

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 tried to beat it by road. Only one woman did.

This is her story.

BEAT.

More or less.

FADE IN:

EXT. CARR RESIDENCE - DAY

DAVID CARR (60s), in quilted gilet and flat cap, loads a wicker picnic basket into the boot of an estate car. A tartan rug, a bottle of wine, the Times folded under his arm. He checks his watch. Again.

DAVID

Deborah? Deborah! We're going to be late!

CUT TO:

INT. CARR RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - DAY

In her bedroom, DEBORAH CARR (60s) fixes a smart coat over her shoulders. She zips a handbag closed - lipstick, tissues, phone inside. She crosses to the sash window, leans out.

DEBORAH

Stop fussing. I'll be down in a minute.

She pulls back. As she turns, something catches her eye: a silver-framed photograph on the bookshelf. She walks over and lifts it. A sepia portrait: PETA FISHER, 1930s, in driving goggles and leather cap, standing proudly on the running board of a Rolls-Royce. Her expression is all grit and glamour.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)

Hello, Gran.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARR RESIDENCE - DAY

Deborah steps out and closes the front door behind her.

DAVID
Don't forget to lock the door.

DEBORAH
(smiling, to herself) I never do.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTORWAY - DAY

The estate car hums along. Inside, Deborah wordlessly offers David a mint. He pops it with a grin.

DAVID
Ooh, lovely.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL ESTATE - DAY

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

DEBORAH
(pointing at parking
space)
There. No, there!

David parks awkwardly. They don't get out just yet.

DAVID
Everything tickety-boo?

DEBORAH
I don't know how I feel, to be
honest.

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

DEBORAH
Bugger the buffs.

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

YOUNG MECHANIC
Help you at all?

DAVID

We're 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.

David coughs politely.

MR. GRADY (CONT'D)

Well... both of you, of course. I expect you're itching to see the old girl?

Deborah and David nod.

DEBORAH

I'll say.

CUT TO:

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. It's poised like a sleeping beast.

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 light 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.

CUT TO:

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

The door clunks shut as Deborah settles into the passenger seat of the vintage Rolls. David slides in behind the wheel, beaming like a boy with a new toy.

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?

DEBORAH

Let's take her somewhere she remembers.

CUT TO:

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.

Deborah stares out of the window, lost in thought. The photograph of Peta sits in her lap, clipped from its frame.

CUT TO:

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?

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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
That's not a motorcar - 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.

CUT TO:

EXT: BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - OBSERVATION TOWER - DAY

The TRACK MARSHAL lowers his binoculars, bemused.

TRACK MARSHAL
She's got a damn nerve.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLANDS MOTOR CIRCUIT - DAY

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

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

A SOCIETY MATRON approaches, clearly scandalised but attempting civility.

SOCIETY MATRON

Mrs. Fisher. That was...
unorthodox.

PETA

Only if one is accustomed to
losing. Which I am not.

She strides away, the murmurs behind her growing louder. She doesn't look back.

WIDE SHOT - PETA WALKING ALONE PAST ROWS OF GLEAMING CARS AND OPEN MOUTHS, UTTERLY UNBOTHERED.

CUT TO:

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 RATO (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, but there's something slightly improvised about the man inside it.

He straightens as she approaches.

PETA
You the new man?

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

His accent is indeterminate - as are his motives.

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.

CUT TO:

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 love driving, don't you?

He thinks for a moment.

RATOU
I enjoy being in control. Not quite
the same thing.

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

PETA
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. She looks thoughtful now, quieter.

PETA
Driving feels like being utterly
free, doesn't it? Just for a short
while? No one watching. No one else
in charge. Just... the wind and the
road?

Ratou smiles in silent acknowledgement.

She nods, as if confirming something private. They ride in silence for a moment longer.

CUT TO:

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 even better at...
other things.

She smiles. Not flirtation, exactly. A test. Ratou merely nods, unreadable.

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.

CUT TO:

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A fire ticks gently in the grate. A tray of untouched tea sits cooling on the sideboard. The mantel clock ticks with quiet insistence.

KENNETH FISHER (late 40s) stands by the window in his shirtsleeves, his tie loosened. The evening paper hangs from one hand. He's been waiting – not angry, exactly, but suspended in a tension he can't name.

The front door opens. A murmur of the housekeeper, the sound of boots kicked off. Then Peta enters, windblown and exhilarated. Her cheeks are pink from cold air and speed. She carries the scent of engine oil and wind in her wake.

She smiles at the sight of him. He tries to match it but can't quite.

KENNETH

You've been at Brooklands.

PETA

Guilty.

She removes her gloves, folds them carefully.

KENNETH

You took the Rolls?

She nods, unashamed. Begins removing her scarf.

PETA

She handles beautifully. Heavy,
yes, but responsive. She wants to
run.

He lets out a quiet breath. Sets the paper aside.

KENNETH

Peta... I'm not trying to stop you
being who you are. I just don't
understand why it has to be this.

PETA

Because when I drive, I remember
what it feels like to be entirely
in command of my life. My breath.
My... direction.

She crosses to him. Her tone is gentle – not defiant, but
rooted in something deeper.

PETA (CONT'D)

When I was a girl, my father bought
a Sunbeam. Bright red. I used to
polish it after school. He'd let my
brother drive it around the garden.
Never me.

KENNETH

That was just the time he was born
into, I suppose, and his general
"Polish-ness".

PETA

No – it was the time he chose to
stay in. He wanted to be English in
every possible way: respectable,
controlled, passionless. He buried
every trace of his mother's roots
and religion like they were a
stain. I was practically a grown-up
before he told me she was . . .

KENNETH

(softly, unashamedly)
Jewish.

PETA

Yes. And he taught me to be quiet.
Gracious. Decorative. Like a bloody
gardenia.

Her eyes search his.

PETA (CONT'D)

But I am not a decoration. I am not
here to sit still and smile and
wilt. I love you, Kenneth. But I
will not disappear for you.

Kenneth takes that in. It lands. It hurts – but not out of
pride. Out of fear.

KENNETH

It frightens me, Peta. The speed.
The recklessness. The world doesn't
give second chances to women like
you.

She softens. Steps closer. Places a hand over his.

PETA

Then let me take the first chances
while I can.

A beat. They stand in that quiet together.

