

SCENE 7

Club's offices. ARDAN is poring over plans. PENROSE enters.

PENROSE: Oh, Ms. Ardan! *(sticking out her hand with force)* Just who I was looking for!

ARDAN: *(shaking PENROSE's hand, with excitement)* Ah, quelle surprise! La dame journaliste of the *Baltimore Star*, of course! Pleased to speak with you, officiellement.

PENROSE: *(slightly starstruck but hiding it well)* You're familiar with my work?

ARDAN: But of course! Monsieur Maston speaks of you highly... and often.

PENROSE: *(SHE smiles, pleased.)* I was wondering if I might have a word with you, concerning my next article.

ARDAN: *(archly)* Ever the reporter, no?

PENROSE: Your extraordinary proposition saved Captain Barbicane *and* Captain Nicholl. The whole country needs to know about you.

ARDAN: *(uncharacteristically humble)* It was your, how you say, eavesdropping on the Captains that saved them. I merely saw the opportunity... and jumped!

PENROSE: *(turning the conversation back onto ARDAN out of both humility and journalistic curiosity)* I imagine you jump at opportune moments often in your travels, don't you?

ARDAN: *(with an appraising chuckle, answering PENROSE's question)* Oui. It is my passion to find new places, new things... It is my purpose, ma raison d'être.

PENROSE: *(enthralled)* That's so inspiring.

ARDAN: *(casually but affectionately)* And you, mon amie? What is your purpose?

PENROSE: Well, this I suppose. Writing. Reaching the public and helping people understand what's going on in the world. It's what I love. *(somewhat self-consciously)* Maybe not as daring as you, but-

ARDAN: But nonsense!

PENROSE: *(in shock)* Oh!

ARDAN: *(pointedly)* Par-don, mademoiselle. But we are women who do what we like, yes?

PENROSE: *(appalled at any thought otherwise)* Yes!

ARDAN: You've had to push to report on le grand mission, yes? To seize the opportunity, to take a risk and write what you want, yes?

PENROSE: Yes-

ARDAN: (*triumphantly*) Then it is no different! My jumping is just sometimes more literal.

PENROSE: You mean-

ARDAN: If you do all that, then in my book you are an adventurer, a pioneer! Just like me. And you, ma chère, can print *that* in your article.

PENROSE: (*with an amused laugh*) I don't think my editor would like that!

(*Vamp.*)

ARDAN: Confound him! You are très populaire! Perhaps it is time he learns that *he* needs *you* more than *you* need *him*.

(*The scene shifts and ARDAN exits. A MESSENGER enters.*)

MESSENGER: (*handing PENROSE a slip of paper*) Telegram from Baltimore.

(*Spots on EDITOR and PENROSE, in vignette. The EDITOR recites his telegram as PENROSE reads.*)

WORD ON THE STREET (p. 251)

EDITOR: (*spoken*) LISTEN HERE SWEETHEART, YOU OWE ME A STORY.
SEND IT ALONG AND I'LL GIVE IT AN EDIT.

PENROSE: (*dictating her response confidently, remembering ARDAN's advice*)
YOU'LL PRINT IT AS WRITTEN, FRONT PAGE, OR I WALK.
BY THE WAY, IT'S "MISS PENROSE", AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT.

(*EDITOR and MESSENGER exit. NEWSBOY enters with newspapers.*)

NEWSBOY: Extra! Extra!

(*Various other members of the PRESS enter with papers and, along with PENROSE, recite the headlines. These and other headlines are projected across the stage in montage.*)

PENROSE: (*spoken*) "A DUEL DERAILED!"

PRESS 1: (*spoken*) "MOON TRIP TO BE TRIO!"