

"MRS. FISHER'S RACE"

Written by

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Based on a true story

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OVER BLACK:

In the 1930s, the Blue Train carried the rich and famous from Calais to the Riviera in style.

BEAT.

Many men attempted to beat it by road. Only one woman did.

This is her story.

BEAT.

More or less.

FADE IN:

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

A modern estate car moves along the motorway, swallowed by ordinary traffic.

INT. ESTATE CAR - MOVING - DAY

DEBORAH CARR, 60s, drives. Smart coat. Sensible scarf. Hands steady on the wheel.

Beside her, DAVID CARR, 60s, quilted gilet and cap, studies directions on his phone.

DAVID
You want the next exit.

DEBORAH
I know.

DAVID
Only it says stay left.

DEBORAH
I am left.

DAVID
You're middle.

DEBORAH
I am left enough.

David decides, wisely, to let this pass.

In his lap is an old sepia photograph in a silver frame.

A woman in driving goggles and a leather cap, standing proudly on the running board of a Rolls-Royce.

David glances at the photograph.

DAVID
All right?

DEBORAH
Yes.

A beat.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
No.

David waits.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
I don't know how I feel, to be honest.

DAVID
It'll be all right, Deborah. Steady the buffs.

DEBORAH
Bugger the buffs.

David smiles.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - DAY

The car pulls into a garage yard full of vintage vehicles in various states of disrepair.

A YOUNG MECHANIC (20s) appears, wiping grease from his hands.

YOUNG MECHANIC
Help you at all?

DAVID
It's Deborah and David Carr. We spoke to a Mr. Grady?

The mechanic shouts toward the main workshop.

YOUNG MECHANIC
Gaffer! Got some Carrs here for you.

MR. GRADY (50s) emerges - all charm and grease. Lab coat over suit.

MR. GRADY
You wouldn't like to be more specific, would you, Raheem?

Raheem shrugs and returns to working on one of the cars.

Spotting the Carrs, Mr. Grady wipes his hands on his lab coat.

MR. GRADY (CONT'D)

(to Deborah)

I can't tell you how excited I am to have you here. The famous Mrs. Fisher's granddaughter reunited with... well, I dare say you know why you're here, don't you?

David coughs politely.

MR. GRADY (CONT'D)

Well... a pleasure to have you here, I'm sure. (beat) I expect you're itching to see the old girl?

DEBORAH

I'll say.

INT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - WORKROOM - DAY

The double doors creak open. Sunlight blasts in.

We see nothing but silhouettes – three figures stepping inside, backs to us.

Then – a glint.

The sunlight catches the Spirit of Ecstasy mascot on the bonnet. Mr. Grady flicks on a switch. Overhead fluorescents buzz to life, one by one, revealing a long, shapely form beneath a dust cloth.

Deborah steps forward, barely breathing.

MR. GRADY

We keep her covered – but go on.

She reaches out. Her fingers curl around the edge of the dust cloth. She pulls with a theatrical flair. WHOOSH. Dust flies. Reveal: The iconic grille. Lustrous blue paint sparkles in the light. Curves like sculpture. Peta's Rolls-Royce.

Unmistakable. Glorious. Deborah's eyes brim. She lets out a stunned breath.

MR. GRADY (CONT'D)

She's a beauty, isn't she?

DEBORAH

Oh... oh my...

DAVID

All right, darling?

DEBORAH
I don't know what to say. She's...
splendid.

DAVID
I'll say she is.

He wraps an arm around her. Deborah doesn't look away.

MR. GRADY
Well then. You haven't come all
this way just to look at her, have
you?

Deborah steps closer, hand reaching again for the bonnet.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

The door clunks shut as Deborah settles into the driver's seat of the vintage Rolls. David slides in beside her.

DAVID
She drives like a dream,
apparently. Gears like butter.

Deborah nods, still running her hand along the walnut trim of the door. A pause.

DAVID (CONT'D)
So, where to, Debs?

DEBORAH
Let's take her somewhere she
remembers.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Rolls-Royce glides through the English countryside, elegant and out of time. Hedgerows blur past. Church spires drift into view and vanish again.

On the dashboard, a folded Ordnance Survey map.

DAVID
Brooklands is just under an hour.
The old banking's still there;
well, what's left of it.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

Clouds part just enough to cast light across the remnants of Brooklands' cracked concrete banking, weathered signage, tufts of grass reclaiming history.

The Rolls pulls up slowly and comes to a stop.

Deborah and David climb out. The engine ticks as it cools. There's a hush. Only wind.

They approach the edge of the track — a sweeping curve of ancient tarmac that once roared with speed and risk.

David whistles, low and reverent.

DAVID
Imagine it... The noise. The smell.
Oil and... oh, what's the word?

DEBORAH
Cordite.

DAVID
Cordite!

Deborah takes a few steps alone toward the curve.

In her mind's eye, echoes begin to rise: a distant rev of an engine, laughter on the wind, the glint of goggles in sunlight.

INSERT - PHOTO in her hand: Peta, on this very track. The same banking curves just behind her.

DEBORAH
You really did it, didn't you,
granny?

David walks up beside her, arms folded.

DAVID
Raced with the best of them, by the
looks of it.

DEBORAH
Everyone says she was just...
glamour itself. Parties, salons,
the Riviera.

DAVID
Doesn't mean she couldn't drive
like hell.

Deborah smiles faintly. She looks out across the ghost of the racetrack — her imagination beginning to piece together a forgotten legend.

WIDE SHOT: THE VAST CURVE OF THE BROOKLANDS BANKING — NOW SILENT, BUT FILLED WITH INVISIBLE MEMORY.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's give her a stretch.

They head back toward the car, wind tugging at Deborah's coat. The Rolls glints in the late sun — just waiting.

Deborah sits behind the wheel.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

Sunrise over Brooklands in the late 1930s: a great sweep of concrete banking curves across the Surrey landscape like a relic of the future. The air crackles with the sound of revving engines and shouted instructions. Mechanics swarm around shining motorcars.

The dark blue Rolls-Royce Phantom II stands out – longer, heavier, and unmistakably out of place among stripped-down racing machines.

Behind the wheel sits PETA FISHER (early 40s), silk scarf tucked neatly into her collar, leather gloves tightening over the steering wheel. Calm. Composed. Daring.

A RACETRACK OFFICIAL leans into the window.

OFFICIAL

You're quite sure about this, Mrs. Fisher?

PETA

Quite. She's not just for show, you know.

The official steps back and signals. A whistle blows. Engines thunder to life.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

Ladies in furs line the railing, watching in disbelief as the Rolls glides onto the circuit.

LADY SPECTATOR 1

That's Peta Fisher, isn't it?

LADY SPECTATOR 2

She's actually going to race in that beast?

GENTLEMAN

Hmph. That's not a motor – it's a damn drawing room on wheels.

The ladies titter. But eyes remain fixed on the track.

The Rolls rounds the curve at speed. Peta drives with precision – not reckless, but fearless. Her scarf flutters like a flag of defiance.

ANGLE ON: PETA'S EYES. SHARP. ALIVE.

She leans into a turn, overtaking a Bugatti with calculated force.

The driver blinks in surprise.

EXT: BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - OBSERVATION TOWER - DAY

The TRACK MARSHAL lowers his binoculars, bemused.

TRACK MARSHAL
She's got a damn nerve.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

The Rolls barrels down the straight, dust rising in its wake.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta's knuckles are white on the wheel. Her face is flushed with exhilaration. She's not smiling — she's in the zone.

A clock ticks down. A red flag goes up.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

Peta eases the car into the paddock. The engine clicks and hisses as it cools.

Mechanics and spectators stare. A few applaud, uncertainly. Others whisper behind gloved hands.

Peta removes her gloves one finger at a time. She steps out, smooths her scarf, and lifts her chin.

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

The noise of the track has faded. The Rolls-Royce is parked in the shadow of a hangar, its blue flanks still warm from exertion.

Peta, now out of her driving gear, walks briskly toward it — a woman coming down from a high she doesn't want to end.

Leaning against the car, polishing a smear from the bonnet, is RATOU (30s) — lean, handsome and dark-haired, with the kind of composed stillness that draws attention rather than deflects it. His chauffeur's cap sits at a slight tilt. His uniform is crisp.

He straightens as she approaches.

PETA
You the new man?

RATOU
Yes, madame. Ratou. I was told to
collect you after your...
engagement.

PETA
Let's call a spade a spade. It was
a race. And I lost. Badly.

She waits for him to speak further as he opens the passenger
door for her.

PETA (CONT'D)
A man of few words, Mr. Ratou.

RATOU
Just Ratou, madame. I speak when I
have something to say.

PETA
In that case I think we'll get
along famously. I, for one, never
stop talking.

She steps into the car. He closes the door behind her.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - MOVING - SHORTLY AFTER

The car glides through the countryside, London-bound. Inside,
a silence made of tension and unasked questions.

Peta watches Ratou from the corner of her eye.

PETA
Your English is very good.

RATOU
Thank you, madame. I studied it.
Long ago now.

PETA
Studied where?

RATOU
At school, madame.

Peta narrows her eyes at his evasion, intrigued.

PETA
Nicely done. Own business minded.

Peta winds down her window and leans her head out of the
window, feeling the wind in her hair, the freedom of the open
road.

PETA (CONT'D)
I adore driving, don't you?

Peta smiles. She turns to look out the window – but only briefly.

PETA (CONT'D)
Before you were a chauffeur, were you a soldier?

RATOU
No, madame.

PETA
A priest?

Ratou laughs in spite of himself.

PETA (CONT'D)
Smuggler?

RATOU
(chuckling softly)
Not recently.

She laughs – a low, delighted sound.

PETA
I shall get the truth out of you,
"Just Ratou". Eventually.

RATOU
You may try, madame.

The car hums quietly as they pass a line of poplars. Evening light slides over Peta's face.

EXT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DUSK

The Rolls turns onto a quiet London street and pulls up in front of an elegant townhouse. Gaslight flickers in the windows.

Ratou steps out, opens her door. Peta pauses before climbing out.

PETA
You drive beautifully. But I
imagine you're rather good at lots
of things, aren't you, "Just
Ratou"?

RATOU
Good evening, madame.

She steps inside. He closes the car door gently.

HOLD on Ratou – standing at the foot of the steps, watching the townhouse, then turning back to the car as the light fades.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A fire ticks gently in the grate. Untouched tea cools on the sideboard.

KENNETH FISHER, 50s, stands by the window in his shirtsleeves, tie loosened, evening paper hanging from one hand.

He has been waiting.

The front door opens. A murmur from the housekeeper. Boots kicked off.

Peta enters, windblown and exhilarated. Pink-cheeked from speed, faintly smelling of engine oil and cold air.

She sees him.

PETA
Oh.

KENNETH
Brooklands?

PETA
Yes.

KENNETH
In the Rolls?

PETA
Yes.

She begins removing her gloves.

KENNETH
Peta.

PETA
I know.

KENNETH
Do you?

That stings. She softens.

PETA
She was wonderful.

KENNETH
The car?

PETA
Yes. Heavy, but once she gets
going...

She stops herself.

PETA (CONT'D)
Sorry.

KENNETH
Don't be sorry because I'm dull.

PETA
You're not dull. Not to me, anyway.

KENNETH
I was worried.

PETA
I know.

KENNETH
That isn't the same as trying to
stop you.

PETA
No.

She takes off her scarf. Her hands are still trembling.
Kenneth notices.

KENNETH
You're shaking.

She looks at her hands. Almost laughs.

PETA
I didn't notice.

KENNETH
That's what frightens me.

A beat.

PETA
It isn't that I don't feel fear.

KENNETH
You hide it well.

PETA
I had a good teacher.

KENNETH
Your father.

She looks at him.

PETA

Yes.

She crosses to the sideboard, pours tea, realises it is cold.

PETA (CONT'D)

He always hated being noticed.

KENNETH

You're not him.

PETA

I know.

KENNETH

Sometimes I'm not sure you do.

PETA

What does that mean?

KENNETH

It means you drive as if you're proving something to a man who isn't here. And I'm the one standing at the window waiting for the telephone to ring.

That lands.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

I don't want a smaller wife. I don't want a quieter wife. I just want one who comes home.

A silence.

PETA

I came home.

KENNETH

Tonight.

She absorbs that.

PETA

People already talk, Kenneth.

KENNETH

More, then.

PETA

Let them.

KENNETH

It isn't always harmless.

PETA
No. But hiding isn't harmless
either.

He knows what she means.

KENNETH
Your father had his reasons.

PETA
Yes. The name before it was tidied.
The grandmother no one mentioned.
All those little omissions.

KENNETH
Perhaps he was right to be
frightened?

PETA
Perhaps. But he made a life out of
disappearing. I don't want that to
be me, Kenneth.

She looks down at her gloves.

PETA (CONT'D)
When I drive, no one is asking me
to be charming. The road only asks
whether I can hold my nerve.

KENNETH
I know why it matters, darling. I
just wish it didn't have to matter
at eighty miles an hour.

PETA
It wasn't eighty.

KENNETH
Don't tell me.

PETA
All right.

Despite himself, he reaches for her hand. She lets him take
it.

KENNETH
Promise me you'll be careful.

PETA
I can promise to try.

KENNETH
That's not very comforting.

PETA
It's honest.

A small silence.

PETA (CONT'D)
I love you, Kenneth.

KENNETH
I love you too.

PETA
Even when I'm impossible?

KENNETH
Especially then. God help me.

She rests her forehead briefly against his shoulder. Not defeat. Not surrender. Just marriage.

Then she pulls back, still alive with the night.

PETA
I'm going to change. I'm late.

KENNETH
Of course you are.

She heads for the stairs.

KENNETH (CONT'D)
Peta?

She turns.

KENNETH (CONT'D)
Next time... tell me before you go.
Please.

PETA
I'll try.

KENNETH
That isn't yes.

She goes upstairs.

PETA (O.S.)
But it isn't no either!

Kenneth remains by the fire, listening to her footsteps fade.

EXT. WEST END - NIGHT

Lights, flashbulbs, laughter in the rain. Peta steps out of a gleaming motorcar into the glittering chaos of 1930s West End nightlife.

INT. WEST END THEATRE - NIGHT

Opening night. Champagne, pearls, and the beau monde swirl under the chandeliers. The lobby is ablaze with chatter, perfume, and preening.

Theatrical posters scream: "For Better or Worse - A New Comedy by Noël Coward"

Peta glides through the crowd. Her gown - black silk and silver beading - turns heads. She passes duchesses, critics, industrialists' wives.

A man breaks from a tight knot of insiders and beelines for her. BINKIE BEAUMONT (30) - razor-sharp, immaculately attired, incorrigibly amused.

BINKIE

My dear Mrs. Fisher. You are very nearly late. (Scanning the crowd.) Hmm, I was hoping for some Royals tonight. For Noël really. You know he practically collects them. Like stamps.

He kisses her cheek, then fans a theatrical look around the lobby.

BINKIE (CONT'D)

Alas, not a Windsor in sight. Not even one of the boring ones.

At which point: enter NOËL COWARD (mid-30s) - hawk-eyed, dashing, smoking, pacing like a caged thoroughbred in a too-perfect dinner suit. He spots them and swoops in, waving a telegram in one gloved hand.

NOËL

His Royal Dullness sends his regrets. By which he means that damned American woman is more important than my new play. Hello, Binkie darling.

PETA

Oh Noël, I thought he promised.

NOËL

He did. It's a catastrophe. I'd arranged for him to be seen in floods of tears during Act Two.

He downs half a glass of champagne from a passing tray.

NOËL (CONT'D)

Peta darling, you look simply divine.

(MORE)

NOËL (CONT'D)

But if you so much as breathe
during the first scene, I'll toss
you from the dress circle myself.

He spins off in a whirl of nerves and silk. Peta turns back
to Binkie, grinning.

PETA

Poor Noël.

BINKIE

He'll be intolerable until the
reviews are in. Then he'll be
intolerable in a different register
entirely. (beat) But then he is
noted for his versatility.