KENNETH

I just don't want people talking.

PETA

They'll always talk, believe me. If
a woman's loud, she's hysterical.
If she's ambitious, she's grasping.
If she wants more than dinner
parties and Royal Ascot – well,
they call her dangerous.

She looks him in the eye – not angry, but tired of having to
explain herself.

A beat.

PETA (CONT'D)

I'm not dangerous, Kenneth. I'm
just... awake. And I won't go back
to sleep just because it suits
other people. Even you. Oh, darling
Kenneth. You don't need to
understand all of it. You just need
to see that it matters to me.

CUT TO:

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Peta's elegant bedroom. A dressing table strewn with cosmetics, perfume bottles, cigarette case, opera glasses. The soft glow of a vanity lamp. The distant hum of traffic and promise.

Peta stands in front of a gilt mirror, fastening a diamond clasp at her throat. Her gown is black silk, daring but elegant - a calculated statement.

Across the room, MAISIE (20s), her Cockney maid, perches on the edge of the bed, lacing up Peta's heels with reverent care.

MAISIE

That's proper film star stuff, that is, madam. You'll stop traffic in that.

PETA

Let's hope not - I'm late enough as it is.

She smooths her hips, inspecting herself. Perfect. Impeccable. Armoured.

Maisie hands her the evening gloves.

MAISIE

Where's it to be tonight then, madam? The Dorchester? Café de Paris?

PETA

Theatre first. New comedy in the West End. Then possibly drinks. Possibly scandal.

Maisie's eyes widen with delight.

MAISIE

You'll have to tell me everything, you know. Who was there. What they wore. Who was blind drunk. Who fell into the orchestra pit.

PETA

Steady on, Maisie. That could be me!

Maisie giggles. She passes Peta her small evening clutch and cigarette case, watching as Peta gathers herself.

Then, gently:

MAISIE

Do they know, all them lot? Do they
know the real you?

Peta pauses. A small smile.

PETA

They know who they think I am.
That's half the fun.

She leans down and pats Maisie's hand – warm, maternal,
conspiratorial.

PETA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you everything in the
morning, Maisie. Names changed to
protect the stupid, of course.

MAISIE

Yes, madam.

Peta takes one last look in the mirror – not vain, but
precise. Then she sweeps out of the room, silk trailing
behind her like a whisper of war.

CUT TO:

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...

CUT TO:

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 like a woman immune to gravity.
Her gown – black silk and silver beading – turns heads. She
passes duchesses, critics, industrialists' wives. She is not
a great beauty – yet she outshines them all.

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

BINKIE

Mrs. Fisher. It's about time. You
are very nearly late.

(MORE)

BINKIE (CONT'D)

(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 like a matador.

NOËL

His Royal Dullness sends his regrets. By which I mean: he's decided that damned American 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. Now I've only got a box of wretchedly drunken stockbrokers and Lady Harrow clutching her lorgnette like a rosary.

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

NOËL (CONT'D)

Peta darling, you look simply divine. And if you so much as breathe during the first scene, I'll toss you from the dress circle myself.

PETA

Not even a whisper?

NOËL

A sigh. A gasp. An exquisite silence. But no notes, darling. Not until after the curtain falls.

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)

It's frightfully naughty but I've nabbed the best box for we two. Something else for dear Noël to fume about. He really ought to find a producer who has his best interests at heart.

PETA

Darling, you are his producer.

BINKIE

Fancy that. Come, you're sitting beside me – and no, you may not escape.

PETA

Not even if I see someone I want to want to stab in the back?

BINKIE

If that's the case, my dear, I'll lend you my nail file.

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

FADE TO:

INT. WEST END THEATRE – AUDITORIUM – NIGHT

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

CLOSE ON
PROGRAMME:

For Better or Worse

A New Comedy by Noël Coward

Starring...

The curtain rises and a hush descends.

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.

BINKIE

Tallulah's halfway through the wine list already and it's barely eleven.

TALLULAH

(overhearing, slurring precisely)

Shucks, 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

Quiet, you fiends. 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.

The handsome waiter returns with a tray of drinks. Cole lets his fingers linger a moment too long as he takes his glass.

COLE

Do you do table-side flambé or... is that a special request?

The young waiter flushes, flustered and flattered, and retreats. Peta watches them with dry amusement.

PETA

You two are incorrigible.

BINKIE

Lack of discretion is the only vice we have left, darling.

TALLULAH

Speak for yourselves. I've got a list of vices longer than my bar tab — and (flirting with a passing YOUNG LADY) they're both getting longer by the second.

NOËL

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

PETA

Remember, dearest: charming pays the bills, and scandal the house in Antibes.

TALLULAH

Antibes? Didn't some damn fool try to race that goddam fancy train? Some guy in a Bentley?

COLE

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

TALLULAH

Hmph. Should've let me drive.

BINKIE

Wait — is this the damn fool who tried to race the Blue Train to the Riviera?

COLE

That's the fella. They say if you reach the station in Antibes before the whistle, 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.

NOËL

Peacocking, purposeless nonsense.

PETA

So is baccarat. I still play

COLE

You gamble, Mrs. Fisher?

PETA

I do, Mr. Porter. Racing, roulette, dogs, cars, you name it. I like odds. I like beating them.

A beat. Binkie stares at her. The wheels turn behind his eyes.

BINKIE

How fast is the Rolls?

PETA

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

He sits back, delighted, eyes twinkling.

COLE

(grinning over his glass)
Oh no. He's got the look. That look means there's mischief afoot, and we'll all end up in the South of France under false pretences.

NOËL

I certainly hope so. I adore false pretences. They're so much more intriguing than real ones. (to Peta, deadpan) If you do race the train, darling, wear something sheer. Then you'll be in the morning papers either way. And for goodness sake, don't crash the wretched motor. You'd look simply ghastly smeared over the Provençal countryside like some grisly tapenade.

PETA

Charming, as ever, Noël.

BINKIE

(to Peta, quietly)
Let's talk later. I think I have something utterly mad and delicious to propose.

PETA

You usually do.

The band strikes up a jazzy version of "Anything Goes." Cole rolls his eyes.

The camera lingers on Peta – champagne in hand, eyes alight.
A woman made for motion. For risk. For her own story.

CUT TO:

INT. BINKIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

The fire has burned low. London is hushed. A jazz record spins down to its last soft crackle.

