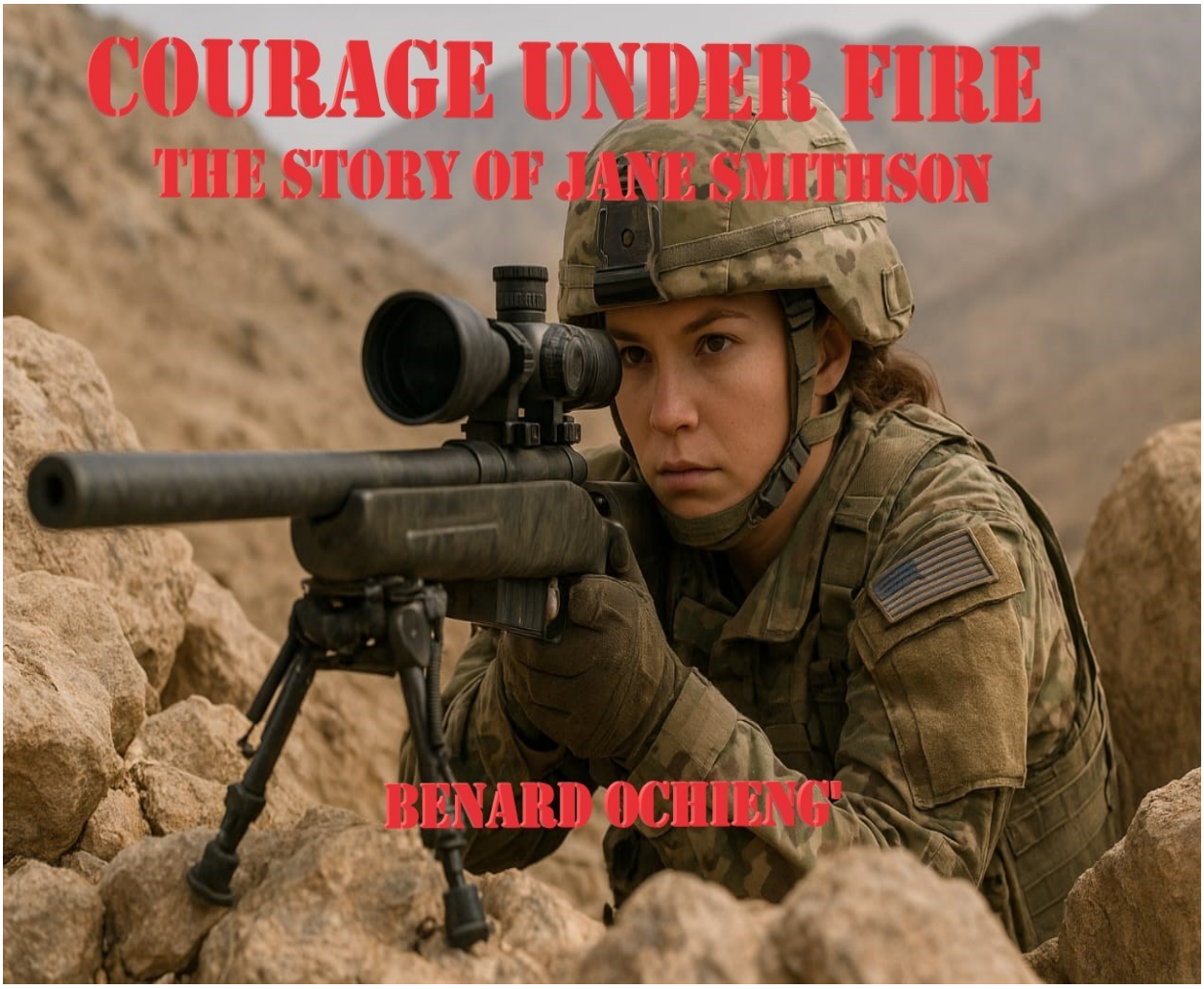


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This short story acts a prequel to the short story **Courage Under Fire: The Story of Team Metal Head**, taking place in the year 2011, five years before the events in The Story of Team Metal Head. The story follows the adventures of Jane Smithson in her first days as a sniper for the US Marines in Afghanistan, following graduation from WestPoint Academy.

It is the 31st of March 2011, Jane Smithson graduates from West Point Academy and is met by General Dick Smithson, her father.

General: I am happy for you daughter; hope you are ready for your first deployment.

Jane: Yes, dad...

Master Sgt. Tony Scott: Welcome to the force Mrs. Smithson. I will be accompanying you to your first tour of Afghanistan.