The theatre bell rings. They make their way up the stairs.

BINKIE (CONT'D)

I've nabbed us the best box. Noël
really should have a word with his
producer.

PETA

Darling, you are his producer.

BINKIE

Am I? In that case, how wicked of
me.

They sweep into the crowd, drawing every eye as they go.

INT. WEST END THEATRE - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The house dims. Binkie slides a programme into Peta's hand.
She glances down, amused.

The curtain rises.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ DE PARIS - NIGHT

A riot of chandeliers, cigarette smoke, jazz, and money. The
room glows gold with champagne and scandal.

At a prime table on the mezzanine, Noël Coward, Peta, and
Binkie sit amid a high-bohemian who's who of London and New
York society.

They're joined by:

TALLULAH BANKHEAD (36) - all drawl, diamonds, and deliberate
chaos.

COLE PORTER (47) — amused detachment in evening gloves, seated. A handsome WAITER is taking his drink order with a shy smile.

Binkie leans toward Peta, lighting her cigarette with quiet elegance.

TALLULAH

Hell, if I'd known Jesus was turning water into this, I'd have got religion years ago. Hallelujah!

Laughter. Noël raises a hand for calm — mock-furious.

NOËL

Hush, Tallulah. I'm trying to appear both modest and gracious for the press.

Noël gestures at a gaggle of photographers and journalists nearby.

COLE

At the same time? Careful Noël, you'll put your back out.

NOËL

Very droll, Cole.

PETA

You two are incorrigible.

NOËL

Peta dear, tell us something wicked. I have been told in the space of twenty minutes by two of the dullest people in London that my play is both "charming" and "scandalous". I shall drown myself in the Serpentine.

PETA

Well, charming pays the bills, and scandal rents the house in Antibes.

TALLULAH

Where the big blue choo-choo goes? Didn't some idiot try to race it?

COLE

Barnato. Woolf Barnato. Won the bet, lost the girl, as I recall.

TALLULAH

Should've let me drive.

COLE

They say if you reach Antibes
before the Blue Train, you earn
your name in the Chronicle and a
magnum of Ruinart. If not, you get
a ruptured crank shaft and a very
long sulk.

Binkie stares at Peta. The wheels turn behind his eyes.

BINKIE

How fast is the Rolls?

PETA

Faster than a damn train, if she's
in the mood.

He sits back, delighted, eyes twinkling.

COLE

Oh no. He's got the look.

NOËL

Binkie always has a look, Cole. It
is either intrigue or dyspepsia. No
more talk of motors, I implore you,
or I shall simply die of boredom.
Now, Cole, I have made a special
request of the band leader.

The band strikes up a jazz version of "Anything Goes." Cole
rolls his eyes. The camera lingers on Peta – champagne in
hand, eyes alight.

EXT. CAFÉ DE PARIS - LATER

The doors swing open and laughter spills into the damp London
night.

Peta and Binkie emerge in hats and evening cloaks, the last
bright fragments of the party clinging to them.

Then the doors close.

Peta and Binkie walk together beneath the glow of the lamps.

BINKIE

The Blue Train. Calais to Antibes.
You. The Rolls. The open road.

PETA

You make it sound simple.

BINKIE

It is simple.

PETA
It is not remotely simple.

BINKIE
No. But it would be utterly
thrilling.

PETA
I'd drive.

BINKIE
Naturally.

PETA
All of it.

BINKIE
Of course.

PETA
And I'd need someone. For all
the... pistons and whatnot. I mean,
I haven't the faintest idea what a
carburettor is!

BINKIE
Nor I, but then I don't speak a
word of Italian.

That gets the smallest laugh.

PETA
Ratou, perhaps?

BINKIE
Your new man?

PETA
He's quiet. Capable. Oddly calm.
I'm not sure what else he is.

Binkie hesitates.

BINKIE
I've seen him about.

PETA
Where?

BINKIE
Oh, here and there.

Peta glances at him.

PETA
Can I trust him?

BINKIE
I trust that he minds his own
business. And I fancy he'd be
useful in all sorts of
circumstances.

They walk on.

The last music from the Café fades behind them.

PETA
Kenneth will loathe it.

BINKIE
Kenneth can loathe it from the
comfort of a first-class
compartment.

PETA
(decisive)
No. It's too big.

BINKIE
The race?

PETA
The dream.

BINKIE
Is it?

She says nothing.

BINKIE (CONT'D)
Peta?

She stops walking.

Across the street, the city is beginning to thin into the
small hours: club doors closing, porters sweeping steps, a
milk cart turning a corner.

PETA
It's terribly late.

BINKIE
Terribly.

PETA
Which means it's practically
morning.

She kisses his cheek.

PETA (CONT'D)
Good night, Binkie.

BINKIE
Sleep on it, my darling.

PETA
That sounds ominous.

BINKIE
It's meant to.

She smiles, but not lightly.

Then she turns and walks away alone.

Binkie watches her go.

EXT. MAYFAIR - NIGHT

The streets are mostly empty, slick with dew and the last of the night's fog. Peta walks alone through the elegant hush of Mayfair. Her heels click softly against the pavement.

She is still in last night's gown, coat draped over her shoulders, gloves in one hand. Her hair is slightly mussed. Tired, but lit from within — a woman wondering whether to change her life.

No music. Just breath and footsteps.

As she passes a gentlemen's club, the door opens behind her. Laughter spills out with the smoke and lamplight.

Three or four men emerge in black shirts beneath their evening coats. BUF badges on their lapels. Young, flushed, pleased with themselves.

Peta notices them.

She keeps walking.

FASCIST #1
That's what I call a speech. At last, someone saying it plain.

FASCIST #2
About time too. Country's gone soft.

FASCIST #3
Needs cleaning up, that's all.

They laugh. One of them tries to light a cigarette in the damp air.

Peta passes without looking back.

FASCIST #1
Evening.

Not quite polite. Not quite not.

PETA
Good morning.

She says it lightly, as she walks on.

That throws them for half a second. Then more laughter behind her.

Peta turns the corner and disappears.

REVERSE ANGLE: A FIGURE IN THE SHADOWS — WATCHING.

Ratou. Half a block back. Hat low. No expression.

He has seen the men. Seen Peta pass them. Seen her choose not to care.

Or appear not to.

He waits until the blackshirts drift away, still laughing.

Then Ratou melts back into the morning mist.

INT. MAYFAIR HOTEL - CHARITY LUNCHEON - DAY

A grand hotel dining room dressed for a charity luncheon: white tablecloths, flowers, silverware, name cards, women in hats.

A small runway has been arranged between the tables.

Peta and Binkie sit together near the front. Peta is immaculate. Binkie looks beautifully resigned.

Peta reads the card on the table.

PETA
In aid of what exactly?

BINKIE
Do you know, I haven't the faintest idea.

At the lectern stands MME. LOUISE, large, over-made-up, furiously elegant, and speaking in a very unexpected Edinburgh accent.

MME. LOUISE
Ladies — Mr. Beaumont — thank you.
It is my great privilege to present
a small selection of Paris-inspired
pieces for the modern woman.

BINKIE
I adore her.

PETA

Do you?

BINKIE

Oh, completely.

Peta suppresses a smile.

MME. LOUISE

Sybil, dear.

A mannequin glides out wearing an evening ensemble with a collar of astonishing volume.

The Society ladies applaud politely.

A waiter tries to serve soup while everyone pretends to be watching the clothes.

BINKIE

(remarking on the absurd
outfit)

Fancy.

PETA

She looks like a chrysanthemum.

MME. LOUISE

And now, the lovely Brenda.

BRENDA, lovely but ungainly, enters wearing a fur muff shaped like a white tiger.

Brenda attempts a turn. The tiger muff swings dangerously.

MME. LOUISE (CONT'D)

Brenda, dear, don't slouch. You're
ruining the line of your muff.

Peta makes a tiny sound.

Binkie coughs into his napkin.

Several women glance over.

PETA

I'm so sorry.

BINKIE

Neither am I.

Brenda continues down the runway with great seriousness.

Peta and Binkie both look down at their plates, shoulders shaking.

The show continues. More outfits. More applause. More soup going cold.

Binkie wipes his eyes discreetly.

BINKIE (CONT'D)
She should be on the stage.

PETA
Mme. Louise?

BINKIE
I'd give her eight shows a week at
the Hippodrome. I'd make a fortune.

Peta laughs.

Then she looks around the room: hats, pearls, little nods,
women smiling at one another across tables of untouched food.

The laughter fades.

PETA
Is this what the rest of my life is
going to be, Binkie?

BINKIE
Eight shows a week at the
Hippodrome? You wouldn't last a
matinée.

Peta swats him with the menu.

PETA
This! Luncheons. Committees.
Fashion shows.

BINKIE
I can think of worse fates.

PETA
That's what frightens me.

Around them, polite applause rises again.

Peta watches Brenda turn at the end of the runway, still
battling the tiger muff.

PETA (CONT'D)
If I did it..

Binkie waits.

BINKIE
Did what?

PETA
The race, ninny. Would you come?

BINKIE
In the car? You must be mad!

PETA
On the train, you idiot.

BINKIE
Of course.

PETA
For moral support.

BINKIE
And champagne.

PETA
Obviously. Kenneth will be terribly
cross.

BINKIE
Yes.

PETA
Ratou may be a murderer.

BINKIE
Not with those eyes, my dear.

That gets a small laugh.

PETA
I don't know if I'm strong enough.

Binkie studies her.

BINKIE
I think you are. I also think you
won't believe that until you've
done it.

The luncheon applause swells again. Mme. Louise beams at the
room, triumphant.

Peta looks back to the runway.

PETA
I'll have to tell Kenneth.

BINKIE
Yes.

PETA
Poor Kenneth.

BINKIE
A little.

Peta smiles, nervous now, but decided.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

A pristine spring morning. Sunlight on silver. Toast untouched. Tea poured too carefully.

Kenneth stands by the fireplace in his dressing gown, bristling.

Peta sits at the breakfast table, calm as anything.

Pamela, tidy plaits and clever eyes, pretends to read Richard III while listening to every word.

KENNETH
It's absurd.

PETA
So you've said.

KENNETH
Reckless.

PETA
Several times.

KENNETH
You are not some petrol-drunk
American socialite.

PETA
No. I'm a tediously respectable
English wife who would like, just
once, to feel the wind in her hair
before she strangles someone with a
silk scarf.

Pamela coughs lightly into her napkin.

KENNETH
You're a mother.

PETA
Not a terminal condition, I'm told.

Pamela coughs again.

KENNETH
Men have tried this, Peta.
Professional motorists. And you
propose to race the Blue Train in a
Rolls-Royce.

PAMELA
It would be rather splendid, Papa.

Kenneth looks at her.

PAMELA (CONT'D)
I mean dangerous, of course.

Peta hides a smile.

KENNETH
And anyway, you drive as if you're
being chased by the Devil himself.

PETA
I drive as if I want to get
somewhere.

Kenneth's anger slips, briefly, into fear.

KENNETH
Please don't do this, Peta.

Pamela looks at her mother.

PAMELA
Are you really going, Mummy?

Peta softens.

PETA
Yes.

PAMELA
With Ratou?

PETA
With gloves, lipstick, and a
spanner-wielding foreigner in the
passenger seat.

Pamela grins.

KENNETH
A spanner-wielding...? Peta!

PETA
Don't look so alarmed. I'm sure
he's a perfect whizz with a snapped
gusset.

KENNETH
Gasket.

PETA
That too.

KENNETH
You'll drag us into the papers.

PETA
The papers write what they like.
They always have.
(MORE)

PETA (CONT'D)

If I do this, I might actually be worth writing about.

Pamela looks between them.

PAMELA

Maybe it's something Mummy has to do, Papa?

Kenneth looks at his daughter. Then at Peta.

He sets his cup down. Not thrown. Not slammed. Final.

KENNETH

Then I won't stop you. But I won't endorse this... madness.

He turns to go.

PETA

You can at least wave your handkerchief from the platform, darling. It's the gentlemanly thing to do.

Kenneth pauses at the door.

Despite himself, his mouth twitches.

He leaves.

Pamela lets out the breath she's been holding.

MONTAGE - PREPARING FOR THE RACE

A bright 1930s jazz instrumental swings us through the sequence - light, nimble, slightly cheeky.

INT. HARRODS - DAY

Peta selects driving goggles and gloves with surgical precision. A shopgirl fusses with hatboxes. Pamela appears behind her holding a thermos and a silver cigarette case. They grin.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

A maid helps Peta into her custom driving coat, pulling the belt tight. Peta checks her lipstick in a hand mirror and shrugs into a silk scarf like a soldier putting on armour.

EXT. SOHO ALLEY - NIGHT

Ratou stands in a dim alley. A streetlight flickers. A gaunt ELDERLY MAN steps from the shadows. No words. A parcel wrapped in brown paper and string changes hands.

Ratou tucks it silently under his coat and walks off. WE do not see the contents.

INT. DAILY MAIL OFFICE - DAY

Peta sits across a desk from a smartly dressed female SOCIAL EDITOR, who scribbles in a notebook, barely glancing up. Behind her, walls of clippings and gossip columns. Peta waits, perfectly still.

A PHOTOGRAPHER sets up a box camera. Peta turns toward him. FLASH. She smiles – but hesitantly. Just a flicker of doubt behind the eyes.

No dialogue. Just the low click of the shutter.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

Kenneth sits in a leather chair, reading stiffly. A bustle of packing surrounds him: trunks open, hatboxes stacked, a maid bustling past with boots.

He remains absolutely still. Not helping. Not hindering. Once he is alone, he takes out a paper wallet and extracts first-class tickets for the Blue Train.

EXT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

Ratou fills spare petrol cans, tightening caps with care. The Rolls gleams in the sunshine. He checks tyre treads with a coin. Polishes the windscreen. He takes the mysterious package and tucks it into a hidden compartment inside the Rolls. Shuts the bonnet with quiet finality.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Pamela fastens a Star of David pendant around Peta's neck. They don't speak. They just look at each other.

A moment passes. Then Pamela nods, once.

EXT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

The Rolls is packed and ready. Morning mist lingers in the air. Ratou stands by the open boot.

A porter and his cart rattle up with luggage – not a few bags, but an entire theatrical production: trunks, hatboxes, leather cases, picnic baskets, emergency flasks. A ridiculous, opulent pile. The camera pans slowly across it all.

PAMELA

Ratou – how long is the race
supposed to take, exactly?

RATOU

(deadpan)
Twenty-four hours, miss.

INT. CROSS-CHANNEL FERRY - DAY

The ferry rocks gently as the chalk cliffs of Dover recede through the portholes. Inside the lounge: brass fittings, upholstered benches, and the faint clink of teacups.

Kenneth stands stiffly by a side table, reading the Daily Mail with visible agitation.

Across the front page:

"Mrs Fisher vs. The Blue Train – Society's Queen of Speed".

A large photo of Peta – elegant, half-smiling, lit like a movie star.

He folds it sharply, knuckles whitening.

KENNETH

For God's sake.

Binkie, seated nearby with a gin and tonic, eyes him with mild amusement.

BINKIE

It's her good side. She'll be
thrilled.

Kenneth glares at him.

KENNETH

This isn't one of your silly plays,
Binkie. It's reckless. Undignified.

He lowers his voice, scanning the room as if someone might be listening.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

And did you see her at the dock?
She made a perfect spectacle of
herself for the press on the very
day the Windsors are crossing.

Binkie perks up.

BINKIE
Ah, yes — I've heard. They're tucked away in the captain's quarters, presumably avoiding difficult questions.

KENNETH
She's doing this for attention.

BINKIE
Wallis?

KENNETH
(angrily)
Binkie!

BINKIE
Calm down, Kenneth. Peta's doing it because no one else has ever really let her take the wheel.

Kenneth looks back out the porthole — his reflection merging with the sea spray.

EXT. CALAIS STATION - DAY

Steam hisses. Brass glints. The Blue Train, sleek and aristocratic in deep navy and gold, stretches across the platform like a velvet ribbon. Crew and platform staff bustle as the well-heeled passengers board.

