkled old hand grasp her shoulder firmly. Still in CLOSE SHOT, JANE clings to the other woman for a few moments.

Then we PULL BACK and SEE RABIA GUL. She is quite startling to look at because of her incredibly wrinkled nut-brown skin. Although she looks so old she is strong and smart. She and Jane practise very different kinds of medicine but treat one another with wary respect. Now JANE is intensely grateful to her for coming.

With RABIA is ZAHARA, Jane's best friend in the village, a tall, handsome woman of Jane's age, full of vitality.

RABIA
Are the pains coming fast?

JANE
Every minute or so.

RABIA
(making quite sure she is wanted)
Shall we make everything ready?

JANE
Oh yes... yes please. (to herself, under her breath) Damn you, Jean Pierre, if I die from this I'll absolutely come back to haunt you.

ZAHARA goes out. RABIA kneels in front of the washbowl which JANE was going to use earlier. She washes her hands thoroughly with soap, closing her eyes and murmuring some unintelligible WORDS which might be PRAYERS. She hears JANE GROAN and looks.

JANE closes her eyes and grits her teeth for another contraction. This pain is different and not so bad. She gives what sounds like a constipated MOAN. She feels this incredible urge to push.

RABIA
It begins.

The atmosphere is now very tense as all three women concentrate on the birth.

The contractions eases and JANE seems almost asleep. Then she gives a CRY as if she feels a sharp pain.

RABIA
(intense)
Don't push any more. Let the
baby swim out.

The contraction passes. RABIA nods at ZAHARA and they change places. RABIA kneels in front of JANE.

JANE grits her teeth, her face taut with strain.

RABIA
(gently insistent)
Don't push. Be calm.

She reaches up and touches JANE's face.

RABIA
Don't bite down. Make your mouth loose.
It will help you to relax your body.

JANE lets her jaw sag and some of the tension goes out of her face. Suddenly she CRIES out again, loudly this time. RABIA reaches between JANE's thighs.

LIBRARY FOOTAGE of a baby's head emerging while JANE CRIES (V.O.) out loud.

Back to JANE: the pain eases momentarily and she looks down.

JANE
(panicky)
Don't pull. Don't pull the head.

RABIA
No.

JANE closes her eyes again.

RABIA
A small push for the shoulder.

LIBRARY FOOTAGE of the baby's shoulder emerging.

RABIA (V.O.)
Now the other shoulder.

The baby is born.

Back to JANE: she gives a HUGE SIGH of exhausted relief.

LIBRARY FOOTAGE: CLOSE-UP of a new-born baby, silent and motionless, not breathing.

Back to JANE.

JANE
~~Is it~~ all right? ... isn't it?

RABIA blows on the baby's face.

JANE
(panicking)
~~Is it alive?~~ Isn't it? Please. Tell me.

RABIA blows again.

LIBRARY FOOTAGE: the baby CRIES.

JANE hears and smiles.

RABIA takes a clean rag and wipes the baby's face.

ZAHARA helps JANE over to the rug. JANE sits down. ZAHARA props her up with cushions. JANE unbuttons her shirt.

~~JANE~~
~~Is it normal?~~

RABIA gives her the baby, saying -

RABIA
Yes. ~~Yes,~~ she is perfect.

JANE puts the baby to her breast.

JANE (in breathless wonder)
A girl.

JANE has never been so tired, never been so happy.

RABIA and ZAHARA look at the mother and child. RABIA looks quietly satisfied. ZAHARA is beaming with pride.

JANE
Her name is Chantal.

ZAHARA gets JANE a glass of water. JANE sips.

JANE
Tasted good. (meaning the water at first, then as all which sinks in) wonderful, in fact. (to RABIA) Look how hungry she is. (wincing) Do you have any more in that black bag of yours for sore tits?
HOLD on JANE and CHANTAL, then slowly FADE TO BLACK.

ANATOLY

Xue-moe!

(A Russian exclamation.)

JEAN-PIERRE jumps to his feet, shocked and frightened.

JEAN-PIERRE

Jane! What is it? Why are you here?

The two men watch tensely while JANE takes several deep breaths. Then -

JANE

~~A medical problem I can't solve.~~
A boy with gangrene. I tried, but he needs a doctor.

The tension breaks. ANATOLY pulls up his hood and turns away. JEAN-PIERRE takes JANE's arm and draws her farther inside.

JEAN-PIERRE

Sit down. Catch your breath.

They sit. CLOSE on ANATOLY as he takes a cigarette (from a packet with Arabic style script - part of his disguise) and lights it, his hands trembling with suppressed tension.

As JEAN-PIERRE sits down he fumbles the radio so that it is behind him and hidden from JANE. He does this awkwardly but she does not notice. He offers her a water bottle. She takes it and drinks.

~~They brought him in.~~ JANE
~~A few minutes after you left, they brought in a boy with gangrene. I gave him 600 milligrams of penicillin, injected.~~

JEAN-PIERRE

Exactly ~~correct?~~ *what I would have done.*

JANE

He broke out in a cold sweat, ~~and~~ became confused. His pulse was rapid and weak.

JEAN-PIERRE

Did he go pale and have trouble breathing?

JANE

Yes - you know what it is!

JEAN-PIERRE

Allergic shock. A rare reaction to penicillin injections.

JANE

His father carried him for two days - I can't let him die!

(insert)

38A

55A. INT. Jane's house

NIGHT

JANE and JEAN-PIERRE sitting on cushions. It is the end of a day. JEAN-PIERRE is sharpening a kitchen knife. JANE is looking at photographs.

CLOSE on the photos. We SEE a classic wedding picture: JANE, JEAN-PIERRE, and four PARENTS.

She shuffles them and now we SEE a picture of JANE and JEAN-PIERRE smiling at the CAMERA.

A third picture shows them kissing.

CLOSE on JANE's face, full of emotion.

JEAN-PIERRE sharpening away, not looking at her.

A single tear rolls down JANE's face. She brushes it away hastily. She sniffs.

He looks up.

JEAN-PIERRE
Something the matter?

JANE
No.

JEAN-PIERRE
~~Then don't sniff.~~

He continues sharpening.