Jane: That's great….



(A Humvee stops nearby and the three aboard, departing West Point Military Academy)

4th April 8.00 am -Kandahar Air Force Base Afghanistan

(Jane, Scott and the general arrive in a C-130 Hercules)

General: Everybody welcome to Afghanistan

Jane: Looks great…. What's my first mission.

Scott: A training camp in the Hindu Kush. Your target will be Ahmed Khalid, a Taliban leader owning the camp. He recruits his fighters from Iraq and the local youth around…well that marks the beginning of your first briefing….

(Briefing room)

Scott: So, this is the exact location of the training camp…. a Blackhawk will drop you in for insertion 2 km east of the training camp at 0400 hours. You will have to make your way up the mountain sides to the very top. Khalid will be arriving at the camp at 0800hours. Your mission is to take him down. The Agency wants him dead.

Your codename will be "Ladybird "……. Dismissed.



5th April -Afghan Mountains -0600 hours

(A Blackhawk helicopter lands and Jane embarks with her M1 Carbine Sniper Rifle)

Jane: I am in.

Tom Harris (UAV Drone Controller): Taliban patrols are frequent...be careful.



(Jane makes her way up the mountains with her sight through her rifle scope)

Tom Harris: 5 Taliban bogeys making their way down the mountain…they must have heard the chopper.

Jane: How far….

Tom Harris: 2km up high….

Jane: Ok….

Taliban 1: Let's go down the mountains. American patrols may be around….

Taliban 2: Maybe they know Khalid is coming today…

Taliban 1: Ahmed take lead… scout the area and report to us…

Ahmed (Taliban 5): That's alright…I need someone to watch over my back.

Tom Harris: Goat herders going across the mountains.15 meters ahead of you…do not alert them or they'll blow your cover.

Jane: Affirmative…civilians and animals in sight…. taking cover…so many animals

(0615 hours)

Taliban 5: Goats ahead….

Taliban 2: Stop the herders and question them for any American sightings….

Taliban 5: Hey…. stop there!!!

Goat Herder: Morning to you brethren….

Taliban 5: Morning to you…. you are so early in the morning….

Goat Herder: It is my custom to get up early…. There's a wedding in 3 days' time in my cousin's village... I have to gift him some of these animals.

Taliban 5: Have you seen any Americans on patrol?

Goat herder: I heard a helicopter pass by my village early before I left….

Taliban 5: Good…

Taliban 5: It was nothing but a routine patrol… I think we should go back.

Jane: I have the Taliban leader in my sight…permission to fire.10 meters away

Scott: Wait until the herders pass by.



Taliban 5: Nothing is here…. maybe we should go back up

Scott: Follow the targets and engage when the herders are gone.

(At Kandahar AF Base)

(General Smithson meets CIA Agent Mathews Blake)

Blake: Morning General.

General: Morning

Blake: I am here to report to you information about growing Taliban recruitments. We are worried one Major Zadek as he is called…He moved from Syria after working for ISIS leader Al Baghdadi…carrying with him about 300 men for Taliban recruits.

Zadek has been elusive from the Agency's grips. Soon he will be meeting with Bin Laden whom we think is in Pakistan ...and soon enough hope we'll find him and kill him.

We want a Task Force purely of Marines that can hunt and take down Zadek as soon as we can have information on his whereabouts.

General: Understood…

(Afghan Mountains -0630 hours)

Jane: Coast is clear. Permission to engage...?

Scott: Weapon free…

Jane: Taking a head shot…

(Jane kills Taliban5)

Taliban1: Ahmed is down…where did that come from?!!!

Taliban 2: Hide!

Jane: Second Taliban is in my sight. Taking a shot…

(Jane kills Taliban 3)

Taliban 2: Its coming from between the rocks.!!!

Taliban 1: How do you know?

Taliban 3: Just fire at the rocks!!

(Taliban militants fire at Jane hiding between the rocks)

Jane: I think they have got my position. Taking fire!

Scott: Move to a new position…

Jane: Moving….

Jane: I have new position…taking aim…. I have a clear shot

(Jane kills Taliban 1)

Jane: Two more…

Taliban 2: To the right!!! …hide!!

Jane: Target in my sight….10 meters…. taking a shot

(Jane kills Taliban 2)

(Taliban 4 comes out of hiding holding his gun over his head with both hands, an act of surrender)

(Jane leaves her hiding spot and approaches the Taliban militant)

(Jane disarms the militant and cuffs him to the ground)

Jane: All targets down. One in my custody.

