



BLACK RUSSIAN

Drama: Thriller

Film

The year is 1999 and Linbart Spencer (35) African American, former Afghanistan-based civil engineer, now a well-respected English lecturer at Lomonosov Moscow State University (but watched by the KGB), is having a lively debate about translating Shakespeare's Othello with mature Afghan students Zarak(22) and Malek(23). Both are curious about Linbart's account of his childhood within a USA expat community and his in-depth Afghan linguistic skills. The debate stops suddenly when the assistant principal of English, Professor Rodney Cowan (65), a long-time stalwart of Russian culture, walks in unannounced. When Rodney informs Linbart he has a visitor in reception, a one Hajii Bashtan, (Linbart's childhood friend) they are all visibly surprised.

Hajii explains to Linbart that the English Language centre in Kabul is now ready and requires a Head of English. Immediately Linbart acknowledges the signal to talk in their childhood coded language: Shakespearean plays as metaphors for the real discussion. Linbart explains how his students have just finished examining the soliloquies of Othello. Hajii explains how the young Afghans might interpret Othello's soliloquies differently. The conversation is pseudo-newspeak for rising splinter groups in Afghanistan, notably one headed by a young Saudi, OBL, and the other by the artefact recovery group ARG. Linbart's reason for teaching in Moscow is to recover a plundered sacred artefact and return it to the remaining village elders, his one-time mentors, who were virtually wiped out by the Russians in the early 80's.

At the end of the conversation the two men walk down the corridor, and Rodney, uses code via "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" music to inform Linbart the university is alive with intelligence agents. Hajii leaves the university, followed by two cars.

Marlize (35) mixed-race Afghan and CIA agent is, unbeknown to the CIA, a childhood friend of Linbart and Hajii. Marlize is rewinding the video of the conversation between Linbart and Hajii. Her CIA supervisors soon realize they have no intelligence on Hajii. Panic sets in. Marlize is summoned by the Chief of CIA and requested to find out more by getting close to Linbart. Marlize heads for the university. Rodney and Linbart meet in Rodney's office. The conversation moves to International Student

Cultural day, when all students celebrate their native country by bringing in something of their culture

Rodney provides updated intelligence to Linbart regarding the sacred artefact through a discussion on Hamlet. When Marlize arrives, Rodney introduces her as Linbart's assistant. Linbart loudly and fiercely expresses his desire not to chaperone anyone. Marlize hits back, and soon all three are in deep heated pseudo-Shakespearian style conversation. Rodney quells the situation by sending both to the basement library. When they enter the basement, all cold walls, no cameras or hidden microphones, they immediately embrace passionately but this is quickly followed by accusations from Linbart of diverting from the original plan. Marlize stresses her desire to find the Colonel and avenge her mother's tortured death.

On International Student cultural Day Zarak and Malek arrive in full Afghan robes. Other class students arrive, notably Boris, (22) a young man eager to brag about his father, Bogdan Vandall, now a high-ranking Russian colonel with a notorious past, notably during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Boris shows his offering, a collection of 3 highly decorative daggers, and taunts Zarak & Malek with embellished stories from his father. Proclaiming the daggers were given to his father as a peace offering from a village elder, Malek silences Boris by stating the daggers are fakes. A possible altercation is avoided by Linbart agreeing to check the authenticity of the daggers and return them to Boris the next day.

Rodney confirms to Linbart the authenticity of the daggers and the Colonel's name and history. They make copies of the daggers and send the real ones boxed to a trusted courier bound for Afghanistan via Helsinki. Linbart and Marlize visit the Colonel with the fake daggers. Marlize plants listening devices. The Colonel is impressed with Linbart's knowledge of Afghan culture. Marlize's plan to poison the Colonel is stood down at the last minute by her CIA handlers. An outraged Marlize leaves alone.

A few days later at an all-Soviet dinner party, Colonel Vandall and close comrades discuss old times listened in by the CIA. A hardened mafia comrade, Sergey (55) states the daggers are fake, by comparing them to his own. A fight breaks out, halted by other comrades, who confirm the daggers are fake. An outraged and embarrassed Colonel orders the death of Linbart and the return of the real daggers.

Rodney receives word, and informs Linbart, who uses Moscow's extensive network of underground tunnels to head for a safe house, only to be stopped by two masked men, Zarak and Malek, who direct Linbart to the University of Theatre Arts, where their friends are packing for a

European tour of Shakespeare plays. Linbart is packed into the wardrobe cases. The lorries set off to Tallinn for the ferry to Helsinki.

Rodney is seized by the Colonel's henchmen, tortured and killed. They head for Tallinn, as do Marlize and CIA agents. The Colonel's men board the packed ferry bound for Helsinki. Slowly and stealthily each of the Colonel's men is taken out by passengers dressed as tourists. The CIA agents watch, stunned, as henchmen and KGB agents silently disappear (at the hands of ex-mujahideen fighters).

The Colonel confronts the captain, who is Hajii heavily disguised, only to be surrounded by CIA agents. The Colonel is locked in a cell and given an ultimatum: full war crimes details or left alone with Marlize. The CIA arrest the Colonel in Helsinki, and head for The Hague. Linbart and Marlize reunite with Hajii.