The blue Rolls-Royce idles opposite; its own proud, polished challenge gleaming in the sun. Two machines. One race.

Peta stands beside the Rolls with Ratou, watching him make a final check of the bonnet strap.

A huge burst of steam erupts behind her.

Peta turns.

Across the platform, through the white cloud, the Blue Train comes into view.

Not all at once. First the black wheels. Then the deep navy flank. Then gold lettering, brass handles, polished windows. Carriage after carriage emerging from the steam as if the thing is assembling itself in front of her.

It is enormous.

The glamour falls away.

From here, close up, it is not a society train. It is iron, coal, pressure, weight.

A great machine built to cross countries while people sleep in silk sheets and drink champagne above its furnace.

Porters hurry alongside it. Conductors consult watches. Doors slam with hard, final sounds. Valves spit. Couplings groan. Somewhere inside, unseen, the engine breathes again.

Another blast of steam rolls across the platform.

The Rolls suddenly seems very small.

Beautiful, yes. Defiant, yes. But small. Four tyres, a bonnet, a leather seat, and a woman who has decided to take on a timetable.

Peta looks from the train to the car.

Ratou says nothing.

He has seen her see it.

The Blue Train gives a low metallic shudder, as if impatient to be done with the ceremony and start.

Peta's hand finds the warm curve of the Rolls' bonnet.

For the first time, the size of the thing lands.

The train has rails laid out for it. Men to serve it. Clocks to obey it. Europe cleared in front of it.

She has a car, a road map, a mechanic with secrets, and nerve.

A gust of steam swallows her shoes, then her hem.

For one strange second, it looks as if the train is taking the ground from under her.

Then Peta catches herself in the Rolls' wing mirror.

Small. Perfectly dressed. A little absurd.

Her chin lifts.

She buttons one glove.

PETA

Right then.

A crowd has gathered – travellers, locals, press.

Cameras flash. French and English chatter mingle in the air.

At the far end of the platform, a small commotion.

Plainclothes detectives. A valet. A ladies maid.

A dark car flying the Union flag draws up beside the rear carriage.

The DUKE OF WINDSOR and WALLIS are ushered quickly aboard. No photographs. No greetings.

Peta notices.

Beside the Rolls, Ratou checks the tyre pressure. Focused. Silent.

Kenneth, Pamela and Binkie arrive with porters in tow. Kenneth carries the folded Daily Mail under one arm.

A bewhiskered RAILWAY OFFICIAL in frock coat and gloves steps forward, clutching a ledger with the gravity of a peace treaty.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL
Madame Fisher?

Peta turns.

The official gives the Rolls a brief, doubtful look.

Then Peta.

Then the Rolls again.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
I am here on behalf of the
Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-
Lits.

A small bow.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
To confirm that this undertaking is
being conducted in earnest.

PETA
It is.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL
Entirely in earnest?

PETA
Entirely.

He absorbs this with visible professional concern.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL
Bon.

He opens the ledger with great ceremony.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

The terms are simple. You must arrive at Antibes station before the Blue Train. By road.

PETA

That was my understanding.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

No aeroplane. No assistance from railway personnel. No alteration to the official departure time. No, how do you say... sorcerie?

Binkie leans in.

BINKIE

Witchcraft.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

Yes. Exactly. No witchcraft. My little joke.

PETA

A blow, but we shall manage.

The official does not know whether she is joking.

He turns the ledger towards her.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

Sign here, madame.

Peta signs with a flourish.

Flashbulbs.

The official examines the signature as if it may be legally inadequate.

Then, reluctantly satisfied, he stamps the page.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Very well. It is recorded.

Pamela watches, nervous with pride.

BINKIE

Rather poetic, isn't it?

KENNETH

What is?

BINKIE

Blue car. Blue train. One very determined woman.

PAMELA
And a lot of hot air.

Kenneth gives her a look.

The station bell rings.

The Blue Train's CONDUCTOR checks his pocket watch.

Pamela runs to Peta.

PAMELA (CONT'D)
Mummy.

They embrace.

PAMELA (CONT'D)
Do be careful.

PETA
Always, my darling. Now go. Keep
everything crossed.

Pamela runs back to Binkie.

BINKIE
Come along, Pammy. Let the record
show we left the starting line
beautifully attired.

Peta turns to Kenneth.

A quieter moment in the noise.

PETA
You think I'm making a fool of
myself.

KENNETH
I think you're choosing spectacle
over sense.

PETA
Perhaps.

She adjusts his lapel. Familiar. Tender.

PETA (CONT'D)
But at least it's my spectacle.

Kenneth's anger falters.

KENNETH
I want you to win, Peta. But not
more than I want you home safe and
sound.

He kisses her cheek and steps back.

Ratou opens the driver's door.

The railway official consults his watch.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL
Five minutes, madame. Le Train Bleu
is never late.

PETA
How reassuring.

Peta climbs in.

The Rolls purrs to life. Heads turn.

The train whistles.

Steam blasts across the platform.

Peta looks straight ahead.

Ratou slides into the passenger seat and nods once.

From the train, Kenneth, Pamela and Binkie watch.

The Blue Train begins to move.

For one second, the Rolls waits.

Then Peta releases the brake.

The car sweeps out of the station forecourt.

The crowd parts, cheering.

EXT. CALAIS STATION - DAY

The crowd has thinned.

The railway official, who registered Peta's entry into the race, removes his gloves, dusts soot from his lapel, and walks briskly to the telegraph office, a short distance away.

INT. CALAIS TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

He approaches the operator's desk — polished wood, green glass lamp, and a brass telephone already ringing from the next call. The operator, young and flustered, hands it over. All speak in French, SUBTITLED:

OPERATOR
It's Antibes, monsieur. They're
expecting confirmation.

The railway official takes the phone, clearing his throat.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

Yes. This is Calais Control. The vehicle departed at precisely 09h00 – blue Rolls-Royce, female driver and... Yes, that is what I said. But, you know... the English. (He shrugs.) Mechanic present. Weather fair. Visibility good. They're en route, God help them. (He puts down the receiver.) Antibes? She'll be lucky to make it out of Calais!

He removes a folded racing form from his pocket and stamps it with an embossed seal: "Official Start Time – Calais: 09h00"

He sets it down. Picks up his watch.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

A small, cluttered room stuffed with maps, telegraph forms, and a half-eaten croissant.

At the centre, M. LABICHE – 60s, twinkly-eyed, gallant moustache, pinstripe waistcoat covered in crumbs and mysterious stains, clinging to its former glory – sits like a general before battle.

A giant wall map is titled in calligraphic script (also in French:

LA GRANDE COURSE DE MME. FISHER – Observations, Verifications & Enthusiasms

Beside him, his assistant BOBO – 20s, affable, clumsy and already tangled in his own phone cord – looks on: a Labrador in human form.

The phone rings. M. Labiche picks it up with drama.

M. LABICHE

Calais? Yes, it is Labiche who speaks. You are certain?

(pause)

Then it begins.

He hangs up. Dramatically. Selects a blue pin with reverence. Steps to the wall map and plants it in Calais with military precision.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)

Madame Fisher... I wish you well.

Bobo applauds – too loudly, to a withering look from M. Labiche.

BOBO

Do we start the clock now, uncle?

M. LABICHE
(with great seriousness)
Bobo, we have already started.

He checks his pocket watch. Tick. Tick. Tick.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
Let's see how far she gets before
we run out of pins. How many pins
do we...?

Bobo grabs the mug of pins and spills them all over the office floor. M. Labiche sighs and smooths his waistcoat, turns to the window like a man awaiting battle. END
SUBTITLES.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The train winds through northern France, a great serpent of luxury and steel, its windows gleaming like polished mirrors.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Rolls continues south — engine humming, dust curling behind it.

Inside the cabin: Peta at the wheel, focused. Ratou beside her, watching the road ahead. Two silhouettes against the motion blur of France.

CLOSE ON: DASHBOARD CLOCK — TICKING. CLOSE ON: TRAIN WHEELS — TURNING.

CLOSE ON: THE STAR OF DAVID PENDANT BENEATH PETA'S COLLAR — STEADY AGAINST HER PULSE. SHE NOTICES THAT IT IS EXPOSED AND QUICKLY TUCKS IT INTO HER BLOUSE.

WIDE SHOT: TWO BLUES RACING SOUTH.

One glides on rails, regal and unbending. One bends with every curve, full of risk.

EXT. FRENCH HIGHWAY - DAY

The blue Rolls-Royce glides along a broad stretch of road flanked by fields and stone farmhouses. The hum of the engine is steady. A road sign passes.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta has taken off her gloves and unbuttoned the top of her driving coat. She's relaxed — but her eyes remain sharp. Her left hand rests on the wheel. She looks over at Ratou, who is once again... quietly existing.

PETA
You do know silence is not required
by law?

RATOU
Some find it restful.

PETA
I find it suspicious.

A hint of a smile touches his lips. It disappears almost
immediately.

PETA (CONT'D)
Are you always this cautious,
Ratou?

RATOU
It has served me well, madame.

PETA
You sound like someone with a
secret. Lots of them, actually.
It's quite maddening.

She glances sideways at him. Nothing. But he's listening.

PETA (CONT'D)
Binkie said you knew Paris. Were
you born there?

RATOU
I was raised there. For a while.

She tilts her head. A different answer than the question she
asked.

PETA
Parents?

RATOU
One. Then none.

She nods once. Respectfully.

PETA
And now you drive foolhardy ladies
across France on madcap dares? Life
is full of surprises.

RATOU
Sometimes. But it is you who are
driving, madame.

He takes out a packet of cigarettes. Lights one and places it
to Peta's lips.

He then reaches into the glove box and unfolds the route map. Studies it.

RATOU (CONT'D)

(studying map)

We'll stop briefly to refuel in Lyon in the early hours, I think. I have... a small matter to attend to there.

PETA

It's a race, Ratou, not a Sunday school outing! Do you often run errands mid-race?

RATOU

Only important ones.

She watches him fold the map again – carefully, precisely.

PETA

You're very good at answering questions without actually answering them at all.

RATOU

Thank you, madame.

She smiles at that – genuinely – then shifts the Rolls into a higher gear, the engine growling contentedly.

WIDE SHOT: The car curves along a hillside.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Binkie, in impeccable silk and soft shoes, is halfway through a coupe of champagne. His posture is languid. His senses are not.

The doors at the far end of the carriage open.

In steps LADY EVELYN, early 30s – striking, aristocratic, dressed to perfection in dove grey and pearls. Confident without seeming to try.

The room reacts subtly: a nod here, a flick of attention there.

She brings weather with her.

Behind her comes LANGLEY, late 20s, smooth-faced, well-cut, Oxbridge bland. He removes Lady Evelyn's coat, then his own.

As he does, Pamela notices the smallest flash at his lapel.

A badge. Silver. Angular.

She looks at it for a second longer than politeness allows.

Langley notices her noticing and gives a pleasant little smile.

Pamela looks back down at her play.

Lady Evelyn and Langley take prominent seats.

A STEWARD appears almost before they are settled.

STEWARD
Champagne, your ladyship?

LADY EVELYN
How clever of you to remember.

LANGLEY
They always remember you.

LADY EVELYN
I suspect they've been told to.

It is said lightly. The steward smiles because he is meant to.

Binkie hears. His glass pauses halfway to his mouth.

Only for a second.

Lady Evelyn glances around the carriage.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)
How soothing this all is. One does forget, sometimes, that civilisation can still arrange itself beautifully.

LANGLEY
Provided everyone knows where to sit.

Lady Evelyn gives him a small amused look.

LADY EVELYN
You make it sound much too severe.

LANGLEY
Do I?

LADY EVELYN
A little order is not severity.

Binkie lowers his glass and smiles across.

BINKIE
I shall try to remember that next time I'm seated by the kitchen.

Lady Evelyn turns.

LADY EVELYN
Mr. Beaumont. How nice.

BINKIE
Lady Evelyn.

LANGLEY
Do you go through to Antibes?

BINKIE
If the train insists.

Lady Evelyn laughs. Beautifully. Easily.

Pamela looks up again.

Kenneth turns a page of his newspaper.

Binkie's smile remains in place.

His champagne remains untouched.

EXT. RURAL CROSSROADS - DAY

The blue Rolls-Royce sits idling at a lonely crossroads, surrounded by open fields and a scattering of tired signs pointing to villages with names Peta doesn't recognise.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta leans forward slightly, peering at a battered road sign with an arrow swinging listlessly in the breeze.

PETA
I'm quite certain we were meant to
turn right back in Saint-Pol.

Ratou, calmly consulting the folded Michelin map, doesn't look up.

RATOU
We were. But the road was closed
for resurfacing. We took the only
paved option.

PETA
Which has led us... here. To
nowhere.

A cow moos. The only other sign of life.

Ratou traces a finger along the map, silently recalibrating. Peta drums her fingers once on the wheel, then yanks off one glove with her teeth.

PETA (CONT'D)

I don't suppose this detour will
cost us much time?

RATOU

If we keep our pace steady: twenty
minutes, maybe less.

PETA

That's assuming the road ahead
isn't a dead end or... closed for
military exercises.

RATOU

If it is, I will offer them
cigarettes and charm.

PETA

God help us if you're the charming
one.

She checks the dashboard clock. Breathes in, steadies
herself.

INT. SALOON CAR - BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Sunlight dapples the carpet. Tea cups clink. Jazz murmurs
somewhere down the carriage.

The salon is half-full, but every seat has a social weight.

Pamela sits with the play she isn't reading. Kenneth sips
wine. Binkie has drifted off in search of champagne.

At the far end, Lady Evelyn and Langley sit with a small
group. Lady Evelyn speaks quietly, but she knows how to be
heard.

Nearer the entrance, BARON ÉMILE LANDAU and BARONESS RACHEL
LANDAU, 70s, appear.

They are grand. Perfectly dressed.

Lady Evelyn notices them.

LADY EVELYN

(sotto voce)

Baron and Baroness Landau.

Langley looks over.

LANGLEY

Still here?

LADY EVELYN

For the time being.

A small laugh from their table.

The Landaus hear it. They do not react at once.

Then the Baroness turns towards Pamela and Kenneth.

BARONESS RACHEL
Would you mind if we sat?

Kenneth stands immediately.

KENNETH
Of course not. Please.

BARON ÉMILE
Thank you.

They sit. Gloves removed. Tea poured.

BARON ÉMILE (CONT'D)
Baron Émile Landau. My wife,
Rachel.

PAMELA
Pamela Fisher, Baron. Baroness.
This is my father, Kenneth Fisher.

BARONESS RACHEL
Fisher? Then your mother is the
lady racing the train.

PAMELA
Yes, Baroness.

BARON ÉMILE
Very brave.

KENNETH
Very determined, certainly.

From Lady Evelyn's table:

LADY EVELYN
I always thought their house at Èze
was one of the prettiest on the
coast.

LANGLEY
Sold, I suppose?

LADY EVELYN
Hard to know. Some people are
moving about rather quickly these
days.

Langley murmurs something. Lady Evelyn smiles into her glass.

Pamela has heard enough to know something is meant, but not quite enough to know what.

The Baron stirs his tea.

KENNETH
You live in Èze, Baron?

BARON ÉMILE
We did.

BARONESS RACHEL
A beautiful place. Too many stairs.

BARON ÉMILE
You never complained of the view.

BARONESS RACHEL
No. Only the stairs.

PAMELA
Are you going home?

BARONESS RACHEL
Not exactly.

BARON ÉMILE
We are going to Marseilles. Then
New York.

PAMELA
For a holiday?

The Baron looks at his wife.

BARON ÉMILE
No.

The answer is gentle, but final.

Kenneth shifts slightly, uncomfortable.

KENNETH
Well, I hope your journey is a
pleasant one.

BARONESS RACHEL
Thank you. We do too.

From the far table:

LADY EVELYN
Of course, one can't be surprised.
When things become unsettled,
certain people are always the first
to pack.