Peta lounges in Binkie's sitting room, barefoot, gown slightly askew, cigarette in hand. She looks like a portrait no one had the nerve to paint.

Binkie, disheveled but dapper, perches on the windowsill, a drink in one hand, the other tracing condensation on the glass.

BINKIE

You do realise, of course, that it's entirely your fault?

PETA

What is?

BINKIE

That now I have to convince you to race a train.

PETA

I thought I was being wonderfully subtle.

BINKIE

Darling, you're an open book. At least you are to me.

A pause and a smile. She smokes in silence. Then –

BINKIE (CONT'D)

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

She doesn't laugh. Doesn't flinch.

PETA

I'd drive. All of it. Every mile between here and the Riviera.

BINKIE

Naturally.

PETA

But you know what my mechanical skills are like, Binkie darling. I'd faint if the engine so much as hiccupped.

(MORE)

PETA (CONT'D)

And I haven't the faintest idea what a carburettor looks like. Or where to find it. Or what it does. Actually, Binkie - what is a carburettor?

BINKIE

How would I know? I don't speak a word of Italian.

PETA

I'd need someone. To manage all those pistons and whatnot.

BINKIE

What about your new man?

PETA

Ratou? He's quiet. Capable. Oddly calm. Which I like. I'm not sure what else he is.

BINKIE

(hesitantly)

I've seen him about. Certain places. Certain parties. Never speaks unless spoken to. Never stays long.

She glances at him, curious.

PETA

Do you trust him?

BINKIE

I trust that he minds his own business. And in this life, my dear, that is rarer than a sober critic.

She nods slowly. Then:

PETA

Kenneth will loathe the very idea of it.

BINKIE

He's welcome to loathe it from the comfort of a first-class compartment.

A pause. Then Peta rises, smoothing her dress.

PETA

I'm sorry, Binkie darling. It's too big a dream for me.

BINKIE

Sleep on it, my angel. Shall I see
about a taxi? It's terribly late.

PETA

It's terribly early.

She kisses him gently on the top of his head and takes her
leave.

Binkie watches her with real affection – and with a sense
that his proposition may just need time to sink in.

CUT TO:

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's dressed in last night's gown, coat draped over her
shoulders, gloves in one hand. Her hair is slightly mussed.
She looks tired, but lit from within – like a woman who's
wondering whether to change her life.

No music. Just breath and footsteps.

As she passes a gentlemen's club, a group of men spills out –
three or four in black shirts and jodhpurs, laughing loudly,
cheeks flushed with drink and triumph.

BUF badges. British Union of Fascists.

Their energy is charged – euphoric, dangerous. Peta slows her
pace, but doesn't cross the street. She walks directly past
them.

FASCIST #1

Bloody triumph, I'd say. Finally a
leader with a bit of backbone.
Moseley will clean out the gutters,
mark my words – bloody gutters
running over with filthy vermin.

FASCIST #2

Pimlico's crawling with them, old
boy. Shops, tailors, pawnbrokers –
Every one a Cohen or a Goldstein.

Laughter. A bottle clinks against the kerb. Peta walks faster
now, chin lifted. Her eyes burn, but her expression stays
fixed.

One of the men calls after her, not quite hostile – yet.

FASCIST #3
 Lovely night for a walk,
 sweetheart. You off back to Park
 Lane or Palestine?

More laughter. She doesn't flinch. Just keeps walking.

CUT TO:

REVERSE ANGLE: A FIGURE IN THE SHADOWS – WATCHING.

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

CUT TO:

She doesn't see him. He doesn't follow immediately – just stands. Watching. Waiting.

His expression gives away nothing: is he following her or protecting her?

Peta turns the corner and disappears. Ratou melts back into the morning mist.

CUT TO:

INT. FASHION SHOWROOM – DAY

A group of smartly dressed Society LADIES of various ages are watching a fashion show in a Mayfair boutique. An elegant MANNEQUIN is modelling a ridiculously small, sequinned handbag. The ladies look on admiringly. Peta and Binkie look skeptical and thoroughly unimpressed.

A large, over-made-up lady – the proprietress of the establishment – MME. LOUISE – is compering the show.

MME. LOUISE
 (in a very unexpected
 Edinburgh accent)
 Thank you, Sybil. Now, if there's
 one thing I learned from my many
 years in Paris...

Peta rolls her eyes and is glared at by Binkie.

MME. LOUISE (CONT'D)
 ... it's that one can never have
 too many novelty muffs. Brenda?

The lovely but ungainly BRENDA enters and begins to model a fur muff shaped like a white tiger. Peta and Binkie are trying – in vain – to suppress their mirth.

MME. LOUISE (CONT'D)
 Brenda dear, don't slouch. You're
 ruining the line of your muff.

That's it, and Peta and Binkie dash for the exit, giggling
 like ninnies, enduring glowers of disapproval as they go.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOND STREET - DAY

Peta and Binkie walk arm-in-arm through the sunshine.

PETA
 Binkie, that was ghastly!

BINKIE
 What can you mean? Mme. Louise is
 the best turn in the West End. If
 it were up to me, she'd have eight
 shows a week at the Hippodrome.

Peta laughs.

PETA
 Is this what the rest of my life is
 going to be? Fashion shows and tea
 parties and oohing and aahing over
 silly handbags?

BINKIE
 That rather depends.

PETA
 On what?

Binkie gives her a look as if to say: you know what.

PETA (CONT'D)
 Oh, your harebrained scheme. I
 simply couldn't, Binkie. For one
 thing, I'd have to tell Kenneth.

BINKIE
 You're stronger than you think, you
 know.

PETA
 I don't know that I am. Really.

BINKIE
 Hmm, I wonder. Lunch?

PETA
 Lunch.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIC MAYFAIR RESTAURANT - DAY

An upscale French restaurant peopled with well-dressed ladies and gentlemen. The soft air of elegance and refinement.

Peta and Binkie are seated at the best table, close to a large picture window. An open bottle of champagne sits in an ice bucket, and a FRENCH WAITER clears their plates.

PETA

If I did do it...

BINKIE

Yes?

PETA

Would you come too?

BINKIE

In the car? With you driving? How much champagne have you drunk?

PETA

No, I mean on the train, you oaf. You know, moral support and all that.

