

Eclipse 1914

FILM SCRIPT

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/ Don't hurt an ant /

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Based on the book

THE LAST MOTOR RACE OF THE EMPIRE

In July 1914, a car race took place in the Governorate of Livonia. It was the third race for the Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna Prize. At the same time, events in the world were developing more rapidly, and a telegram arrived at the final banquet of the race announcing martial law in the country: the First World War had begun.

Our knowledge of the race derives from the notes of the correspondent of the newspaper *Rigasche Zeitung*, who accompanied motorists and regularly sent reports to his paper. In addition, quite a few photos of this run have been preserved, the author of which is the renowned photographer and cameraman from Tartu, Johannes Pääsuke. The narrative of the development of events in the political arena is based on many documents and memoirs. Thus, we can say that the story that follows is more or less factual.

This story is not so much about specific characters and a motor race, but about a creeping disaster, about the ticking clock. The race lasted for seven days – discreet strokes show parallels from the Book of Revelations.

This is a story about how fragile our everyday life, seemingly unshakable and often bordering on dullness, may turn out to be. Russian and German noblemen, ladies in high society, chauffeurs, mechanics – no member of this big friendly family could have imagined that in just a week a whole era would come to an end.

Finally, this is a reflection on how easily disasters can happen – as a result of someone's stupidity, some misunderstanding, kind of confusion...

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|--|---|--|
|  <p>Mauritiyus Fabianovich Schilling (1872-1934), Director of the Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> |  <p>Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov (1860-1927), Minister of Foreign Affairs</p> |  <p>Ivan Konstantinovich Grigorovich (1853-1930) Naval Minister</p> |
|  <p>Nikolai Alekseyevich Maklakov (1871-1918), Minister of the Interior</p> |  <p>Vladimir Aleksandrovich Sukhomlinov (1848-1926), Minister of War</p> |  <p>Sergei Kontantinovich Dobrorolsky (1867-1930), Head of the Mobilization Department of the Main Directorate of the General Staff</p> |
|  <p>Alexander Vasilyevich Krivoshein (1857-1921), Chief Governor of Land Management and Agriculture</p> |  <p>Nikolai Nikolaevich Yanushkevich (1868-1918), the Chief of General Staff</p> |  <p>Friedrich von Pourtalès (1853-1928), German Ambassador to Russia</p> |



PROLOGUE

Thursday, July 10/23, 1914.

From 7/20 July to 10/23 July, the President of France, Raymond Poincaré visited Russia.

Krasnoye Selo

Morning. A review of forces in honour of the visit of French President Poincaré. The infantry pass to sound of the march “Sambre-et Meuse Regiment”

(<http://march.artcenter.ru/docs.php?march=11>).

The Emperor is on horseback at the foot of a hill, on top of which the imperial pavilion stands.

In front of the pavilion, Poincaré is sitting to the right of the Empress. Next to them there are Baroness Elizabeth Heiningen-Hune, lady-in-waiting to the Empress (everyone calls her Betty); members of the Royal Family; members of the government, such as Grigorovich, Krivoshein; Sazonov together with Schilling, their Director of the Office; Sukhomlinov; General Yanushkevich and General Dobrorolsky from the General Staff. Nearby, the Grand Dukes Nikolai Mikhailovich and Kirill Vladimirovich, as well as Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna are standing.

Sazonov to Yanushkevich: Nice marching. Our army are brave, no enemy will be able to scare such soldiers.

Yanushkevich: One thing is to walk to music, another to charge in attack.

Kirill: They sometimes attack to music, too.

Yanushkevich: They do, but not in your fleet.

K: Why not? I have a trumpeter on the ship.

Yanushkevich: Then of course. You’ve got everything under control when it comes to music.

Dobrorolsky: I could also give you a drum.

K: Oh yes, I was just wondering what we were missing. Of course – a drum.

They laugh.

The emperor dismounts and walks up the stairs. The orchestra carry on playing. The Emperor’s daughter Olga raises a glass of champagne, gesturing at the parade. Everybody joins her. Glasses are clinking, ‘Hurrah!’ can be heard from below.