LANGLEY

They usually know where everything
is.

Lady Evelyn gives him the smallest look: careful.

Pamela sees it.

PAMELA

Why would she say that?

KENNETH

Pamela.

BARONESS RACHEL

It's all right, M. Fisher.

She turns to Pamela, kind but measured.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

People say many things, my child,
when they think people may be too
frightened to answer.

PAMELA

But who does she mean?

BARONESS RACHEL

She means us.

Pamela looks at her.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

Not our title. Not our house. Not
our manners. Something older.

The Baroness touches a small Star of David attached to her
bracelet.

BARON ÉMILE

We are lucky. We can leave before
we must.

He says it quietly. No drama.

BARONESS RACHEL

Many cannot. Some will not.

Pamela looks back toward Lady Evelyn's table.

Lady Evelyn is laughing again, bright and easy.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

Your mother is a courageous woman,
mademoiselle.

PAMELA

Oh, yes.

BARONESS RACHEL
Tell her we said so.

PAMELA
I will.

BARON ÉMILE
Non, tell her the Baroness Landau
wishes her well. She may appreciate
the formality.

That wins a small smile from Pamela.

PAMELA
She will.

The train rocks gently on.

EXT. RURAL CROSSROADS - DAY

The Rolls turns onto the left-hand road – a little rough, but passable. Dust kicks up behind them and startles the cow gentling chomping at the roadside.

A middle-aged GENDARME spots the incident and cycles off in the direction of the village.

The Rolls disappears down the lane, the countryside swallowing them again.

HOLD ON the signpost. It swings once more – then falls off entirely.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

The office is already a circus.

A large map of France covers one wall, little coloured flags stabbed in from Calais and along the route so far.

At a desk, M. Labiche, sleeves rolled up, waistcoat barely fastened, barks orders at the telephone. All speak in French, SUBTITLED:

Bobo stumbles in from the back room, trailing tangled telephone wires around his legs like spaghetti.

BOBO
Uncle! Telegram! Urgent! It says—
(reads)
"Blue car passed 10 minutes ago.
Startled cow. Lady driver. Very
chic hat."

M. LABICHE
Where?

BOBO
On her head, I suppose?

M. Labiche glowers.

BOBO (CONT'D)
Oh, of course. Uh, at a farm near Arras. Signed by the gendarmerie. The gendarme is on the telephone.

M. Labiche cradles the receiver of his present call and picks up another phone.

M. LABICHE
Labiche speaks. What? Near Béthune? Well how fast was she going? I do not care about the cow! Unless the cow is injured? It's what? Upset?! Monsieur, please!

He hangs up the phone in annoyance.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
Bobo, the pins!

Bobo places a pin on the map.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
And...?

Bobo looks befuddled - even more so than usual.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
And one for the cow, stupid!

Suddenly: a loud squawk. A CHICKEN waddles in from nowhere and hops onto the desk.

BOBO
That's not ours. I think it's one of Mme. Hubert's?

M. Labiche shoos the chicken off the map. Picks up his pocket watch. Clicks it open. He stares. The ticking grows louder.

M. LABICHE
Fifty-three minutes in...

He clicks the watch closed. Looks up.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
And already she battles brave French cattle! What a woman!

He crosses himself. Cut to the clock. Ticking on. END
SUBTITLES.

EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN SQUARE - DAY

The Rolls glides slowly through a quiet provincial town. Market stalls closed. Afternoon sun hazy. A breeze lifts the edge of a newspaper.

They pass a small synagogue tucked between shuttered houses. Outside, a handful of JEWISH MEN and JEWISH BOYS are removing ceremonial objects – a Torah wrapped in linen, silver candlesticks, prayer books.

They're locking the doors. Quiet. Urgent. Resigned. Some JEWISH WOMEN are standing nearby in tears while others comfort them.

Two GRUBBY GENDARMES observe from across the road – arms folded, lazy, vaguely amused.

Peta slows the car. She leans slightly forward, brow furrowed. Ratou, beside her, glances once – then looks away quickly. He takes something from his coat – a folded piece of paper or list, discreetly checking it before tucking it away again.

Peta notices. Says nothing. The engine idles.

Then, softly:

RATOU
Drive, madame.

A beat. Not a command, exactly – but not a request either.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The blue Rolls-Royce slices through the French countryside, the only motion on an otherwise empty ribbon of tarmac. Golden fields blur past. Road signs in French flicker by.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Golden light drifts through the saloon windows. String music plays softly from a gramophone. The train hums steadily south.

At a corner table, a quiet card game.

Binkie deals with practised neatness. Pamela studies her cards. Baroness Rachel sits beside Baron Émile, composed and warm.

Across the carriage, Lady Evelyn lounges with a drink. Langley sits near her, reading a newspaper. They are not part of the game.

BINKIE

I warn you all, I'm in a ruthless mood.

BARON ÉMILE

That is usually said by people holding no cards, monsieur.

BINKIE

Baron, I feel dreadfully seen.

Pamela smiles, but she is distracted.

BARONESS RACHEL

You are very quiet, my dear.

PAMELA

Am I?

BARONESS RACHEL

For a young woman with a winning hand, yes.

Pamela looks down.

PAMELA

I don't think it's winning.

BINKIE

Then bluff. It's the foundation of most successful societies. And my entire career.

Lady Evelyn looks up from her drink.

LADY EVELYN

It's good to be bold, don't you find?

Binkie gives her a polite smile.

BINKIE

Lady Evelyn?

LADY EVELYN

Don't mind me. I'm only admiring the seriousness of the game.

LANGLEY

Cards tell one a good deal about character.

BARON ÉMILE

Only if one loses.

Langley smiles as if taking that as agreement.

Pamela plays a card.

PAMELA

It's strange, isn't it? Being in here. Everything so calm.

BARONESS RACHEL

Trains are good at pretending the world is orderly, my dear.

Lady Evelyn gives a soft laugh.

LADY EVELYN

Surely, Baroness, order is not the enemy?

BARONESS RACHEL

Not always.

LANGLEY

Some countries could do with rather more of it, if you ask me.

He folds his newspaper.

LANGLEY (CONT'D)

France, for one. Always arguing with itself.

LADY EVELYN

England too, in her way. Everyone so afraid of firm decisions.

Binkie places a card down.

BINKIE

I've often found firm decisions rather overrated.

LADY EVELYN

Oh, but endless talk is exhausting, don't you think, Mr. Beaumont? At some point, one has to act.

BARON ÉMILE

Action is useful. Thought is useful too.

LADY EVELYN

Exactly.

BARON ÉMILE

Not always the same thing, madame.

Lady Evelyn misses, or chooses to miss, the point.

LADY EVELYN

One can hardly deny that Germany has found a kind of energy again.

PAMELA

Germany?

LANGLEY

Industry. Roads. Youth. Purpose.

LADY EVELYN

People standing a little
straighter. There's nothing
offensive in admiring that.

The Baroness plays a card.

BARONESS RACHEL

No. Admiration is rarely offensive
by itself.

Lady Evelyn sips her drink.

LADY EVELYN

Of course, one hears all sorts of
stories. People do exaggerate.
Particularly people who dislike
being told no.

Pamela looks at her.

PAMELA

What people?

LADY EVELYN

Oh, darling, I don't mean anyone in
particular.

Langley smiles into his glass.

LANGLEY

There will always be complaints
when a country decides to tidy its
house.

The Baron's fingers pause on his cards. Only for a second.

Binkie notices.

BINKIE

And what does one do with the
things one has tidied away, Mr.
Langley?

LANGLEY

That rather depends whether they
were useful in the first place.

Lady Evelyn gives him a quick look. Not shocked. Cautioning.

LADY EVELYN
Langley means waste. Waste and
confusion. All that old muddle.

BARONESS RACHEL
Yes. Muddle can be very
inconvenient.

She says it plainly. No emphasis.

Pamela hears something beneath it.

PAMELA
Baroness?

BARONESS RACHEL
Yes?

PAMELA
Is this about politics?

Before the Baroness can answer -

LADY EVELYN
Everything is politics now,
apparently. One can't admire a road
or a uniform without someone making
a tragedy out of it.

LANGLEY
It's a new sort of sentimentality.

BINKIE
I've always rather liked sentiment.

LADY EVELYN
So have I. But there are moments
when sentiment gets in the way of a
country's health.

The words have gone a little further than she intended.

Pamela looks from Lady Evelyn to the Baroness.

Lady Evelyn smiles, bright and socially easy.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)
Goodness, listen to me. I sound
like a pamphlet. Langley, shall we
walk?

LANGLEY
Of course.

They rise.

LADY EVELYN
Do enjoy your game.

BARONESS RACHEL
Thank you, madame. We shall.

Lady Evelyn and Langley move away.

The train rattles gently.

Pamela watches them go.

PAMELA
Did she mean to be unkind?

Binkie looks after Lady Evelyn.

BINKIE
Do you know, I'm not sure she'd
recognise it as unkind at all.

The Baroness gathers in the trick.

BARONESS RACHEL
Your play, Pamela.

Pamela looks back at her cards.

She has forgotten the game.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta drives, steady and focused. Leather gloves, silk scarf, sunglasses. Her posture is elegant, but alert – she's not out for a pleasure cruise.

Beside her: Ratou, calm and inscrutable, one hand resting lightly on the map folded across his lap.

The only sounds: the engine's low hum, the wind teasing the corners of her scarf.

PETA
If you would stoop to a little
conversation, now is the time to
declare it.

RATOU
(after a pause)
I'm used to silent journeys.

PETA
Boring!

RATOU
Peaceful.

A small smile ghosts across her lips. She shifts gears smoothly, the car purring as they pass a cart and horse.

PETA

What did Mr. Beaumont tell you
about me?

RATOU

That you drive fast. And are not to
be underestimated.

She laughs – a short, genuine burst.

PETA

That's true enough.

She glances sideways at him. Still unreadable.

PETA (CONT'D)

And what did he tell you about the
car?

RATOU

That she's heavier than she looks,
but full of surprises.

PETA

Actually I think that was also
about me.

Ratou smiles. Another silence – not uncomfortable this time.
They pass a sign: ARRAS 10km

Peta relaxes into the curve of the road. Ratou marks their
route with a discreet pencil mark on the map.

PETA (CONT'D)

Are you always so calm?

RATOU

When I'm not the one behind the
wheel, yes.

She tilts her head, almost amused.

PETA

You know, you haven't asked me a
single question about why I'm doing
this.

RATOU

That is not my place, madame.

PETA

Indeed. But aren't you even
curious?

RATOU

Curious? Always. Intrusive? Never.

That silences her – briefly.

She shifts the car into a higher gear. The Rolls surges forward. The road opens up before them, flat and golden. The moment stretches.

WIDE SHOT: THE ROLLS CUTS THROUGH A FIELD OF SUN-DRENCHED COUNTRYSIDE.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The corridor glows with polished brass and sunlight filtered through velvet curtains. The steward ushers Pamela, Kenneth and Binkie down the narrow passage.

Each carries a small case – or in Binkie's case, an elaborate reticule.

Behind them, just entering the carriage, is Lady Evelyn, arm linked with Langley's. She watches the procession with polite disdain.

They pause as the steward opens a coupé. Pamela peers in, delighted. Kenneth nods curtly.

Just ahead, the Baron and Baroness are being shown into their coupé – the one adjacent to the Landau's – by another steward.

Lady Evelyn glances toward them. Her smile never falters. She leans slightly towards her steward and murmurs something we don't hear.

He blinks. Hesitates. Then nods.

Binkie turns back just in time to catch it. He raises one eyebrow – and then, without a word, steps aside to swap cabins with the Landaus, cheerfully.

Pamela sees this. Her eyes meet Binkie's. She understands.

EXT. RURAL CROSSROADS - DAY

The Rolls-Royce slows to a crawl, Peta squinting at a confusing hand-painted road sign that seems to point both ways to Montreuil.

Dust kicks up as she pulls to a stop at the edge of a sun-drenched field.

Two identical French farmers in overalls and caps stand beside two battered carts full of onions, smoking and arguing with each other in rapid-fire Picard dialect.

They both turn as the elegant car rolls up, blinking in slow unison like a pair of owls. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

PETA
 (through the window)
 Excuse me — which road to
 Montreuil?

The First Twin points decisively to the left. The Second Twin points just as firmly to the right.

FIRST TWIN
 Left. Always left.

SECOND TWIN
 No, no, no — that's madness. Right!
 You'll be in Montreuil before your
 shadow catches up with you!

The twins glare at each other. The Second Twin turns to Peta, earnestly:

SECOND TWIN (CONT'D)
 Madame, my brother is...
 geographically challenged.

FIRST TWIN
 And you are pining for some
 strumpet from Arras. You've been
 trying to reroute traffic to her
 bistro since 1926!

Ratou, stone-faced in the passenger seat, turns very slightly to Peta. END SUBTITLES.

RATOU
 We may need to pick one and hope
 for the best.

PETA
 Or drive straight through them.

She revs the engine lightly.

The twins both leap back, laughing.

FIRST TWIN
 (in French)
 Ah! She is bold, this one!

SECOND TWIN
 (in French)
 Like a racing Joan of Arc!

PETA
 (to Ratou)
 Oh Lord, we've gone from confused
 to canonised in under a minute.

She throws the car into gear.

RATOU

Go left. I trust the one with fewer onions.

They peel away in a roar of dust and bemusement. The twins wave madly, still arguing. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

FIRST TWIN

(shouting)

She'll be back when the road ends in a barn!

SECOND TWIN

(shouting)

No she won't - she'll be lunching in Arras with my future wife!

END SUBTITLES.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DINING CAR - NIGHT

Velvet drapes closed. Soft jazz. Lamplight on silver, crystal, white linen.

The dining car glows with expensive fatigue. Guests in evening dress murmur over late supper and cocktails.

Binkie, Kenneth and Pamela sit together.

Kenneth is in white tie, stiff-backed, trying to look as if nothing in the room irritates him. Pamela watches everything. Binkie smokes, amused by the world and faintly ashamed of it.

At the far end, a stir.

The DUKE OF WINDSOR and WALLIS dine at the best table.

With them: Lady Evelyn, Langley, and several well-dressed HANGERS-ON, all leaning in too eagerly, laughing too quickly.

The Duke is slim, dry, restless. Wallis is immaculate, brittle, entirely aware of the room's attention.

LADY EVELYN

Leipzig has made such an impression on Mr. Langley, ma'am. Quite transformed him.

LANGLEY

Only in the best possible sense, Lady Evelyn.

He smiles. A BUF pin catches the lamplight on his lapel.

Wallis notices it.

A tiny pause. Then a smile.

WALLIS

One does like to see young men with purpose.

The hangers-on laugh softly.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

Purpose is exactly what's missing at home. Everyone talking, no one doing.

LADY EVELYN

Quite so, sir.

WALLIS

England does love a committee.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

And a bloody compromise.

LANGLEY

Europe seems to be finding rather cleaner answers, don't you find, sir?

A small silence. Then the table absorbs the remark as if it were only politics, only dinner talk.

Binkie's smile thins.

Pamela looks from Langley to the Duke.

Kenneth keeps his eyes on his glass.

At the Windsor table, a waiter refills champagne.

LADY EVELYN

Speaking of bold experiments – we are travelling with the husband of the famous Mrs. Fisher.

Wallis turns slightly.

WALLIS

The one racing the train?

DUKE OF WINDSOR

In a motorcar, yes?

LANGLEY

A Rolls-Royce, sir.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

Well, at least that's something.

Light laughter.

Wallis scans the room. Finds Kenneth.

WALLIS
Is that him?

The room shifts.

Kenneth looks up.

Binkie and Pamela both go still.

KENNETH
Ma'am?

DUKE OF WINDSOR
I say, do come here, Fisher. We
must hear about this extraordinary
wife of yours.

Kenneth rises.

He reaches the table and gives the Duke a correct bow.

KENNETH
Your Royal Highness. Ma'am.

DUKE OF WINDSOR
So. Your wife is determined to beat
us all to the Riviera, is she?