BINKIE

Darling, of course.

Peta looks out of the window at all the people moving past. Just ambling through life. Shopping and gossiping. Empty. Dead.

PETA

Do you think Kenneth will be terribly cross?

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

A pristine spring morning in London. Sunlight streams through leaded windows. The silver toast rack gleams. The Times is folded, untouched. Tension hums beneath the quiet clink of teacups.

Kenneth stands stiffly by the fireplace, still in his dressing gown but already bristling with indignation.

Peta, the very picture of calm defiance, but no less elegant for it, pours herself tea.

At the table between them sits Pamela - clever eyes, tidy plaits, trying not to spill marmalade on Richard III.

KENNETH

It's absurd. Reckless. You're not some petrol-drunk American socialite.

PETA

No, I'm a tediously respectable English wife who's bored beyond belief, and who needs the wind in her hair before she strangles someone with a silk scarf.

KENNETH

You're a mother, Peta.

PETA

Which is not, contrary to popular opinion, a terminal condition.

Pamela coughs lightly into her napkin, trying not to laugh.

KENNETH

Do you have any idea how this will look?

PETA

Yes. Magnificent.

PAMELA

It would be rather splendid, Papa. You must admit.

KENNETH

I must do no such thing. Men - professional motorists, mind you - have tried this ridiculous stunt and barely pulled it off. And you're suggesting your mother - your mother! - race a train?

PAMELA

(unintentionally making a joke)

She's rather good at being fast.

Peta cocks an eyebrow.

PETA

Thank you, Pamela darling. (To Kenneth.) I won a cup at Brooklands last year, remember? Silver. Engraved. Hideous. You hated it too.

KENNETH

I hated the risk, not the result. You drive like you're being chased by the Devil himself.

Peta sits beside Pamela, calmly buttering a piece of toast.

PETA

I drive like I want to get
somewhere.

Kenneth runs a hand through his hair, struggling for
composure.

KENNETH

Peta, please. Don't do this.

Pamela watches her mother closely, her voice soft but steady.

PAMELA

Are you really going to race the
Blue Train, Mummy?

Peta looks at her daughter. The moment softens.

PETA

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

Pamela grins, almost proud – then quickly composes herself.

KENNETH

A spanner-wielding...? You can't
mean...?

PETA

Of course! It makes perfect sense.
I'm sure he's a perfect whizz with
a snapped gusset.

KENNETH

It's "gasket"! And you can't snap
it – you can only... Oh, this is
ridiculous!

PETA

Besides, you don't want me
gallivanting across Europe on my
own, do you darling?

KENNETH

I don't want you gallivanting
anywhere! The very idea is absurd.
Have you completely lost your mind?
It's dangerous, reckless, foolhardy
and... insane. Naturally, you'll
drag us into the papers to boot.

PETA

Let the papers write what they
like. They will anyway.

(MORE)

PETA (CONT'D)

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

Pamela looks between them. Her voice is careful.

PAMELA

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

Kenneth stares at them both – wife and daughter. Two women, two generations; drawn to something beyond his reach.

He sets his cup down – not thrown, not slammed – just final.

KENNETH

Then I won't stop you. But I won't help you either.

He turns to go.

PETA

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

A beat. Kenneth pauses at the door. His mouth twitches – not a smile exactly, but close enough. A kind of truce. He leaves without another word. Pamela lets out the breath she's been holding.

CUT TO:

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.

EXT. FISHER RESIDENCE – DAY

Ratou, coat off, methodically polishes the Rolls-Royce. He checks the tyres, replaces spark plugs, aligns a map across the bonnet. His movements are economical, expert.

INT. FISHER RESIDENCE - DAY

Maisie 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. THOMAS COOK OFFICE - DAY

Peta slides a cheque across a counter. A ferry ticket is stamped, ink sharp against the paper: DOVER to CALAIS - ONE VEHICLE.

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.

CUT TO:

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

How long is the race supposed to take, exactly?

RATOU

(deadpan)

Twenty-four hours, miss.

CUT TO:

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 reporters and... difficult questions.

KENNETH

She's doing this for attention.

BINKIE

Who, Wallis?

KENNETH

(angrily)
Binkie!

BINKIE

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

That lands - quietly. Kenneth doesn't respond.

A passing STEWARD hands Binkie a note with a cheeky wink. He reads it, smiles faintly.

BINKIE (CONT'D)

David and Wallis have requested private disembarkation at Calais. They don't want any "fuss", apparently. That's a turn-up for the books.

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

EXT. CROSS-CHANNEL FERRY - DAY

The Rolls sits secured among lesser vehicles. Peta stands beside it, arms folded, scarf tucked neatly at her collar.

Ratou leans against the bonnet smoking, watching the waves through an open hatch.

They don't speak.

CUT TO:

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.

A gathering crowd has formed - travellers, locals, press. Word is out: la femme et le train. Cameras flash. French and English chatter mingle in the air.

At the edge of the platform, a small security detachment appears as if from nowhere - plainclothes detectives, a uniformed valet and a ladies maid. A hush descends on the crowd

A dark car flying the Union flag glides up to the far end of the train, almost unnoticed.

A gloved hand emerges from the car. Then another. The DUKE OF WINDSOR and WALLIS, Duchess of Windsor, unmistakable in posture and profile, ushered discreetly into the rear carriage. No photographs. No greetings. Only Peta, across the square, watches with narrowed eyes. She says nothing. Just notes it.

Beside the Rolls, Ratou is checking tyre pressure again. Focused. Silent.

At the platform entrance, Kenneth, Pamela, and Binkie arrive with porters in tow. Kenneth carries the Daily Mail under one arm - folded now, but still seething.

A bewhiskered railway official in a frock coat and gloves steps forward, clutching a ledger.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL
Madame Fisher?

Peta turns. She steps forward and offers her hand.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I am here in my capacity official as representative of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits. We - that is to say, the directors of the line and myself - understand this race will be conducted... in earnest?

PETA

It will.

He gestures toward the ledger. She signs with a flourish.

Photographers' flashbulbs flash.

Behind Peta, Binkie and Pamela watch - Pamela bouncing on her heels with nervous pride.

BINKIE

Rather poetic, don't you think?

KENNETH

What is?