Scott: Move up the mountains and wait for Ahmed Khalid. Set up a nice position for the kill shot.

Jane: Affirmative

Scott: Good

Tom Harris: I am picking up movements of 3 trucks coming from the west.30km. Running facial recognition on targets.

Scott: Good…

Tom Harris: I have major Zadek he is on the first truck…I have Ahmed Khalid on the second truck. They will be there by 0730 hours.

Jane: And I will be waiting….

(At the Taliban Base High Up the Mountain)

Taliban 6: What happened to the patrol team going down the mountain…Their radio is out.

Taliban 7: Do not worry…they'll be back soon…Khalid and Zadek will be with us soon.

(0700 hours)

(Jane is at the top of the mountain with a binoculars gathering intelligence on the Taliban base)

Jane: I am in position. Quite a number patrolling the base.

Scott: Good just, just lay low

Tom Harris: The Convoy will be arriving soon in 30 minutes…

Scott: The CIA just filled in a report on Major Zadek, they want him dead. If you can kill two birds with one stone.

Jane: Good…

Tom Harris: Jane be careful, patrol is approaching your position. 10 meters to your left. They are circling the base…avoid them without alerting the whole base.

Jane: I am in new position….

(A gun shortly drops on Jane at the back of her head, a skilled and experienced Taliban sniper tasked with patrolling the forested mountain sides has been watching her movements and eventually catches up with her)

(Jane is apprehended and taken to the cells for detention)

Tom: Jane is compromised. She is in detention. Alert General Smithson.

Scott: Affirmative…

Scott: General…Jane has been compromised!

General: What?!

Scott: She is in Taliban detention…

General: Damn! I need a Quick Reaction Force assembled to rescue her…

Scott: Affirmative. I am gathering a team.

Taliban Base Commander (On Radio): Major Zadek, we have captured an American sniper sent to kill you…it's the General's daughter.

Zadek: Good. We are coming up the mountains.

(0730 hours)

(Zadek and Khalid arrive at the Camp to meet the captured Jane)

Zadek: So, this is the one sent to kill us

Taliban Commander: Yes sir.

Zadek: Tie her up for questioning….

(At Kandahar Air Base)

(A team of US Marines led by Scott assemble awaiting transport)

Scott: So, this is the mission. One of us has been captured in a high-profile operation. We are going out there on a rescue operation.

(2 Blackhawk helicopters take off with the team of Marines aboard)

(At the Taliban camp, Jane is badly beaten up and questioned)

Zadek: Why are you here?! To kill me?! Not by a long shot…if your father and his men do not pay ransom for your release, you will be a rotting corpse in two hours….

(0800 hours)

(Helicopter rotor noise are heard from within the cells, suddenly machine guns and missiles are fired upon the Taliban fighters patrolling the camp, explosions rock and shake the shelters and buildings in the camp)

(Jane takes advantage of the noise and distraction and attacks her captors, tying herself loose)

(She kills Khalid in the room with a nearby Beretta Pistol abandoned on the table by her captors)

(Zadek flees the room for his safety, never to be found or heard of again)

(Marines land at the camp and a fight ensues with the Taliban)

(Jane kills all of her captors in the room and walks outside with her sniper weapon and the rest of equipment)

Scott: Jane I have you on sight…is there a way I can reach you. I am taking heavy fire…

Jane: I am making my way to you….

Scott: No, you can't……run down the mountain. We'll be right behind you….

(Marines kill several targets before they begin a descent down the mountains after Jane)

(Taliban militants follow in pursuit)

(Jane provides cover fire for the Marines with her sniper rifle)

Jane: Too many of them, we need to get down there fast!!

Scott: Use your smoke grenades everybody!!!

(The Marines mask their movements with Smoke grenades as they descend down the mountains

(Gun fire and white-hot bullet tracers race through the smoky forest behind the Marines.

(The team fights their way back to the base of the mountain killing several of their pursuers where the Blackhawk choppers were waiting)

(The team is carried to the safety of Kandahar AF Base)

(At Kandahar)

Scott: Great mission. Khalid is dead

Jane: Major Zadek is still out there

Scott: We'll get him soon

General: I am glad you are safe….

Jane: Thanks dad for the rescue

General: Be careful…you still have more missions to go

(Jane Smithson became an excellent sniper in Afghanistan. She scored over 200 kills in all of her career as a sniper for the US Marines.)

(She earned reputation and fear amongst the Taliban who nicknamed her "**The Kiss of Death")**

The Story of Jane Smithson continues on **Courage Under Fire: The Story of Team Metal Head**, a sequel to this short story.

(END)