KENNETH
That is the general idea, sir.

WALLIS
How exhausting.

A polite ripple of laughter.

DUKE OF WINDSOR
Clattering about on French roads
all day. Dust, petrol, potholes. I
can't think what possessed her.

WALLIS
Some women need a hobby, David. Or
we simply die of boredom.

LANGLEY
Is she driving herself, Fisher?

KENNETH
She is.

LADY EVELYN
So... modern.

WALLIS
Not alone, I hope?

KENNETH

Our chauffeur is with her, ma'am.
As mechanic.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

Well.. at least someone sensible is
in the motor.

KENNETH

My wife is perfectly sensible, sir.

The table quietens a fraction.

Kenneth continues, still polite.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

She is also brave, capable, and
rather better at being
underestimated than most people are
at being right.

Wallis's smile hardens.

WALLIS

Well. I suppose that's...
something.

KENNETH

Yes, ma'am.

The Duke gives a small, dry laugh.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

Then let us hope she doesn't kill
herself proving a point.

Kenneth holds his gaze.

KENNETH

I think, sir, the point is already
proved. (he bows) Sir. (he doesn't
bow) Ma'am.

He turns and walks back to his table.

Pamela watches him come, almost glowing.

Binkie exhales smoke.

BINKIE

Well.

Kenneth sits.

PAMELA

Papa.

KENNETH
Eat your pudding, Pamela.

Binkie looks at him, delighted.

BINKIE
Kenneth. I didn't know you had it
in you.

Kenneth picks up his spoon.

KENNETH
Don't be ridiculous.

EXT. ROADSIDE TREE - DAY

The Rolls curves past a lonely tree. On the bark: a cluster of fading flyers, half-torn, printed on onion-skin paper.

Peta glances at them as they pass:

"LIBERTÉ NE SE SUPPLIE PAS."

A red triangle is scrawled underneath.

She slows slightly. Looks in the rear-view mirror.

Ratou says nothing.

EXT. RURAL CHECKPOINT - EVENING

Dust, heat, silence. The Rolls purrs to a stop.

Two GENDARMES emerge — one with a clipboard, the other with eyes that miss nothing.

Peta hands over her passport. A quick glance. Returned.

Ratou passes his folded documents. The gendarme opens them slowly, careful. Lingers on something inside.

Without a word, he slips a folded scrap of paper — or a thin banknote — into his own palm, then into his pocket.

No acknowledgement. No alarm. As if it was always part of the exchange.

Ratou says nothing.

Peta, watching through her sunglasses, catches it. Just the edge of the move. Her expression tightens — but she says nothing either.

The gendarme closes the papers, hands them back.

GENDARME
Bonne route, madame. Monsieur.

Then he taps the roof of the Rolls. Once. Softly. Peta drives on, snatching a suspicious sideways glance at Ratou.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - EVENING

Peta glances sideways at Ratou.

He stares ahead. Calm. As always.

PETA
Did you know them?

RATOU
They don't know me.

PETA
That's not what I asked.

He doesn't answer.

EXT. ROADSIDE CAFÉ - DAY

A shady terrace. Two novice nuns are talking their coffee at one table. At another, three middle-aged French motorists in driving goggles, berets and cravats sit at a table, drinking aperitifs and sharing a copy of Le Matin.

The front page shows a syndicated press photograph: Peta, standing confidently by her Rolls, under the headline:

"L'Anglaise qui défie le Train Bleu"

They scoff in that very specific French way. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

MOTORIST #1
(to the others,
disdainfully)
This Madame Fisher intends to
outrun a locomotive. In pearls.

MOTORIST #2
It's a publicity stunt. A woman's
idea of an engine is a hairdryer.

MOTORIST #3
It will end with a broken axle
or... my God, a broken nail!

They clink glasses. Smug laughter.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A distant whine.

Then suddenly - VVVVVRRRRRRMMMMMMMM!

The blue Rolls screams past the café. Newspapers blow off the table. One man's beret flies into a flowerpot.

Glasses clink and wobble. One drink topples entirely.

The three men stare, mouths open.

MOTORIST #1

Was that...?

MOTORIST #2

She didn't even change gear.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta smirks ever so slightly.

Ratou doesn't comment. He doesn't need to.

EXT. ROADSIDE CAFÉ - DAY

One of the motorists silently rights the fallen glass. Another opens the paper again and quietly folds it to a new page. The third replaces his beret.

The nuns' wimples have blown over their faces, and they remove them to reveal looks of pure wonderment.

EXT. RURAL JUNCTION - DAY

The Rolls slows at a dusty fork in the road. Two weather-worn signs point in opposite directions: Chalon or Dijon.

Peta leans out, squinting. The late sun is hot on the dashboard. A map flutters in her lap.

PETA

It should be Dijon - I think. We're meant to hug east, not...

RATOU

Chalon is faster. Less traffic. The road stays dry in the valleys.

Peta frowns, glancing between the signs and the dust-covered countryside. The left road looks narrower. No milestones.

PETA
You've driven it?

RATOU
Once. Long ago.

Peta hesitates. She watches as Ratou pulls a folded scrap of paper from his coat — smaller than a map. He glances at it, then folds it quickly away.

PETA
What was that?

RATOU
(without looking at her)
Just... nothing. Names of fuel stops. In case we're desperate.

He taps the dashboard.

RATOU (CONT'D)
We'll make better time this way.

A long pause. Then Peta shifts gear and takes the left turn. The Rolls bumps onto the rougher track.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

The light's getting golden. The map of France is now bristling with pins and scribbled annotations. M. Labiche adjusts one with the precision of a military commander.

Bobo stumbles in, arms full of fresh telegrams — including one several feet long. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

BOBO
(reading aloud, badly)
"To whom it may concern: We, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Seven Sacraments at Saint-Raphaël, write with joyful prayers and happy hearts for the lady in the blue motorcar..."

M. Labiche frowns.

BOBO (CONT'D)
"...Having observed her pass our convent wall at what we all judged to be the speed of sin, we fell to prayer..."

M. LABICHE
The "speed of sin"?

BOBO

"... and in the chapel, Sister Bernadette received a vision that the lady in question would make it to Antibes alive, unless she perishes nobly in a fiery ball of death..."

M. Labiche rolls his eyes. Bobo unrolls more. It keeps going.

BOBO (CONT'D)

"... attached is our Novena for the Safety of Lady Drivers, the Litany of Saint Veronica, and..."

M. Labiche snatches it away.

M. LABICHE

What is this — a telegram or the New Testament? How are they paying for this?!

He skims the bottom.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)

Ah — here. "Tell her we are praying for her. With rosaries and a small wager from Sister Clothilde."

Flabbergasted, he pins the final inch to the board — the rest coils off the table. Bobo looks impressed.

BOBO

Should we send a reply?

M. LABICHE

Yes. "Thank you, sisters. But for the love of God, be brief!" (pause, then ashamedly) Glory be to God, Hail Mary full of grace, and so on and so forth.

He crosses himself then checks his watch. The secondhand ticks.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

The Rolls hums down a straight stretch of road, nothing but farmland and heat haze in sight. Both Peta and Ratou are tired. Silence lingers.

Peta drums her fingers on the window frame.

PETA
I spy with my little eye...
something beginning with T.

Ratou doesn't react.

PETA (CONT'D)
Come on. Guess.

RATOU
Guess what?

PETA
Something I can spy. Beginning with
T.

RATOU
How would I know?

PETA
It's a children's game, you oaf. We
used to play it on long car
journeys to avoid strangling one
another.

Ratou considers this gravely.

RATOU
Your childhood sounds very violent.

Peta grins. He tries again.

PETA
Come on, spoilsport. Beginning with
T.

RATOU
Tires?

PETA
How on earth could I see the tires
from here?

RATOU
Tedium?

PETA
Now we're getting close. Try again.

Ratou grunts.

She smiles. He almost — almost — returns it.

PETA (CONT'D)
It was... thermos. Ta-da!
(holds it up)
And while we're on the subject...

She turns the thermos upside down to indicate that it needs refilling.

Ratou grudgingly takes it from her.

RATOU

I am beginning to hope we crash.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Langley is alone in his coupé. He checks the corridor to see if anyone is there, and then closes the window blinds. From a leather briefcase, he extracts a folder. WE do not see the contents.

EXT. RURAL PETROL STATION - DAY

A small, sleepy petrol station nestled under a canopy of trees. A sign creaks in the wind. A single pump. A cat naps in the sun. The Rolls idles.

Peta, stretching her legs and removing her driving gloves, strolls to a nearby cart to examine a basket of sad apples. In the background, Ratou walks behind the station building – supposedly to use the WC.

Peta watches him go.

EXT. RURAL PETROL STATION - DAY

Ratou dials a number on the petrol station's telephone while a grumpy STATION MANAGER looks on. Ratou pulls a small notebook from his jacket. It's old. Worn. He reads a short list of names or locations – we don't see clearly.

Peta, out of sight, rounds the corner of the building just far enough to glimpse him through a window.

Ratou continues speaking – too far away to make out. He holds the notebook up, reading something line by line.

Something in Peta stills. She lingers. Watching.

Just before she's seen, she steps back. Her eyes narrow – a flicker of concern.

EXT. RURAL PETROL STATION - DAY

Back at the car, Ratou returns, calm and unreadable, tightening something under the bonnet.

RATOU

Shall we?

Peta nods, neutral – but watching him now, more carefully than before.

EXT. RHÔNE VALLEY ROAD - DUSK

The blue Rolls-Royce lurches, coughs, and veers to the gravel shoulder. A shudder runs through the frame as the engine lets out a long, choking groan – then dies.

Peta yanks the wheel under control and coasts them to a stop beside a lonely roadside café, lit by one hanging bulb and a crooked hand-painted sign: Café du Midi.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DUSK

PETA
No. No, no, no...

Ratou is already out, yanking open the bonnet without a word.

EXT. RHÔNE VALLEY ROAD - DUSK

The air is cooling fast, the horizon fading to ink. Peta throws off her gloves.

PETA
Tell me it's fixable.

RATOU
Yes. If we were in no hurry. Or in Berkeley Square.

She exhales – furious and helpless.

A woman emerges from the café: MARGUERITE, 40s, shirt half-unbuttoned, cigarette lip-pinned. She's all curves and calm, with an attitude that doesn't ask permission.

She clocks Peta's attire – driving coat, silk scarf, fire in her cheeks – and smiles.

MARGUERITE
(in French)
You're either very late or very lost, I think.

PETA
(in French)
Not lost, but very definitely late.

The cigarette dangles between Marguerite's fingers.

MARGUERITE
You look like someone who could use a shortcut. Or a drink.

They shake hands. There's heat, but no rush.

PETA

I'm racing a train to Antibes.
Which probably tells you everything
and nothing.

MARGUERITE

Come inside. I have food that won't
kill you and wine that might.

Marguerite leads her into the café, casting an appreciative eye over Ratou as she does so.

INT. CAFÉ DU MIDI - DUSK

A small table by the kitchen. Bread, olives, cheese. A chipped bottle of wine. The clock on the wall ticks softly. A fan creaks above.

Peta, coat off now, sits opposite Marguerite, both women with half-full glasses and a kind of curious mutual stillness.

MARGUERITE

Do all the ladies race trains in
England?

PETA

No. Mostly, we race expectations.

Marguerite laughs, low and smoky. She breaks bread, passes half to Peta without asking.

MARGUERITE

That I understand. Men expect us to
be quiet. Pretty.

PETA

And obedient. Don't forget that.

MARGUERITE

Ah. I tried that once. For a
summer. It wasn't for me.

They both smile. It's not about flirtation now – or not only. It's about recognition. A quiet acknowledgment of living sharply, despite the bruises.

PETA

You live here alone?

MARGUERITE

I keep this place alone. Living...
that's more complicated.

She pours another splash of wine. They sip. A gentle calm between them. The clock ticks.

MARGUERITE (CONT'D)

You could stay. Forget the train.
The race. Talk. Sleep. Wake up
late.

A beat. Peta doesn't answer right away. She looks through the small café window – the silhouette of the Rolls-Royce, bonnet open, Ratou bent over the engine like a surgeon.

PETA

Tempting. But I'm a terrible
sleeper and I'd bore you to tears
with tales of my dull, dull life in
London. (beat) And I have something
to prove.

Marguerite watches her a moment longer.

MARGUERITE

Then come back when it's over.
Whether you win or you don't. And
next time I'll serve you the good
wine, yes?

Peta rises, fastens her coat.

PETA

Yes. And I'll try and arrive under
less theatrical circumstances. But
now...

She gestures at the clock on the wall.

PETA (CONT'D)

We've lost far too much time as it
is. If we have any chance to...

MARGUERITE

Ah, yes. I see.

They share a look – layered, unhurried. Peta steps out into the night.

EXT. CAFÉ DU MIDI - DUSK

Ratou is emptying the boot. Trunks, hat boxes, picnic gear, parasols – all being stacked, one by one, beside the car. Peta returns just in time to see a monogrammed steamer trunk hit the ground.

PETA

What on earth are you doing?

RATOU

She's too heavy. If we want to
climb the last leg, we drop
everything non-essential.

PETA
That's my wardrobe, not ballast.

RATOU
Then we arrive in style. But late.

MARGUERITE
(offering a cigarette)
I can store it. For a price.

Peta looks her over. Takes the cigarette. Looks at the pile.
Looks at the horizon.

PETA
You don't even know what's in it.

MARGUERITE
(lighting Peta's
cigarette)
You look like a woman with
excellent taste.

She holds out her hand. Peta shakes it – cool, controlled –
but both women feel it. Something more.

MARGUERITE (CONT'D)
And when the race is done – come
and collect what you miss. If you
miss it. Who knows how long before
shoes and mascara will mean very
little to any of us?

Peta says nothing. Just hands over a handful of francs and
climbs back into the car.

She guns the engine. The Rolls pulls away – lighter now,
faster – into the dark.

Marguerite watches them vanish, scarf flapping, cigarette
glowing. Then she returns to the café to make a telephone
call.

Yes – the instinct is right, but the bridge is missing. The
quote needs to be triggered not by eggs, but by certainty
turning into fear / hate / harm.

The easiest fix is to let Lady Evelyn say one more thing that
lands closer to the Shakespeare line – something about fear
being useful or soft people needing to be made afraid. Then
Pamela's half-remembered quote feels like the only tool she
has.

Here's a tightened version:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DUSK

Light pours in through the windows, a golden evening. White linen, polished silver, the hush of the well-to-do.

Pamela sits between Kenneth and Binkie. Kenneth reads. Binkie nurses a cocktail.

Pamela toys with her glass, half-listening.

Nearby, Lady Evelyn and Langley play cards.

LADY EVELYN

The trouble is, everyone thinks things are so complicated. But really, it's very simple. The strong take charge. The weak adapt.

Langley smiles.

Pamela looks up.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)

This endless dithering. Conscience. Debate. It slows everything down.

She plays a card.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)

If one wants to make an omelette, one simply has to break eggs.

Langley gives a small laugh.

Pamela looks at Binkie.

He has heard it. Of course he has.

Kenneth turns a page, not quite reading now.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)

People are so afraid of strength. I've never understood it.

LANGLEY

And fear does have its uses...

LADY EVELYN

Exactly. Fear makes people sensible.

Pamela looks back at her.

PAMELA

I don't like that.

Lady Evelyn turns, amused.

LADY EVELYN
I beg your pardon?

Pamela has surprised herself.

PAMELA
What you said.

LADY EVELYN
About eggs?

PAMELA
About fear.

A small silence.

Lady Evelyn smiles.

LADY EVELYN
How very earnest.

Pamela flushes, but doesn't look away.

PAMELA
There's a line in Shakespeare.

Lady Evelyn's smile widens.

LADY EVELYN
Of course there is.

Pamela nearly sits back down. Then doesn't.

PAMELA
"The love of wicked men converts to
fear; that fear to hate..."

She falters, embarrassed by herself.

PAMELA (CONT'D)
"And hate..." Oh, bother.