BINKIE

The Rolls is blue. The train is blue. They're practically cousins. Except one of them is being driven by a very fast lady.

PAMELA

(again, being unintentionally funny)
And the other's driven by hot air, isn't it, Papa?

The station bell rings. A whistle blows. The Blue Train's CONDUCTOR checks his pocket watch.

CAMERA SWEEPS ACROSS THE SCENE: ONLOOKERS GATHERING, PORTERS RUSHING, REPORTERS SNAPPING PHOTOS OF PETA STANDING BY HER ROLLS.

She glances once toward Kenneth - who meets her gaze briefly, then turns to Pamela.

KENNETH

(to Pamela, quietly)
Let's go. We don't want to miss our departure.

But Pamela hesitates - then runs to Peta.

PAMELA

Mummy.

They embrace tightly.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Be careful.

PETA

Always. Now go — and keep everything crossed.

Pamela runs back to Binkie, who holds out a gloved hand like a stage escort.

BINKIE

Come along, darling. (To the press.) Let the record show we left the starting line beautifully attired.

Peta looks up. Kenneth stands alone, back straight, unreadable. She walks to him. Quietly.

PETA

You think I'm making a fool of myself.

KENNETH

I think... you're choosing spectacle over sense.

A pause.

PETA

Maybe. But for once, it's my spectacle.

She reaches to adjust his lapel slightly — a familiar, tender gesture.

PETA (CONT'D)

I'm not doing this to shame you, Kenneth.

KENNETH

No. But it will.

And then, unexpectedly — he softens.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Be careful, Peta. I want you to win. But not more than I want you to come back.

Peta nods once. No smile — just understanding.

He kisses her on the cheek, brusque, old-fashioned — and steps back.

Ratou reappears at Peta's side and opens the driver's door. The railway official hoves into view.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

Madame. The train, he departs in five minutes. The rules are simple: You must arrive at the station in Antibes before the Blue Train, comprenez vous? No shortcuts involving aeroplanes, Zeppelins, or, ahem, witchcraft. (He chuckles.) My little joke.

PETA

Oh-ho, très drôle, monsieur. (Quietly to Binkie, rolling her eyes.) God, the French.

BINKIE

Absolument.

Cameras click.

She climbs in. The Rolls purrs to life. Heads turn.

The train whistles again – louder this time. Steam blasts. The platform clock strikes the hour.

Peta looks straight ahead, jaw set.

Ratou slides into the passenger seat and nods once.

Kenneth, Pamela and Binkie watch nervously from the train as it slowly builds up steam and begins to move.

The Rolls swoops once around the station forecourt. The race begins.

A crowd parts and cheers as the car pulls away from the station, gliding through the sunlit streets of Calais.

CAMERA SWEEPS UP
INTO AERIAL
VIEW:

The blue car slices through the French countryside, sun flashing off the bonnet. Roads unspool beneath it like ribbon. Golden fields. Narrow lanes flanked by poplars.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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. They're expecting confirmation.

The railway official takes the phone, clearing his throat.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

(pompously)

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! Pah.

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.

CUT TO:

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? The engine
 is running?
 (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?

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.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

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

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN — DAY

Inside: absolute splendour. Mahogany panelling, velvet armchairs, etched glass.

Kenneth sits stiffly beside a window, gazing outward, unreadable.

Binkie is already reclining in an overstuffed chair, ordering champagne with a flourish. Yet another handsome STEWARD is on hand to pour the champagne and be pored over by Binkie.

Pamela, knees tucked beneath her, peers through the window with barely concealed excitement. Her eyes flick from the passing scenery to the stack of French plays in her lap.

A faint smile crosses her face.

The carriage is warm with sunlight. French countryside blurs past the windows. Crisp white linen, soft voices, clinking silver.

Pamela lounges beside the window, sketchbook in her lap, pencil drifting lazily. Across from her, Kenneth is buried in The Times, brow furrowed at a long editorial.

Pamela picks up one of her plays and starts to read.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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 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.

She raises an eyebrow.

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.

CUT TO:

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 a striking Englishwoman, early 30s – aristocratic, confident, dressed to perfection in dove grey and pearls. LADY EVELYN. The room reacts subtly: a nod here, a flick of attention there. She brings weather with her.

Behind her, Langley, a smooth-faced companion with that particular Oxbridge blandness: all brilliantined hair and entitlement. He removes her coat and then his own. As he does, Pamela notices BUF lapel pins on their lapels – small flashes of silver lightning.

She blinks. Lowers her pencil. Stares. The new arrivals take their seats in a prominent position.

MR. LANGLEY

I say, so you actually met him,
Lady Evelyn?

LADY EVELYN

We dined with him in Munich.
Shorter than you'd think.
Immaculate posture though. Very
clean hands. And such discipline.
Our lot could learn a thing or two
from a man like that. Oh, and when
he speaks... it's like music. Like
Wagner. Wunderbar!

Her companion murmurs assent. Pamela looks up. Her eyes shift to Binkie.

He is still holding his champagne mid-air, eyes fixed not on her but on the woman's reflection in the window.

Then: he slowly lowers the glass, untouched.

Pamela and Binkie exchange a look. Nothing is said. But they both know.

Kenneth turns a page. Clears his throat. Says nothing.

The woman laughs at something Langley has said. Softly. Beautifully. Awfully.

Pamela closes her play. Carefully. Quietly.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Sunlight dapples the carpet. The clink of tea cups. Jazz murmurs in the background. The salon carriage 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 scandal or champagne.

At the far end, Lady Evelyn and her consort, Langley, are holding court - voices low but pointed. Lady Evelyn tosses her hair with every rhetorical flourish. Langley glances occasionally at the other guests, appraising.

Nearer the entrance, a dignified older couple approaches: BARON ÉMILE and BARONESS RACHEL. Old-world elegance in linen and pearls. As they scan the room, Lady Evelyn notices them and smiles – just enough.

LADY EVELYN
(to Langley)
Oh look – the Baron and Baroness.
The last Jews of Èze. I do hope
they packed light.

Langley chuckles behind his glass. The Baron and Baroness pause, clock the exchange.

Without a word, they pivot toward Pamela and Kenneth's table.

BARONESS RACHEL
Pardon – might we join you? The
seats near the fascists seem...
poorly ventilated.

Kenneth blinks, then rises automatically.

KENNETH
Please do.

