

Milena -

Scene

(2)

11.

THE APARTMENT

Daladier looking at the picture.

DALADIER

I'm sure he is.

Daladier returns the picture to Milena.

MILENA

He is gravely ill now.

DALADIER

Sorry to hear that.

Milena takes out of her briefcase another black and white photo and hands it to Daladier.

INSERT - THE SECOND PHOTOGRAPH

A very young man and a woman, both in their teens. The woman is visibly pregnant.

Milena's finger points out the people on the photograph.

MILENA'S VOICE

This is my grandfather's son - my father, this is my mother, and here -

Milena's finger points to the very pregnant belly of the woman in the picture:

MILENA'S VOICE (CONT'D)

That's me in my mom's belly.

DALADIER'S VOICE

I see.

MILENA'S VOICE

They are dead. My parents.

THE APARTMENT

Daladier studying the photograph.

MILENA

They died when I was a child. Six months old. My grandfather raised me. He's cared for me most of my life. But he's very old now.

Daladier sighs.

- Start

Avy Kaufman Cushing

DALADIER

(patiently)

Mademoiselle, I give regularly to charity. I am very generous to charities for orphans too young to look after themselves. So. At your age and the way you managed to disturb my privacy, I don't believe you qualify for my help.

MILENA

My parents died in a Nazi concentration camp.

DALADIER

I am sorry. But it doesn't make any difference, Mademoiselle. Besides, I was in a concentration camp myself.

MILENA

Yes, I know -

Daladier is surprised.

DALADIER

You know?

MILENA

Yes. In Buchenwald.

DALADIER

Yes. In Buchenwald.

MILENA

Auschwitz. My parents died in Auschwitz.

DALADIER

Are you Jewish?

MILENA

No. American. Catholic. But my family is from Czechoslovakia.

DALADIER

Czechoslovakia?

MILENA

My grandfather, when he forgets, still sometimes speaks to me in Czech.

DALADIER

Does he. So. What can I do for you?

MILENA

If you don't mind, monsieur, I want you to send my grandfather a letter.

Daladier is amused by this request.

DALADIER

You want me to send your grandfather a letter?

Milena opens her briefcase again and hands Daladier a neatly typed piece of paper.

MILENA

I've prepared a draft. For you to -
(breaks off)

You can add - change things, of course
- and then I want you want to -

Again she breaks off.

DALADIER

You want me to - what?

She gathers courage. Then:

MILENA

To sign it.

Daladier reads the letter.

MILENA (CONT'D)

It would mean a lot to him if he could
read your letter before he -
(stops, tries again)

It would make his exit from this world
a lot more peaceful.

Milena watches him closely.

Daladier stops reading and looks at her.

DALADIER

Apologize? Why should I apologize to
your grandfather?

MILENA

For what you did on September 29th
1938. In Munich.

Daladier suddenly thinks he knows what this visit of
the young woman is about. He seems irritated and
becomes deadly serious:

DALADIER

Mademoiselle, everything I have ever
wanted to say on that subject I have
said already. The rest I'll take with
me to my grave. Everything! Including
all I have forgotten.

MILENA

But you're aware that the day you and Mr. Chamberlain, signed that paper in Munich, the bloodiest war in history, the Second World War, began.

DALADIER

I hope you are not joking, mademoiselle. But if you are, it is in very bad taste.

Margaret opens the door from the kitchen, pokes her head into the room.

MARGARET

It's time for your walk.

Daladier nods, but first he wants to finish:

DALADIER

I am an old man, mademoiselle, I don't know how many more minutes I have left on this planet but I guess very few. So I do not intend to waste them chatting with somebody who is of absolutely no interest to me except, maybe -

(he almost smiles)

You're very pretty.

(Milena smiles, too)

If you want to join me on my walk, you're very welcome.

8

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET, AVIGNON - DAY

8

Bright sun. Milena walking beside Daladier who wears a shabby raincoat and hat. He hobbles along using his stick. Occasional passers-by take no notice of them. Here and there puddles, the aftermath of rain.

MILENA

My grandfather loved France. He never stopped talking about it -

They come to a bench and Daladier sits.

DALADIER

And you, mademoiselle? Do you love France, too?

She sits beside him.

MILENA

That depends on you.

DALADIER

On me?

MILENA

You see, my grandfather, all he thinks and talks about now is what happened to his own country. To Czechoslovakia. It tortures him. Literally tortures him. You can't imagine what a letter from you would mean to him. And to me.

Daladier, puzzled, looks sideways at her, then notices her earrings: two pearls in the shape of tears.

DALADIER

I like your earrings.

Milena takes off one and hands it to Daladier for closer inspection.

MILENA

They were my mother's. My father gave them to her when I was born.

DALADIER

Very nice. My wife had similar. They were her favorites.

Daladier gives the earring back to Milena. He rises and starts to walk back slowly the way they had come.

MILENA

I don't want to be a nuisance, monsieur, I apologize, but - I believe it's not asking too much - it's not like asking you to declare World War Three. Just a simple apology to one of those who suffered so much. Because of you.

DALADIER

Because of me?

MILENA

And Chamberlain. Yes.

A smile appears on Daladier's face. He pauses for a moment, gives Milena a long look. Then:

DALADIER

(teasing)

Did Chamberlain sign this letter of yours?

Milena is not sure she understands.

MILENA
Chamberlain?

DALADIER
Yes, Chamberlain.

MILENA
But he's dead!

DALADIER
(a smile)
Yes, I do know.

He continues to walk.

MILENA
But if I ever met Mr. Chamberlain, I -
I -

DALADIER
What?

MILENA
I'd ask him to sign this letter, too.

DALADIER
Mademoiselle, you may not have
noticed, but I am even ~~more~~ dead than
Mr. Chamberlain! In particular here,
in France. But, please, do not pity
me. I find it very comfortable being
dead.

They walk in silence. Then:

MILENA
Don't you have any friends?

DALADIER
Politicians do not have friends. Only
enemies.

MILENA
Family?
(he waves the question
away)
What is your astrological sign?

DALADIER
Please, I am not interested in such
nonsense.

MILENA
Do you believe in the afterlife?

DALADIER
Only when I run a temperature.

MILENA
 (pointing upwards)
 Do you think you will meet them up
 there again?

DALADIER
 Who?

MILENA
 Hitler? Mussolini?

DALADIER
 My God, I hope not.

MILENA
 Chamberlain?

DALADIER
 Specially not Chamberlain!

They have reached his apartment building.

MILENA
 Why? Now that we know the consequences
 of what you two concocted in Munich -

Daladier suddenly loses patience and turns on her:

DALADIER
 (angrily)
 What we concocted? We? We were never
 WE! It was always only me! Alone.
 Remember that. Me. Alone. And I was
 never more alone than on that day you
 mentioned. In September '38, when I
 was sitting in my office -

9 **INT. DALADIER'S OFFICE - PARIS 1938 - NIGHT** 9

A title reads:

PARIS - 1938

OLD DALADIER'S VOICE
 - agonizing. Waiting for Chamberlain's
 call!

Seated behind his desk, Daladier, in his early fifties
 and vigorous. The curtains are not drawn. A starry sky.

He sips coffee, smokes a cigarette and stares at the
 clock on his table.

The clock reads few minutes after 2.00.