LADY EVELYN
What a sh—

Binkie, very quietly:

BINKIE
"... and hate turns one or both to
worthy danger and deserved death."

Pamela looks at him, grateful.

Then back to Lady Evelyn.

PAMELA
Yes. That.

The carriage is quiet now.

PAMELA (CONT'D)
That's what I meant.

LANGLEY
Miss Fisher, perhaps politics is
not...

PAMELA
I wasn't talking to you, Mr.
Langley.

That surprises everyone. Pamela most of all.

Lady Evelyn says nothing.

Pamela sits back down, shaken.

Binkie raises his glass, just a fraction.

Kenneth looks at his daughter. Moved. A little startled.

Outside, the evening flashes past the windows.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DUSK

M. Labiche is mid-call, two telephones wedged between ear and shoulder. A fresh coffee stain spreads across a critical section of the France map.

Bobo is tangled in paper tape, wound around an arm like a bandage.

In one hand he has a message written on an official telegraph office form. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

BOBO
New one! From Montélimar. I think?

M. LABICHE
(snatching it)
She's past there by now, foolish
boy — unless she's crashed into
another cow pasture.

He scans it.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
(reading aloud)
"Blue Rolls passed café at 20h12.
Driver very chic. Car trying its
best. Luggage abandoned.
Marguerite."

A silence. M. Labiche freezes. Straightens his tie, even though no one but Bobo can see him.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
 (wistfully)
 Ah, Marguerite...

Bobo blinks.

BOBO
 Who is Marguerite?

M. LABICHE
 (flustered)
 No one. An innkeeper of...
 excellent reputation in Montélimar.

BOBO
 Ah yes, the one who set the mairie
 on fire when she and the
 schoolmaster...?

M. LABICHE
 Almost certainly.

He adjusts the blue pin representing the Rolls on the map - nudges it past Montélimar. Then opens his watch again. Ticking. Louder. He frowns. He places the telegram beside the one about the disgruntled cow.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
 (softly)
 Godspeed, madame.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF LYON - NIGHT

The Rolls-Royce sputters as it climbs a darkening rise. The city lights of Lyon blink ahead in the valley below - golden and unreachable.

Inside the car, tension simmers.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - NIGHT

Peta, jaw clenched, checks the fuel gauge: low. The needle flirts with empty.

PETA
 We won't make it much further like
 this.

Ratou doesn't answer at first. Then:

RATOU
 I know someone in the centre. A
 mechanic.
 (MORE)

RATOU (CONT'D)

He can give us fuel — and replace
the part that's been failing since
Nevers.

PETA

And the detour?

RATOU

Better thirty minutes lost than
thirty minutes broken down on a
mountain.

She exhales sharply but says nothing more.

EXT. LYON - CITY CENTRE - NIGHT

A maze of narrow streets and old façades. The Rolls pulls
into a quiet, shuttered garage: no sign, just a single
flickering light over a wide steel door. Ratou knocks once.

The door opens. A middle-aged MECHANIC in oil-stained
overalls gestures them in. Peta parks. The garage swallows
the Rolls.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

While the mechanic confers with Ratou at the front of the
car, Peta stretches, then walks toward the shadows. She
checks her watch, distracted.

She doesn't see Ratou slip around the back of the car and
open a small compartment beneath the rear seat. He retrieves
the paper-wrapped parcel, tucks it beneath his coat, and
slips out a side door.

But Peta hears the door shut. She looks up. No Ratou.

Her eyes narrow.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - NIGHT

A narrow space, elegant but cramped. Sunlight slants gold
through the shutters.

The Baroness stands by an open suitcase, folding a silk shawl
clumsily. Not because she's weak — but because she's never
packed for herself before.

Pamela stands beside her, sleeves rolled up, helping with
delicate items — gloves, shoes wrapped in linen.

BARONESS RACHEL

I used to have a girl in Paris. A
lady's maid. Mireille.

(MORE)

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

She was only fifteen, but she knew how to pack hats like a magician.

PAMELA

I can barely fold socks.

BARONESS RACHEL

That's because you've never had to. People like us — we've been protected from needing to know all sorts of things. But I dare say we're all about to learn lessons. Of all kinds.

She smooths the edge of a folded dress, stares at it for a moment longer than needed. Pamela smiles sympathetically.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

We've been offered an apartment in New York by a cousin of Émile's. It has radiators. I find that oddly comforting.

PAMELA

It's a good plan, Baroness.

The Baroness gives her a look — gentle, sad.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Is it strange... to leave like this?

BARONESS RACHEL

No. What is strange is that we waited so long. When we knew.
(beat) We always know, my child, before we admit we do.

She gently closes the suitcase, then places one gloved hand on top of it.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)

Thank you for helping me. No one ever teaches you how to pack up your life.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - NIGHT

A chipped enamel bathtub. M. Labiche lies submerged up to the neck, eyes closed, arms floating. Opera plays softly on a radio balanced dangerously on the cistern.

Peace. Steam. Dignity. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

BOBO

(O.S., clearly panicked)
Uncle! Telephone! International!

M. LABICHE
Tell them I'm inspecting the
cables.

The door bursts open. Bobo, breathless, trails a twisted
phone cord into the room.

BOBO
It's from Albania! They say they've
seen the car!

M. Labiche sits bolt upright – a tidal wave of bubbles.

M. LABICHE
Albania? What direction do they
think she is heading –
Constantinople!?

He grabs the phone from Bobo's hand, water sloshing.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
Yes. Labiche speaks. Who is this?
The Mayor of where?

He listens. Blink. Blink.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
A blue Rolls-Royce... yes? With a
goat in the passenger seat?

He lowers the phone. Rolls his eyes. Then raise the receiver
it again.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
That is not Mme. Fisher, monsieur!

He hangs up. Then turns to Bobo.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
Write it down: "Albania sighting:
probable nonsense." Underline
"probable."

He dunks his head under the water. A pause. Resurfaces.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
Also – a new rule. No bath calls
unless it's, er...

BOBO
(teasing)
Marguerite?

M. Labiche – furious – splashes his hands into the water and
tries to leap out of the tub to throttle Bobo, who scarpers.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. BACKSTREET - NIGHT

Peta moves through the alleyways, following Ratou at a careful distance. The sound of her boots muffled on the old stone.

He walks with purpose. Not hurried, not furtive – like someone following a path long memorised.

The alleys darken. The city grows older. Finally, he stops.

A wrought-iron gate. A courtyard beyond. Peta conceals herself behind a kiosk – holding her breath.

A hard-faced WOMAN dressed in black waits under a flickering streetlamp.

Ratou speaks to her – Peta is very close by, but their voices are too soft to hear. Ratou hands the parcel to the woman in black, which she partially opens. Francs. A small fortune.

The woman pockets the bills and hands Ratou a leather briefcase – but it slips from her hands and spills open on the cobblestones.

Peta freezes.

In the glare of the harsh streetlamp, the contents scatter:

Hideous anti-Semitic posters, flyers and pamphlets – crude, graphic, hateful. Peta gasps – instinctively, silently.

She watches as Ratou calmly gathers the contents. Then he bows, and disappears down the alley, headed back toward the garage.

He does not see Peta.

Peta stands frozen, bathed in the streetlamp's cold light.

Her breath is visible in the air. She is devastated. Tears from a place she didn't know was in her course down her face.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - NIGHT

Post-dinner. The carriage sways gently. Soft murmurs behind closed doors. Outside, nothing but moonlit countryside.

Binkie stands by the window in evening dress, nursing a glass of Armagnac. His reflection in the glass is vague, half-sketched.

Behind him, Baron Émile appears quietly.

BARON ÉMILE
You are not sleeping, monsieur?

BINKIE
Trains make me think too much,
Baron. Or not enough.

A pause.

BARON ÉMILE
My wife has many friends... like
you. Artists. Writers. Men of
talent. Clever fellows, all of
them. So amusing.

Binkie smiles a tense smile, unsure of where this
conversation is going. Keeps his voice light, but his
knuckles tighten on the glass.

BINKIE
Indeed. Our big theatrical family.

BARON ÉMILE
One of them – a young pianist we
know in Berlin – he disappeared
last month. Twenty-two years old.
Vanished. Gone into thin air. Comme
ça. This... this gentle, lovely boy
who played Debussy like he was
remembering a beautiful dream. And
now his flat is empty. No trace of
him anywhere. His... his "friend"
can find out nothing.

Binkie is silent.

BARON ÉMILE (CONT'D)
If the Nazis come to England,
monsieur – and by God they will try
– do not think your charm or your
pedigree will spare you.

Binkie turns his head slightly. A half-smile.

BINKIE
(attempting flippancy)
Pedigree!? My dear Baron – all this
is just an elegant subterfuge.

The Baron steps beside him. His voice is low. Serious.
Unflinching.

BARON ÉMILE
You know the thing about the Nazis,
monsieur? They talk a great deal
about art and culture; fine
paintings, beautiful music. But
they know nothing of human nature,
of human worth. They are thugs;
(MORE)

BARON ÉMILE (CONT'D)
mindless brutes who will drag all
Europe - all the world - into Hell
if they can. Do not underestimate
them, monsieur. When the time comes
for more warnings, it will already
be too late.

A beat. They look out into the dark. Two men from vastly
different worlds - finding, just briefly, the same footing.
Then - the Baron rests a hand gently on Binkie's shoulder.
Paternal. Brief. Human.

BARON ÉMILE (CONT'D)
Take care, monsieur. I beg you.

He walks off into the corridor.

Binkie watches the space he leaves behind. Then turns back to
the window. His reflection seems a little clearer now.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The Rolls-Royce sits half-lit under the dull overhead light.
The mechanic wipes his hands and nods - repairs complete. The
car is ready.

Peta stands apart, arms folded, posture elegant but rigid.
She's staring at the car - or through it. Her gloves are in
her hand.

She hasn't moved in some time.

The side door opens. Ratou enters, brushing dust from his
coat, face unreadable. He sees her. He goes to the Rolls and
puts the briefcase onto the back seat.

He hesitates. Something is wrong. He knows it.

RATOU
The part's replaced. We can go.

Peta turns to face him. No smile. A long pause.

PETA
You were gone a long time.

He holds her gaze, level.

RATOU
There are things I must do that I
don't explain.

PETA
I noticed.

He waits. She steps closer, voice low.

PETA (CONT'D)

Tell me — what kind of a man keeps
wretched Nazi propaganda in a Rolls-
Royce?

Ratou stills. A flicker in his expression — not panic. Not
guilt. Something deeper: sadness.

He doesn't answer.

A pause.

PETA (CONT'D)

You're one of them.

RATOU

No. That's all. Just: no.

MECHANIC

(in French: SUBTITLED)

The clock is ticking, monsieur. You
go now or the race is lost.

She wants to press — desperately — but she doesn't. Because
outside that door is a road. A clock. A race.

And she needs him. She steps back.

PETA

I ought to leave you here, you know
that?

RATOU

I won't explain.

Peta reaches into her collar and pulls out her Star of David
pendant.

PETA

Look. Look, damn you!

Ratou looks at the pendant and his expression alters almost
imperceptibly, yet still gives nothing away.

He gestures to the car.

RATOU

If you want to go on alone, say so.
But decide now. You go alone and
maybe you beat the train. Probably
you fail. We go together and there
is still a chance. Make your
decision quickly, madame: we are
almost out of night.

She holds his gaze. Her breath is quick, her jaw tight.

Then, without another word, she walks to the car and climbs in.

He joins her. The engine roars to life. They pull out into the dark.

Neither looks at the other.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The Rolls-Royce glides silently through the dark. No voices. No music. Just the engine.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - NIGHT

Peta grips the wheel. Her face still burns with betrayal – or is it something else?

Ratou stares out into the dark, unreadable. Between them, a silence thick with accusation.

Up ahead – the faint orange flicker of firelight.

They round a bend.

A small house is ablaze, flames licking up into the night.

Beside the road, a Jewish family stands in silence: two crying children, a father in a skullcap and prayer shawl, a MOTHER in a worn, woollen dress. They watch in silence as their little home burns.

Village men stand around idly. They are watching, smoking. They do nothing to help. They let it burn.

The mother has her hands on her children's shoulders. The father's look is haunted, bereft. He weeps silent tears.

The mother does not cry. She's just watching too. Stoic. Still. Her eyes meet Peta's as the car slows to pass.

A long, weighted beat.

The woman's face is careworn. Not dramatic. Not defiant. Just exhausted by history – and resigned for more to come.

Peta doesn't look away. The woman doesn't either. For a second, they hold one another in the firelight.

Then the car moves on. The flames fade behind them.

Inside the Rolls, nothing has changed – but somehow everything has.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAWN

Once outside of the village, the Rolls-Royce pulls hard into a sharp turn, tyres screeching on the wet road. Peta is at the wheel: breath sharp, fury in her grip.

She pulls the car over abruptly at a vantage point overlooking the valley. The engine idles hot.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAWN

PETA

Out.

RATOU

What?

PETA

I said out!

Ratou steps out without argument. She follows, slamming the door behind her.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAWN

They stand in the road, the horizon glowing behind them.

PETA

I followed you in Lyon. I saw the woman in black. I saw what you gave her.

(pause)

And what she gave you.

He doesn't react – no denial, no deflection.

PETA (CONT'D)

You're working with them. With those wicked, evil men. Distributing that, that... filth! Hiding behind me and my car to spread these awful, hateful lies.

RATOU

I am hiding nothing.

She steps closer, angry now, scared.

PETA

Then what did I see?

He pulls something from his coat – a crumpled offensive leaflet. She recoils instinctively.

He picks at the paper's edge and slowly the top layer is peeled away.

Beneath: a travel permit in French. Intricate. Hand-stamped. He offers it to her. She hesitates – then takes it.

PETA (CONT'D)

Is it real?

RATOU

They're forgeries. All of them. Lies, yes, but important lies. Travel documents. Passports. Visas. Laissez-passes. Transit documents. Lists of safe houses. Information and support from friends and fellow Jews who have made it out of Europe. All of them hiding in the worst filth imaginable. No one at the border looks at this anti-Semitic trash. They nod and turn away. They don't look, they don't see. (beat) The woman you saw in Lyon? She is a friend from the synagogue there. There is a network across Europe: brave men and women – Jews, Gentiles, non-believers – all trying to warn our people – my people, your people – of the danger ahead. Why they have to leave. Now. Before it's too late.

Peta stares at the paper. Her gloved hand trembles slightly.

PETA

But, why didn't you tell me?

RATOU

Because people only want to know when the race is won. They want heroes – not smugglers with grubby paper and blood on their boots. And because with you I am not a courier. I am a driver; a servant. (beat) But madame – mostly I did not tell you because I did not know who you were.

She looks up at him, eyes bright with something complex: not yet forgiveness, but understanding.

PETA

My father was a Jew from Poland. You'd never know it to look at him. God no – all tweed and restraint. Never spoke about it: being Jewish. Just kept it quiet. My father wanted respectability more than anything else. He thought silence kept us safe.

A long pause. No sound but the wind and the engine ticking cool.

PETA (CONT'D)
He was wrong, wasn't he?

Ratou nods – once, grave.

They stand in the blue dark looking out at the slowly rising sun on the valley. Two souls with no illusions left.

PETA (CONT'D)
Is it going to be very bad? When it comes?

Ratou does not speak, but his expression says it all.

They look at one another. They have made their peace and return to the car.

The Rolls roars to life. The road unwinds ahead of them. The past behind.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - EVENING

The light is dying. The Rolls glides through narrow country roads, pine forests hemming them in on either side. The engine hums steadily, the dashboard lamps glowing low.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - EVENING

Peta drives. Ratou checks the map, but glances often at the mirror.

A pause.

A black Citroën appears behind them. The only other car on the lonely road. It lags for a second... then accelerates.

The Citroën closes in, menacingly. Soon it draws level to the Rolls. The car is close enough for Peta and Ratou to see the passengers: an older man with an impressive handlebar moustache and a younger, powerfully built man with a prominent scar on his cheek.