They sit. Gloves removed. Tea poured.

BARON ÉMILE
We are Émile and Rachel Landau.

PAMELA
How do you do, Baron. Baroness. I'm
Pamela Fisher and this is my
father, Kenneth Fisher.

BARON ÉMILE
Ah. Then you are the family of the
famous motorist?

BARONESS RACHEL
She's the talk of the train.
Although I suspect she's outrunning
more than a locomotive.

Pamela glows with pride. Kenneth nods faintly.

They settle in. The Baroness glances once more toward Lady Evelyn's table.

A beat.

BARONESS RACHEL (CONT'D)
Some people speak loudly and say
nothing. Your wife, I think, speaks
best by doing.

Kenneth looks uncomfortable.

KENNETH

So what brings you on board, Baron?

BARON ÉMILE

We are closing our house in Èze.
Then abroad from Marseilles. New
York.

BARONESS RACHEL

So many beautiful memories. Our
happy home.

KENNETH

I see. You must have contacts in
America?

BARON ÉMILE

We have money, monsieur. We're
lucky. Well, luckier than most.

Pamela is quiet now – taking it all in.

BARONESS RACHEL

We are. We are. (beat) I wonder if
everyone will be so lucky? I doubt
it. (To Pamela.) I think, young
lady, that soon we will all need to
be strong, yes? Strong, like your
maman. Tell her, when you see her,
Mlle. Fisher – tell her that the
Baroness Landau is cheering for
her.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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 was this?

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.

CUT TO:

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 on.

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

CUT TO:

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.

Inside, quiet.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

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

At a corner table, a quiet card game:

Binkie - droll and precise.

Pamela - trying to concentrate.

Baroness Rachel - warm, regal.

Baron Émile - dry, watchful.

Across the carriage, Lady Evelyn lounges with a drink, not playing, just watching - too close not to be felt.

She smiles at them the way a cat watches a birdcage.

BINKIE

(dealing)

Oh dear, this hand. Hearts like the
Empire - scattered and easily
broken.

BARON ÉMILE

(deadpan)

How poetic.

Pamela frowns at her hand. The Baroness notes it.

BARONESS RACHEL

I always lose at cards when I'm
distracted.

PAMELA

It's not the cards. I keep
thinking... the further south we
go, the quieter everything feels.
Like something's holding its
breath.

Lady Evelyn raises her voice just slightly:

LADY EVELYN

How poetic indeed. I do love an overactive imagination.

The Baroness doesn't turn.

BARONESS RACHEL

Imagination is a comfort. Until it becomes a warning.

Binkie plays his card with a soft thwack.

BINKIE

I'll take warnings over silence any day. At least they suggest someone is still paying attention.

Lady Evelyn rises and stalks from the saloon.

The train rattles gently.

PAMELA

What did she mean? The Baroness.

BINKIE

That the view from the train is lovely, but the world outside the window is starting to burn.

Pamela pauses.

PAMELA

And Lady Evelyn?

BINKIE

She sees the fire too. She's just hoping it burns down someone else's house.

CUT TO:

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.

A long silence.

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 Binkie 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

Velvet drapes closed. Soft jazz playing. The carriage glows with lamplight and decadent fatigue. Guests in evening dress sip cocktails and murmur, like a salon that forgot to go to bed. Binkie, Kenneth, and Pamela are seated together - Kenneth in white tie, still holding himself like a man braced for impact.

Pamela wears her mother's boldness more comfortably now. Binkie, always the observer, smokes and scans the room.

At the far end, a stir – the Duke and Duchess of Windsor enter. The Duke – slim, dry, faintly amused by everything – wears his title like a tailored inconvenience.

Wallis, Duchess of Windsor – sharp, impeccably brittle, smile like a blade. The entire carriage tilts slightly in their direction.

They sweep into the room like they own the train – or regret not doing so.

WHISPERS rip through the salon.

GUEST #1

(quietly)

Is she Your Royal Highness or not?

GUEST #2

No one's quite sure yet. Not even her.

Lady Evelyn – in full fascist glamour – stands and simpers.

LADY EVELYN

(To Wallis, curtseying)

Ma'am. Such a thrill. May I present my friend, Mr. Langley, newly returned from Leipzig.

Langley, the young fascist, ever the specimen of polished menace, bows slightly, revealing his BUF lapel pin with casual confidence.

Wallis clocks it. Smiles, tight and approving.

WALLIS

I do admire conviction in a young man. Especially when it's so stylishly presented.

The Duke exhales a tired chuckle. Everyone else laughs like sycophants.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

We were just saying, weren't we, Wallis – this continent's had quite enough dithering. Strong voices. Strong leaders. That's what's required.

WALLIS

A little steel in the spine does wonders for a country. Don't you agree, David?

Binkie's smile freezes. Pamela sets down her drink with a soft but definitive clink.

WALLIS (CONT'D)

(to the room)

Speaking of steely spines, where is the husband of the fearless lady motorist? We simply must meet him.

Heads turn. All eyes go to Kenneth.

He walks toward the Royal couple. Binkie and Pamela tense.

The Duke extends a hand, with the air of someone greeting a tradesman.

KENNETH

(bowing stiffly)

Your Royal Highness...es.

They shake hands. Wallis smiles cattily.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

You poor chap. Your wife seems to have caused quite a stir. I must say I can't think of anything more tiresome than clanking down all those dreadful French roads. What on earth possessed her?

WALLIS

I suppose it's better than taking up knitting or... communism. But it strikes me as a little reckless.

Binkie flicks a glance toward Pamela, who says nothing – but sees everything.

KENNETH

She's not reckless, ma'am. She's determined. Capable. She's spent most of her life being told what she can't do – by people who wouldn't dare attempt half as much themselves.

WALLIS

Is she alone?

KENNETH

No, ma'am. Our chauffeur is with her, but purely as a mechanic. My wife is driving the route herself.

WALLIS

Sounds crazy, if you ask me.

DUKE OF WINDSOR

Crazy? It's damn well unhinged!

KENNETH

Maybe so. But I have a feeling, sir
 – and I don't think I'm alone in
 this – that there will come a time,
 not too far from now, when all of
 us will be asked to do
 extraordinary things. Things we
 never imagined.

