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!”