The men glare at Peta and Ratou and then speak to one another. After a tense moment, the Citroën accelerates and pulls away.

EXT. PETROL STATION - EVENING

A lonely pump under a flickering bulb. The Rolls pulls in.

No sign of the trailing car.

Peta exits to stretch. Ratou refuels.

PETA
What on earth was that about?
Police?

RATOU
If they were, they'd have stopped
us already.
(beat)
This is something else.

They exchange a look. Peta scans the road. Empty. Still. But not still enough. Then: Headlights flicker in the trees. A shape moves. But the car turns away – disappears. Too far to identify, but not far enough to ignore.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - BACK ON THE ROAD - NIGHT

Peta is silent now. Focused.

Ratou closes the map. He doesn't need it anymore. They drive on – not chased, but not alone.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - NIGHT

Darkness in Kenneth's coupé. The gentle rhythm of the train on the tracks is the only sound.

Suddenly, a jolt – subtle but sharp – rouses Kenneth from sleep. He blinks, disoriented, breath catching as if startled from a dream.

He fumbles for the brass switch by his pillow. A soft, amber light flickers on, casting a warm glow over the polished wood and velvet of the compartment.

Kenneth sits up, tousled and bare-chested, his breath slowly steadying. On the small side table, he reaches for a silver-framed photograph of Peta.

He gazes at it. Long. Quiet. The harsh lines of worry soften. His eyes grow glassy.

A faint smile, private and aching.

He brushes a thumb gently across her cheek.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY

The Rolls comes around a blind bend. A small PROVENÇAL GIRL darts into the road after a runaway hoop.

Peta swerves violently, veering off the road and into a shallow ditch surrounded by dry shrubs and rock.

The car lands with a lurch, one wheel spinning in the air.
Dust and silence.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE CAFÉ - DAY

The sudden screech is heard from the café, where a group of VILLAGE MEN are gathered for morning coffee, bread, and a pipe. They all get up and rush toward the sound.

By the time Peta and Ratou climb out of the Rolls, brushing themselves off, a small crowd has gathered, murmuring – angry, suspicious, defensive. They speak in French,
SUBTITLED:

VILLAGE MAN #1
She nearly killed the child!

VILLAGE MAN #2
Stupid English! They think the
world is theirs!

The mood is turning.

A WAITRESS spots something and points towards the direction of the accident.

WAITRESS
Look, it's little Gabin.

Suddenly – a boy, 11 or so, bursts through the crowd, tears in his eyes, breathless, holding his sister's hand.

GABIN
It's my fault! I was meant to watch
her! She ran into the road – and
the lady, she turned the car – she
saved her. She saved my sister!

The crowd hushes. A few of the men look at each other, unsure. Guilty, but still unmoving.

Then a voice cuts across the square – crisp and strong. GRANDMÈRE, late 60s, proud and sharp as flint, is crossing the square with a bundle of baguettes under her arm.

She stops. Takes in the scene. The children. The Rolls. The villagers standing about.

GRANDMÈRE
What's this? A woman saves a child
and the men of Flassans fold their
arms?

No one answers.

GRANDMÈRE (CONT'D)

If this is French chivalry - then
we'll hand the keys of the mairie
to the Germans this afternoon,
shall we?

She fixes one of them with a deadly stare.

GRANDMÈRE (CONT'D)

Help this woman... or (gesturing at
her granddaughter) explain to her
why the brave men of Flassans stood
like donkeys instead of helping the
woman who saved her life.

A beat. Then one man clears his throat and walks towards the
Rolls. Another follows. Then more.

Soon, the whole village is helping, under Grandmère's silent
command. The car is lifted. Children cheer. Ratou adjusts
something. The engine coughs to life.

Peta, behind the wheel again, glances at the grandmother.
Their eyes meet - mutual respect. No words needed.

Grandmère nods once. Then picks up her baguettes, cuffs her
grandson quickly around the ear and then pulls him into a
tight embrace.

INT: ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta and Ratou exchange a smile. Gabin runs up to the window.

GABIN

Oh madame. Thank you. Thank you.

Peta gently puts her gloved hand on his. The engine revs and
the Gabin steps back and salutes. Ratou salutes back,
sincerely.

The car pulls away as the villagers cheer and wave table
napkins, handkerchiefs, berets, baguettes.

EXT. VILLAGE TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

Grandmère, with grandchildren in tow, stomps towards the
telegraph office.

INT. VILLAGE TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

A young CLERK is behind the counter, visibly terrified at the
prospect of Grandmère bearing down on her.

CLERK

Ma...ma...madame?

GRANDMÈRE

Take this down. For whatever idiot in Antibes is monitoring this mad Englishwoman's folly.

CLERK

Bu...bu...but...

GRANDMÈRE

Now, Miquela! Pah! Slow, just like your mother.

The clerk clumsily picks up a telegraph pad and a pen. Grandmère starts to dictate.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

The Rolls is parked on a ridge above a long valley. The light is gold and long. Cicadas hum.

Peta sits on a rock, coat off, gloves off. She looks pale. Hollowed out.

Ratou leans under the bonnet, checking something — but keeping an eye on her.

PETA

I can't do this. I mean, I could've... I nearly... For a race, Ratou. For a silly, stupid race.

He doesn't respond immediately.

PETA (CONT'D)

It's all a joke, isn't it? The scarf, the goggles, the grin. For God's sake: a costume party on wheels! I'm not a racing driver. I'm not anything.

She tries to laugh. It doesn't land.

PETA (CONT'D)

I'm just a bored woman in a blue car chasing a train she'll never catch. And frankly, I don't even know why anymore.

Ratou closes the bonnet. Wipes his hands on a rag. He walks over and crouches nearby, not too close.

RATOU

Do you think the train knows why it runs?

She looks up. She is exhausted and on the verge of tears.

RATOU (CONT'D)

It doesn't ask if the tracks make sense. It just moves. Because people need it to.

A long beat.

RATOU (CONT'D)

You don't need to be a driver. Or a hero. You just need to keep going.

Peta looks away. Struggles not to cry.

PETA

You make it sound so simple.

RATOU

It isn't. That's why most people give up. But sometimes... one person does not. And then everyone else remembers that they too can carry on.

He stands, offers her his hand. She hesitates. Then takes it.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

Seated at his desk, Bobo is transcribing a telegram. He puts down his pen and beams with pride. He rises and carries the written message over to the race board. As he steps back from pinning the message to the board, WE SEE its opening sentence in French, SUBTITLED: 'MRS. FISHER - THE ANGEL OF FLASSANS'.

M. Labiche comes in carrying a bag of croissants in one hand and munching a croissant with the other. He comes over to read the telegram. It moves him deeply.

He pulls out a voluminous polka-dot handkerchief and dabs his misty eyes. END SUBTITLES.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The carriage is golden with early morning light. Breakfast is being served. Elegant place settings, polite chatter, the quiet clinking of cutlery.

Suddenly - a violent lurch. The train brakes hard. China rattles. A tray topples. Someone shrieks.

Passengers look around, stunned.

EXT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The train grinds to a halt, steam rising, hissing at the rails.

An ENGINEER jogs past the windows, shouting instructions in French.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The conductor enters, explaining hurriedly:

CONDUCTOR

Mesdames et messieurs. A farmer's lorry has spilled hay on the tracks just ahead. We must wait for clearance. Thirty minutes, no more. Thirty minutes only. Merci.

Grumbling rises.

Lady Evelyn stands abruptly.

LADY EVELYN

Well, I suppose this means our Mrs. Fisher wins the race after all.

Langley tries to soothe her. Binkie leans across to Pamela, sotto voce:

BINKIE

She's taking this very personally for someone who swore it was all just a silly stunt.

LADY EVELYN

(snaps, overhearing)

I happen to think it's important that rules are respected. She's supposed to be running a race — not a works outing to the seaside.

PAMELA

If it were a works outing, Lady Evelyn, at least it would be full of people who actually know what work is.

Lady Evelyn shoots her a look.

EXT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

A team of rail workers clears hay bales from the tracks, sweating under the sun.

In the distance, a dust plume on the horizon: the Rolls is still in the race.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The sky is brilliant blue, the sun slanting low over the Provençal hills. Steam curls behind the train - moving now - as it glides along a viaduct above the valley.

Binkie, sipping from a silver hip flask, leans casually on the rail - then stiffens.

BINKIE

What the... It can't be!

He squints.

BINKIE (CONT'D)

There! Look - the bend - left side!

Kenneth, Pamela, the Baron and Baroness rush over.

Through the trees, kicking up dust, is the blue Rolls-Royce - unmistakable. It surges along a winding road that briefly runs parallel to the tracks, gleaming like a blade. Pamela claps her hands to her mouth.

PAMELA

Oh! It's Mummy!

Kenneth stares. Then laughs - a deep, astonished sound.

KENNETH

She's still in it. She's bloody well still in it!

The Baroness wipes at one eye, smiling.

BARONESS RACHEL

She won't stop, our Mme. Fisher.
Not until the race is run. This I know.

All of them press to the rail, waving furiously.

EXT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta, focused on the road - then sees them.

The train, suddenly there - her people waving. Her daughter.

Pamela waves with both hands, mouth open, shouting something joyous that can't be heard.

Peta lifts one hand from the wheel. Just for a moment. A flicker of a smile.

Ratou, glancing over, says nothing – but his expression shifts. For the first time: admiration without calculation.

The train begins to pull in a different direction, the road veers off.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Lady Evelyn – observing the scene with disdain.

LADY EVELYN
(venomously)
Still chasing the impossible, is
she? Dear Mrs. Fisher?

BINKIE
She's not chasing the impossible,
Lady Evelyn. She's chasing the
chance to matter. Funny how that
unsettles people who believe
they're the only ones that do.

This stings. Lady Evelyn makes no response.

BARON ÉMILE
(dryly)
Do we think they'll have champagne
at the station?

EXT. ANTIBES STATION - DAY

Sun blazing. Bunting flaps across the station façade. A brass band tunes up under a striped awning. Banners read:

ARRIVÉE OFFICIELLE – LA GRANDE COURSE CONTRE LE TRAIN BLEU

The MAYOR, resplendent in tricolour sash, stands with local dignitaries and press, posing beside an oversized silver stopwatch.

A huge station clock ticks toward 09:00. A group of schoolchildren wave French and Union flags.

The Blue Train whistles in the distance.

A LOCAL BANDMASTER taps his baton – the uniformed band bursts into a slightly ragged but enthusiastic rendition of "God Save the King".

A reporter checks his watch. The crowd buzzes. Eyes on the tracks. Then – from down the coast – the sound of an approaching engine.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The blue Rolls hurtles down a sun-bleached track. Dust coils in its wake.

Peta leans forward, focused, hands taut on the wheel. Ratou scans the road.

PETA

How far?

RATOU

Twelve minutes. If we don't slow down.

A farm truck pulls out in front of them. Peta slams the horn. It veers, narrowly missing.

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

M. Labiche is on the phone, scribbling on a notepad.

M. LABICHE

(in French: SUBTITLED)

Le Luc reports visual contact. She has passed the viaduct.

He pins a new flag to the map on the wall. Only one flag to go.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Passengers lean out of windows. Tension is thick.

Kenneth stands, silent. Pamela scans the horizon.

Binkie watches them both, quietly steadying.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

The Rolls swerves into a narrow market road.

Stalls. Crates. Goats.

Peta drives through it all.

RATOU

Keep going!

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

M. Labiche on the phone again. In French, SUBTITLED:

M. LABICHE
 Yes. Yes. I see. Thank you. I
 understand.

He slams the receiver down, breathless.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)
 Saint-Denis confirms. She's behind,
 but closing. Come, Bobo: to the
 station!

The clock ticks as M. Labiche and Bobo grab hats and jackets
 and dash to the door. Bobo manages to trip over his own
 shoelaces en route.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. ANTIBES - DAY

Switchbacks. Sea glinting below. Peta steers fast and clean.

Ahead: a WEDDING PROCESSION blocks the road. Music. Ribbons.
 A white rope.

Peta honks the horn. She shouts in rapid French.

A beat. Then the BRIDE'S FATHER lifts the rope. The Rolls
 passes under. Cheers.

Ratou checks his wristwatch.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The train whistle shrieks.

Baroness Rachel clutches her handbag as she looks out of the
 window. Pamela closes her eyes.

BARONESS RACHEL
 I can't see her!

EXT. ANTIBES STATION - DAY

The Rolls skids into view.

Crowds part. Bunting flaps. The square is full.

Peta pulls up sharp. Her face is flushed: with joy and
 confusion. And then -

She looks up - sees her family and others already on the
 platform.

Kenneth. Pamela. Binkie.

The train is already there. The brass band plays faintly and then stops.

Peta steps from the car. Dust-covered, jaw set. Her eyes flicker. It dawns on her: she has lost.

M. Labiche emerges from the crowd; overflowing with emotion, almost dazed with feeling.

PETA

I... I thought...

M. LABICHE

Oui. Yes. Madame, you were six-minutes late.

(beat)

But not to me.

(choked)

Not to any of us.

Peta stares at this strange, kind man. A flicker of emotion. Then she smiles. Just a little.

A bashful Bobo steps forward and presents her with a hastily assembled bouquet. Peta doesn't know what she's supposed to do - so she kisses Bobo gently on each cheek. He blushes crimson with embarrassment and delight.

From the platform, the Baroness begins to applaud. One by one, others join.

M. Labiche, moved beyond words, bows slightly, then pulls Peta into a tearful embrace - a little formal but full of heart.

M. LABICHE (CONT'D)

Madame Fisher: all France salutes you.

He steps back. Bows his head. Then, with enormous dignity, turns and walks back into the station like a star tenor leaving the stage - straightening his tie as he goes.

Peta looks after him with a look of astonishment. Then:

BINKIE (O.S.)

Good God darling, you look simply dreadful.

She turns - there he is: Binkie, in his immaculate suit and scarf, as wonderful as ever.

Peta stares at him. A beat. Then:

PETA

Oh Binkie.

A pause – then they laugh, suddenly and helplessly. She rushes to him. They embrace tightly: no words needed now.

BINKIE

I missed you, old girl.

PETA

I missed you too, you beast.

A tearful Pamela reaches her mother. Kenneth too. Kenneth takes Peta in his arms. No words – just a silent, proud embrace.

Photographers' flashbulbs pop and the crowd roars its approval.

All is laughter, tears and celebration. Then:

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor appear from the station. On hearing the commotion they start to acknowledge the crowd before realising no-one has even noticed them.

Crestfallen, they are ushered away by their staff. Again, no-one notices.

Lady Evelyn and Langley stand a little apart from the well-wishers.

Lady Evelyn, immaculate as ever, smokes through an elegant holder. Langley checks his watch, pleased with himself.

LADY EVELYN

Well. That would appear to settle it.

LANGLEY

Indeed. And hopefully put a certain someone in her place.

A man steps to Langley's shoulder.

The MOUSTACHIOED MAN from the Citroën.

MOUSTACHIOED MAN

Monsieur Langley?

Langley turns.

LANGLEY

What?

The man shows his badge.

MOUSTACHIOED MAN

Inspector Vernier.

Langley's smile fades.

The SCARRED MAN from the Citroën joins them.

SCARRED MAN
Detective Inspector Jepsen, sir.
Scotland Yard.

Langley looks from one man to the other.

LANGLEY
I'm afraid you've chosen a rather
public moment for whatever this is.

SCARRED MAN
I dare say, sir. But then, my
colleague and I have some questions
regarding sensitive papers missing
from the Admiralty in London.

Lady Evelyn turns to Langley.

LADY EVELYN
Papers?

Langley says nothing.

MOUSTACHIOED MAN
They were to be passed in
Marseille.

SCARRED MAN
To a German contact travelling
under diplomatic protection, your
ladyship.

MR. LANGLEY
That's preposterous.

SCARRED MAN
Is it, sir?

He takes a small folded envelope from his pocket.

SCARRED MAN (CONT'D)
Your cipher key was less
preposterous, sir. A child could've
cracked it.