He lets that hang for a moment. The room stills, just slightly.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

And as far as I'm concerned... what
 my wife is doing isn't folly, it's
 the future. A future where all of
 us have to act with courage and
 conviction, whatever our status in
 life. (Glaring at Lady Evelyn and
 Langley.) Or our background.

He straightens his jacket. Looks Wallis in the eye.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

And I, for one, couldn't be more
 proud of her. (bowing again) Sir.
 Ma'am.

The Duke of Windsor lifts a brow, finishes his drink.

Wallis nods faintly, but says nothing.

BINKIE

(under his breath)
 He's magnificent.

PAMELA

Isn't he?

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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"

(The Englishwoman who defies the Blue Train)

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.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A distant whine.

Then suddenly - VVVVRRRRRRMMMMMMMM!

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.

CUT TO:

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DAY

Peta smirks ever so slightly.

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

CUT 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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'm beginning to hope we crash.

CUT TO:

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, but they seem to make Langley very happy indeed.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - DUSK

PETA

No. No, no, no...

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

CUT TO:

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, madame?

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.

CUT TO:

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. 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.

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

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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, both quietly sipping cocktails.

She toys with her glass, half-listening.

At a nearby table, playing cards: Lady Evelyn and Langley.

LADY EVELYN

The trouble is, everyone thinks
things are so complicated.

(MORE)

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)

But really, it's very simple. The strong take charge. The weak adapt.

Langley nods slavishly. Pamela shifts, uneasy. Kenneth reads. Binkie flicks an eye toward the conversation but stays quiet.

LADY EVELYN (CONT'D)

This constant dithering – moral grey areas, endless conscience: all that – it slows progress. You want to make an omelette, you have to break some eggs – that's all there is to it.

Pamela closes her eyes. Something stirs in her. A memory. A line. She stands – almost before she knows why.

PAMELA

You speak with such certainty, Lady Evelyn.

LADY EVELYN

I am certain, Miss Fisher.

PAMELA

I'm very pleased for you. I don't think I've ever been certain of anything.

LADY EVELYN

(sarcastically)

What thrilling performances we can look forward to from your theatrical career.

PAMELA

(pausing before speaking)

Although... I do know this. Certainty like yours always demands someone else's silence. Or their suffering.

Lady Evelyn blinks. Smiles, tight.

LADY EVELYN

You've been reading too many plays, Miss Fisher.

PAMELA

Maybe, but at RADA they teach us that words are never just words. They have a rhythm and a ripple all their own. They mean something. If you speak them often enough – and with enough conviction – people believe them.

A beat. The carriage seems to hush.

Lady Evelyn looks at Langley and rolls her eyes, dismissively.

Pamela - nervous but resolved, continues.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

"The love of wicked men converts to fear;/That fear to hate, and hate turns one or both/To worthy danger and deserved death.." Shakespeare. The Merchant of Venice.

Lady Evelyn sneers.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

You talk about breaking eggs to sound practical, Lady Evelyn. Ordinary. Commonplace. But I doubt you've ever set foot in a kitchen in your life, much less cooked in one. And here you are: sweeping people away in a trite little phrase.

(calmly)

I don't know much about politics, but I do know that evil words lead to evil deeds, just like eggs lead to omelettes. And in both cases, something ends up getting broken.

Langley exhales a faint, mocking laugh. Lady Evelyn says nothing. Pamela sits back down. Calm. Quiet. Certain - in the way only someone who's just crossed a line can be. Binkie raises his glass.

Kenneth beams with pride.

CUT TO:

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)
 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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. 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.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY CENTRE - NIGHT

Lyon: 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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. 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.

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.

CUT TO:

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
Pff. 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.

CUT TO: A CLOCK
TICKING.

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.

CUT TO:

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?

BINKIE

Trains make me think too much. Or not enough.

A pause.

BARON ÉMILE

You know, my wife has many friends... like you. Artists. Writers. Musical men. Clever fellows, all of them. And 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

Ah. 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. Just vanished. Gone into thin air. This lovely boy who played Debussy like he was remembering a beautiful dream. And now his flat is empty. No trace of him anywhere. His... "friend" can find out nothing.

Binkie is silent.

BARON ÉMILE (CONT'D)

If the Nazis come to England – and by God they will try – do not think your charm or your pedigree will spare you, M. Beaumont.

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 lot about art and culture, fine paintings, beautiful music. But they have learned nothing of human nature, of human worth. They are thugs; 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 of yourself, 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.

CUT TO:

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.

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.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

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

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAWN

PETA

Out.

RATOU

What?

PETA

I said out!

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

CUT TO:

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, 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

(with a heavy sigh)
Worse than you can possibly imagine.

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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 all 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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 village
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
there 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

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

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.
(MORE)

PETA (CONT'D)

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 don't do it.

A pause.

RATOU (CONT'D)

But sometimes... one person does. And then everyone else remembers that they can too.

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

CUT TO:

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, 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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The conductor enters, explaining hurriedly:

CONDUCTOR

Ladies and gentlemen. A farmer's lorry has spilled bales of hay on the tracks just ahead. We must wait for clearance. Thirty minutes, no more. Thirty minutes only.

Grumbling rises.

Lady Evelyn stands abruptly.

LADY EVELYN

Unbelievable. That wretched woman's campaign of chaos now includes destroying French agriculture.

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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?

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. ANTIBES TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY

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

M. LABICHE
(in French)
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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

The Rolls swerves into a narrow market road. Stalls. Crates. Goats. Peta drives through it all.

RATOU
Keep going!

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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!

CUT TO:

EXT. ANTIBES STATION - DAY

The Rolls skids into view.

Crowds part. Bunting flaps. The square is full.

Peta pulls up sharp. A moment of confusion.

She looks up - sees her family and others already on the
platform.

Kenneth. Pamela. Binkie. The Landaus.

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 missed it.

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 are in the forecourt – a little apart from the well-wishers.

Lady Evelyn – wearing another immaculately tailored ensemble – smokes a cigarette in an elegant holder. Langley checks his watch smugly.

LADY EVELYN

Well, I suppose that's settled then. It would appear you can't outrun destiny – or, indeed, the future.

MR. LANGLEY

Rather an elegant denouement, isn't it? A lady, of sorts, a Rolls, the South of France... and a well-deserved lesson in knowing your place.