Langley's face drains.

LADY EVELYN
Langley?

He does not look at her.

MOUSTACHIOED MAN
This way, monsieur.

Vernier takes Langley by the arm.

Lady Evelyn steps back from him.

LADY EVELYN
I had no knowledge of this.

SCARRED MAN
Then I dare say you'll want to
explain that to us in some detail
at the police station. Won't you,
your ladyship?

She looks around. People are watching.

SCARRED MAN (CONT'D)
Your ladyship.

He indicates the way to a waiting car.

Langley and Lady Evelyn are led off.

Pamela and Binkie watch from near the platform steps.

PAMELA
Good.

BINKIE
Quite.

Peta is still talking to Kenneth. She looks back at the Rolls
and sees Ratou already tinkering with the engine. She looks
at Kenneth and he nods.

She walks over to Ratou. He wipes the grease from his hands
and smiles his half-smile.

PETA
Well, we managed to make a complete
hash of that, didn't we?

Ratou lets out a hearty laugh - and it's delightful.

He doesn't speak, but his expression returns to its normal
inscrutability. But there's something more there now.

PETA (CONT'D)
What's that faraway look about? You
are coming back with us, aren't
you? To London?

Ratou's face falls.

PETA (CONT'D)
You're not.

RATOU
Oh, Peta.

PETA

Do you know: that's the first time
you've said my name. I like it.

She extends her hands and Ratou takes them in his. They share
a look that defies description. They are in the crowd, but
utterly alone with one another.

Kenneth looks on. There is no jealousy here. Only pride.

EXT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - TERRACE BAR - DAY

Binkie returns from a discreetly flirtatious conversation
with a handsome CIVIL SERVANT.

He sits with the Fishers, pleased with himself.

BINKIE

Well. Good news and bad news.

PETA

Must there be both?

BINKIE

The French are wild about you.

PETA

That's the good news?

BINKIE

Courage. Glamour. Goggles.
Apparently Paris is already bracing
itself for women in thigh-length
boots.

PETA

God help Paris.

KENNETH

And the bad news?

BINKIE

They're banning Peta from racing on
French roads.

PETA

For how long?

BINKIE

Ever.

PETA

Oh.

BINKIE
Technically illegal, darling.
Unapologetically stylish, but
illegal. Much like my good self.

PETA
Oh, Binkie.

EXT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - DAY

The incinerator at the rear of the hotel. Ratou takes out the leather briefcase and extracts two bundles of papers. They have now been separated: one pile of Nazi filth and another of the precious documents that were concealed beneath.

The fire is burning white-hot. Ratou's steely expression is lit by the crackling flames.

Ratou takes the pile of repellent Nazi posters and flyers and starts tossing batches of them into the inferno. The fire licks at the papers' edges. They begin to crumple and burn: evil and hate reduced to ashes by the unrelenting flames. Ratou's is unrelenting too - ensuring every vile scrap of paper is utterly destroyed.

INT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - DAY

Sunlight glints off glasses: a tray of cocktails. Peta, Kenneth, and Pamela are seated on the white-stone terrace of the Hôtel du Cap, overlooking the shimmering sea. A sense of quiet hangs between them - not silence, but a mutual breath after impact.

Peta sips her drink, then sets it down carefully. Her hair is still pinned, but looser now. There's no sparkle in her smile - just steel.

PETA
It wasn't ever about the race, was it?

Kenneth glances over, curious.

PETA (CONT'D)
I thought it was, at first. A challenge. Something reckless. Something to feel alive. But along the way it became... something else.

She picks up her glove, twists it slowly in her fingers.

PETA (CONT'D)
A declaration, I suppose. A statement. That I'm not a passenger in this world.
(MORE)

PETA (CONT'D)

Not a wife to be fussed over. Not a mother to coddle and coo, but a woman who decides where she goes – and how fast she gets there.

Pamela watches her mother closely, moved. Kenneth sets his drink down. There's a softness in his voice now – new.

KENNETH

I see that now, Peta. I don't think I wanted to. But I do.

She turns to him. He meets her gaze fully.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

I didn't marry a quiet woman. I just couldn't admit that... she scared me.

Peta smiles – not unkindly. Just honest.

PETA

I scare myself sometimes.

They all laugh – low, private.

PETA (CONT'D)

Right, I want you all to meet me in the lobby in fifteen minutes. There's something we need to do. Pamela darling, ask the Baron and Baroness to join us, would you? By the way, has anyone seen Ratou?

At that moment, Ratou appears, brushing soot from his jacket. Binkie, Kenneth and Pamela all look at one another quizzically.

EXT. ANTIBES DOCKS - DAY

Ratou, the Fishers, the Baron and Baroness, and Binkie walk in good humour. They are smiling and chatting, reliving the last twenty-four-hours. And then, they see something that changes the air: the light fades from their faces – the conversation dies.

KENNETH

This can't be the place? Peta?

BINKIE

Dear God.

WE LINGER on their faces. They are stunned into silence.

Only then do WE SEE a converted boatbuilder's warehouse, its paint flaking, windows propped open with bits of wood.

A sign over the door, hastily stencilled, reads: *Comité de Secours pour les Réfugiés Juifs*.

A queue of families waits with bundles of blankets, coats, papers, battered suitcases, and sometimes nothing at all.

Binkie grabs Pamela's hand. A long beat. Then – Peta steps forward. She looks at the shabby sign, the queue of children with solemn eyes, the mothers gripping papers like lifelines. She doesn't speak – but her face tightens. Resolve setting like concrete behind her eyes.

WE have never seen her like this before.

PETA

Right.

She marches towards the building.

Ratou, already walking ahead. At the door, he turns:

RATOU

(to the group)

Be prepared.

INT. RELIEF CENTRE - DAY

A different world.

A vast, messy hall. The air is mournful with human misery, filled with the scratch of pens, babies crying, the clack of typewriters, the shuffling of paper: the grinding bureaucracy of the dispossessed.

Battered tables where doctors treat patients. Names being written into ledgers by tired volunteers. A room of whispers and sullen movement: full of families and not enough chairs.

Pamela clutches her coat. Kenneth looks stunned. The Baron and Baroness seem unable to move.

A woman – RIVKA, 50s – approaches them. Stern, dark-eyed, purposeful.

RIVKA

You are not welcome here.

PETA

We're not here for –

RIVKA

We don't do tours, madame. Or sentiment.

She spots Ratou.

RIVKA (CONT'D)
 (in Yiddish: SUBTITLED)
 You. I might have known.

RATOU
 (in Yiddish: SUBTITLED)
 They're good people, Rivka.

PAMELA
 May we help? Please.

A long pause.

Rivka assesses them with practiced suspicion. Then:

RIVKA
 Coats over there. Wash your hands.
 And if you start crying, go
 outside.

She walks off.

INT. RELIEF CENTRE - DAY

MONTAGE of the Relief Centre:

Pamela helps an elderly woman fill in her forms. Slowly, with lots of gestures and a little humour.

Kenneth: organising boxes of shabby boots by size, tying the laces together so they don't get separated.

Baron Émile is shown a row of names on a chalkboard by a young VOLUNTEER. He reads the names once, then again, and has to sit down. The young man fetches him a cup of tea in a chipped mug.

The Baroness, in her Paris couture and diamond clip, stands in stunned silence, unsure of what to do. Her eyes are caught by a MOTHER with her son; rummaging through a pile of secondhand clothes. It is the Jewish woman and child whose house was ablaze.

The mother holds up a threadbare coat - torn at the cuff and covered in stains - and inspects it. She frowns, brushes at the dirt, and tries in vain to adjust the collar before slipping the coat over her little boy's skinny shoulders.

The coat swallows him - but the mother buttons every button. She kisses him on the top of the head. He smiles.

Then she takes out a frayed pocket handkerchief to dab at her son's dirty face.

The Baroness watches.

Slowly, but with purpose, she reaches up to her lapel and unpins the diamond clip.

She approaches Rivka, hunched over a manifest.

BARONESS RACHEL
(in French: SUBTITLED)
You will know who needs this, I
think.

She places the clip in Rivka's hand. Rivka doesn't look up, but closes her hand gently around the jewel.

RIVKA
(softly in French:
SUBTITLED)
I will.

Then Rivka looks up - steel eyes judging. She sees the kindness in the Baroness' face. Her eyes soften but she does not smile.

RIVKA (CONT'D)
(in Yiddish, SUBTITLED)
Thank you, madame. And good luck.

The Baroness looks on the verge of tears. Too moved to respond, she can only nod and walk away.

INT. RELIEF CENTRE - DAY

Peta, walking a narrow corridor, hears quiet voices.

She finds Ratou, standing with men in skull caps and heavy overcoats. They speak low, in a mix of French, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian. He hands over documents and a small bundle wrapped in newspaper.

Peta watches from the shadows.

RATOU
(gently, in Yiddish,
SUBTITLED)
This will get you across. But only
once, you understand? And for God's
sake, be careful.

INT. RELIEF CENTRE - DAY

Binkie kneels beside a small group of children and teenagers holding up a badly hand-drawn map. He listens to a child's question, then draws something on the floor in the dust with a small stick. He is telling the story of Peta's adventures; acting out different scenes. His young audience is tickled pink with delight at this funny Englishman.

Kenneth watches with a gentle grin on his face, holding a crate of pots and pans. He looks to Peta, across the hall. She meets his eyes.

Not a smile. Something more serious: shared comprehension.

EXT. RELIEF CENTRE - DAY

They emerge into bright sunlight. None of them speaks for a moment.

The Baron removes his hat and mops his brow with a handkerchief.

BARON ÉMILE

I never thought I would see this again.

BARONESS RACHEL

No.

PETA

And now?

The Baroness looks back at Rivka, sternly guiding another distressed family into the refuge.

BARONESS RACHEL

Now we must never stop seeing it.
All of us. We are witnesses. (from
the Torah, in Hebrew, SUBTITLED)
"You shall not stand idly by the
blood of your neighbour."

As they walk away, a ragged JEWISH GIRL looks after them. She too wears an oversized coat. In her hand: the newspaper clipping with Peta's photo; salvaged from the rubbish, folded and refolded. Precious.

EXT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - DAY

The Rolls-Royce is waiting. Ratou - in his simple cap and coat - is talking to the young CHAUFFEUR who will be driving the car back to England.

Ratou sees the Fishers, picks up his canvas bag and finishes giving instructions to the chauffeur, who settles into the driving seat and steers the Rolls out of the hotel.

The Fishers watch as the car pulls away: a dignified and stylish friend they have come to love. Binkie stands nearby.

RATOU

(to Kenneth)

He is a good driver, monsieur.

(MORE)

RATOU (CONT'D)

The car will be back in London in
no time.

Kenneth steps forward and hands him an envelope.

KENNETH

For the road ahead. I may not
understand everything you're doing
- but I understand the risk.

Ratou nods, accepts the envelope. Then Kenneth offers a firm,
unexpected handshake. A moment of earned respect. Ratou
shakes his hand, then turns to Peta.

There are tears in her eyes.

PETA

There's nothing to say, is there?

Ratou merely smiles.

PETA (CONT'D)

Well, you were never a great
conversationalist anyway.

Ratou laughs at this.

RATOU

Madame...

PETA

Don't. Just... Please. I couldn't
bear it.

Ratou takes her hand and kisses it.

Then - with a faint smile - he turns and simply walks away.

Peta's expression is clear: she knows she will never see him
again.

EXT. ANTIBES STATION - DAY

The Blue Train awaits. Bustling passengers. Porters shuffle
trunks. A whistle blows somewhere.

The Fishers walk down the platform - together.

They cross the station concourse, passing a cluster of
visiting Nazi officers in full dress uniform - laughing,
smoking, loudly confident. One of them eyes Pamela's figure
as she walks by.

As they reach the platform, and move towards boarding the
train, they spy a familiar group waiting there.

PAMELA

Look!

The Landaus - dressed in their very finest - have come to say goodbye. Binkie is there too - dressed casually for the cafés and villas of Antibes. The ladies hug. The gentlemen shake hands. There are smiles and tears. There is friendship and love.

After a short time, the Fishers move away to board the train, turning to wave goodbye. The smiles are gone. The faces are stricken. Binkie puts his arms around the shoulders of the Baron and Baroness to comfort them. The Baron is wiping a tear from his eye.

Peta waves her handkerchief as tears pour down her face. They board. A steward closes the train door.

The train slowly - inevitably - pulls away.

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The train hums beneath them, steady and unhurried.

Beyond the window, France slips past in pale morning light.

Peta sits opposite Pamela.

The glamour of the race has gone. Her hair is unpinned. There is dust at her cuff, a faint smear of oil near her wrist. Her eyes are tired.

She is not performing now.

For a while, neither of them speaks.

Pamela looks at her mother, waiting.

Peta watches the countryside pass.

PAMELA

Mummy?

PETA

Losing.

A beat.

PETA (CONT'D)

I thought I'd be furious.
Humiliated. I thought everything
would collapse if I didn't arrive
first.

She looks out, almost amused by herself.

PETA (CONT'D)

But it hasn't.

PAMELA

No.

PETA

No. Which is odd, because I was so certain that was the point.

A small silence.

PETA (CONT'D)

All that noise in London. Cameras. Champagne. People saying one thing and meaning another. I thought if I could do something impossible – something that was mine – then perhaps I'd feel... settled in myself.

She smiles faintly.

PETA (CONT'D)

Silly, really.

PAMELA

I don't think it's silly.

PETA

Perhaps not. But it isn't enough, is it?

PAMELA

What isn't?

PETA

Being "free". Not if one uses it to arrive first. Or be noticed. Or prove a point to people who were never going to understand it anyway.

She looks out of the window.

PETA (CONT'D)

We saw things, didn't we?

Pamela nods.

PETA (CONT'D)

People leaving their homes. People pretending not to be afraid. Men in uniforms who looked so damned pleased with themselves. And I kept thinking – what use is freedom if one spends it only on oneself?

PAMELA
What should we do?

Peta gives a tiny laugh.

PETA
I haven't the faintest idea,
darling. That's the awful part. I
should like very much to make a
speech and tell you exactly what
comes next.

She looks at Pamela.

PETA (CONT'D)
I can't.

A beat.

PETA (CONT'D)
But I know we can't pretend we
haven't seen this.

PAMELA
No.

PETA
And we can't go back to being...
decorative.

A small, sad smile.

PETA (CONT'D)
Neither of us.

Pamela almost smiles.

PETA (CONT'D)
Your grandfather spent his life
trying not to be noticed. I spent
mine trying to be noticed by anyone
and everyone.

She lets that sit.

PETA (CONT'D)
I'm not sure either of us was
entirely right.

The train hums on.

Peta reaches across the table and takes Pamela's hand.

PETA (CONT'D)
Perhaps courage is not making
oneself seen.

A beat.

PETA (CONT'D)
Perhaps it's seeing clearly. And
then doing what needs to be done.

PAMELA
Even if it costs you dearly?

PETA
Especially then, I think.

PAMELA
Mummy, are you frightened?

PETA
Yes.

Pamela nods. That matters more than reassurance.

PETA (CONT'D)
But not of being myself. Not
anymore.

A beat.

PETA (CONT'D)
Of what being myself might require.

She looks down at Pamela's hand in hers.

PETA (CONT'D)
Of doing what needs to be done,
even if I'm terrified. Even if I
make a perfect hash of it.

A small, rueful smile.

PETA (CONT'D)
I think I understand now, darling.
In this world - in this dreadful,
dreadful time - the very worst
thing one can possibly do... is
nothing.

The whistle blows somewhere ahead. The sound rolls back
through the carriages.

Peta looks out at the wide sky.

Pamela keeps hold of her hand.

The train carries them on.

EXT. THE BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The powerful, beautiful train picks up steam - thundering towards the future: whatever it holds.

FADE TO BLACK.
OVER BLACK:

A year later, war came to France.

BEAT.

Mrs. Fisher never raced again.

BEAT.

She had more important battles to fight.

*

THE END.