They chuckle. A man appears appears at Langley's shoulder. It is the man with the handlebar moustache from the Citroën.

MOUSTACHIOED MAN

Monsieur Langley?

Langley turns.

MR. LANGLEY

Yes? Who's asking?

MOUSTACHIOED MAN

(holding up an official badge)

Vernier. Direction Générale des Douanes.

(MORE)

MOUSTACHIOED MAN (CONT'D)

We believe you are in possession of undeclared foreign currency to the value of one hundred thousand francs. We have some questions we would like to ask you.

Langley sputters. Lady Evelyn steps in, imperious.

LADY EVELYN

You will do no such thing. This is my secretary, under my protection. And my father is a very powerful English peer.

The SCARRED MAN from the Citroën joins the conversation.

SCARRED MAN

(holding up his ID card)

Ah yes, your ladyship. My name is Jepsen, ma'am. Scotland Yard. My French colleague here and I have been in contact with your father, Lord Wrexham, by telephone. (consulting his notepad) Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Seems his lordship's views regarding your, ahem, political affiliations are... well, not suitable for mixed company, I'm afraid. And if - as you say - this gentleman is under your protection, then I dare say we have some questions for you as well. This way, your ladyship.

Lady Evelyn and Langley are escorted to a waiting police van.

The band strikes up a spirited rendition of Cole Porter's "It's De-Lovely".

Pamela and Binkie have been watching this scene with great satisfaction. They stand side by side.

PAMELA

It's delightful.

BINKIE

My dear, it's positively delicious.

PAMELA/BINKIE

(in unison)

It's de-lovely!

They both burst out laughing.

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

That's the first time you've said my name. (smiling, but choking back tears) 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.

FADE OUT:

CUT TO:

EXT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - DAY

On the hotel's Terrace Bar, Binkie is talking flirtatiously - but discreetly - to a good-looking and elegantly dressed CIVIL SERVANT. They shake hands and Binkie comes over to the table where the Fishers are seated.

BINKIE

(to Peta)

I've just been chatting to that rather dashing young man from the French Ministry of Transport. They're awfully proud of you, you know, the frogs.

PETA

They are?

BINKIE

Oh indeed. Courage in the face of adversity. Feisty, madcap socialite. And, of course, the clothes. Everyone's simply mad for your "look". Next season, Paris will nothing but thigh-length boots and goggles.

PETA

The bloody outfits. Exactly what I hoped for.

BINKIE

(ignoring her sarcasm)
Yes, but they are banning you from driving in France. For life.

KENNETH

They're what!?

BINKIE

Racing on the roads. Technically illegal, darling. Unapologetically stylish, but illegal. Much like my good self.

PETA

(seeing the funny side)
Oh, Binkie.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

The fire is burning white-hot. Ratou's steely expression is lit by the crackling flames.

CUT TO:

EXT. HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC - DAY

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.

CUT TO:

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, you know.

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. 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 was just too proud to 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.

CUT TO:

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?

BINKIE

(visibly shocked)

Dear God.

WE LINGER on their faces. They are stunned into silence.

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.

CUT TO:

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, madame.
None of you.

PETA
No. We're not here for -

RIVKA
We don't do tours. Or sentiment.

PAMELA
(quietly)
May we help?

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. The group blinks.

CUT TO:

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. Not out of pity - but with sudden, awful, wrenching understanding.

Slowly, but with purpose, she reaches up to her lapel and unpins the diamond clip.

She approaches Rivka, hunched over a manifest.

BARONESS RACHEL
You will know who needs this.

She places the clip in Rivka's hand. Rivka doesn't look up, but closes her hand gently around the jewel.

RIVKA
(softly)
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 French, 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.

CUT TO:

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 Hebrew,
SUBTITLED)
This will get you across. But only
once, you understand? And for God's
sake, be careful.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

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

Nor did I.

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.

CUT TO:

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. 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.

No words. Just the faintest bow. A look that says thank you - and goodbye. Peta has tears in her eyes. He throws his bag over his shoulder and takes a last, long look at Peta; at the hotel, at civilisation.

Then - with a faint smile - he turns and simply walks away. Peta's expression is clear: she knows she will never see him again.

CUT TO:

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.

CUT TO:

INT. BLUE TRAIN - DAY

The train hums beneath them; its rhythm steady and unhurried. Beyond the window, the sky is wide.

Peta sits across from Pamela. The glamour of the race has faded. Her hair is unpinned. Her eyes are tired. But something in her has changed: she is no longer performing for anyone.

They sit in silence for a beat, the only sound the soft clatter of the train.

Peta's gaze drifts out the window. Then she turns to her daughter.

PETA

The world we knew, darling - the world we thought we were going back to - it's gone. Maybe forever.

Pamela doesn't respond. She already knows.

PETA (CONT'D)

What's coming... it'll be harder than anything we've ever known. Harder than any race, any scandal. And it won't matter who you know, or what you're wearing.

She reaches across the table and takes Pamela's hand - gently, but with a grip that holds.

PETA (CONT'D)

We've seen it, haven't we? The soldiers. The uniforms. The bile. The hatred. It's growing. Festering. It's coming for all of us.

Pamela blinks - not tears, just clarity.

PETA (CONT'D)

We can't outrun it, darling. Any more than I could outrun this damned train.

She gives a soft laugh - not bitter, just true.

PETA (CONT'D)

There are moments coming, Pammy. Moments that will ask everything of you. And when they do - you'll have to decide.

Her voice is low now. Intimate.

PETA (CONT'D)

Will you just sit by and watch? History is coming for all of us, my darling girl. Promise me you won't meet it quietly. Those of us who've been told to be silent all these years: we can't be silent any more. We need to roar.

The whistle blows. The roar of the Blue Train grows louder and louder. Pamela and her mother exchange a look of shared purpose.

CUT TO:

EXT. 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.

BEAT.

Ratou disappeared into Europe without a trace.

Hugh "Binkie" Beaumont remained the West End's most successful impresario until the 1960s.

Pamela's daughter Deborah also became an actress.

She has appeared in several motion pictures...

BEAT.

...including this one.

WE SEE sepia photographs of the real Peta Fisher, culminating in a photo of her with her grandchildren.

WE SEE the real Deborah Carr smiling; standing with her husband David, next to the original Rolls-Royce Phantom II.

THE END.