Olga to Victoria: In the evening there will be a farewell dinner on board the *France*.

Victoria: I know, but Kirill and I are travelling to Livonia overnight tonight. Tomorrow my motor race will be starting, the third one already.

Olga: That’s great! Can I come with you?

V (jokingly): I wouldn't mind, but will your mother allow you? Her lady-in-waiting is travelling with us.

They turn towards the Empress.

V: (to the lady-in-waiting): Betty, you're ready for the race, got your courage summoned?

Betty: I've got our cavalier Baron von Wrangell at the wheel after all; with him one is as snug as a bug in a rug.

They laugh.

Tsesarevich Alexey: Grandmother promised to give me a car.

V: A real one?

Alexey: Something small, but real. I know that it's already been bought, they're hiding it for now. I think in three or four years' time I'll go with you, too.

V: Certainly, that will be great.

A: On a bicycle, I can overtake everyone.

Schilling (standing nearby): They told me a lot about your race, I have some relatives in your automobile club.

V: Are they riding as well?

S: Yes, two brothers - Alfred and Edgar Schilling, they have a Benz. As far as I know, Alfred's wife Lilia should also be on your list.

V: Shall I pass your greetings to them?

S: Thank you.

Yanushkevich: Two years ago, our military department also conducted a race, for endurance.

V (jokingly): Of the drivers or the cars?

Y: Cars of course and according to our criteria: strength, practicability...

V: And which one did you pick?

Y: Well, generally speaking the German ones are better, but then the American ones are less expensive and not bad, either.

The Emperor's car, a Delaunay-Belleville arrives. Poincaré and Nicholas go down the stairs, get into the car, and drive off. Then a Renault landaulette drives up – the Empress and the children take their seats in it. One after another, the cars drive the guests away. Baron von Wrangell's Lorraine-Dietrich takes Betty away. Kirill and Victoria get into their Panhard et Levassor; at the wheel there is His Excellency Prince Carl von Lieven.

V: There is still time before the train goes, I need to buy some gloves and a hat for the journey.

Kirill (to von Lieven): Let's go to the Nevskaya, to Mandl's.

L: All right, but from there you should take a cab; I have to take the car to the railway station.

They drive up to Mandl's department store.

Lieven: Do go in, I'll find a cab for you.



Mandl's department store

Various car accessories can be seen – horns and fancy interior lamps, several mannequins in travel suits...

The shop assistant approaches: How can I help you? We've just received some raincoats of the latest style, do take a look (indicates a mannequin in a grey coat).

Kirill: We would like some ladies' gloves and a hat.

The shop assistant: Allow me (goes to the shelf with leather gloves, Victoria tries on some of them)

The door opens, von Lieven from the doorway: The cab is waiting, I'm off to the station, to load the car on.

V: Have a nice trip!

L: Good luck to us (he waves, leaves).

V: There, these ones we'll take (Hands the gloves to the shop assistant. Then, standing at the mirror, tries on some motoring hats, picks a white one.)

Kirill: White will get dusty in no time.

V: Fine, let's get two then (they laugh).

K: Give us two of those.

They leave the store, a droshky is standing in front of the entrance, Kirill and Victoria take their seats in it.

K: Take us to Glinka 13, please, mate.

Not yet moving, the horse raises its tail. The passengers can hear the sounds of nature, the air is filled with the aroma characteristic of the phenomenon. Horse shit is pouring onto the road.

Cabbie: Sorry, sir - them horses - they are also living beings.

The horse tugs off.

V: Good heavens, what do you feed it?

C: Well, why, the usual stuff, oats. And we have apple trees, too. Oh, how she loves apples.

V: She clearly does.

C: People say that this air is jolly good for the lungs, ma'am.

V: Yes, our people are wise.

They depart from the store.

Glinka Street; Kirill and Victoria are getting out of the carriage, carrying shopping bags. They enter the house.

In the flat.

Packing is underway. Kirill is studying the map of the Governorate of Livonia.

Victoria: We haven't forgotten the gift for the firefighters, have we?

Victoria looks into the bag: No, here's the box.

The striking of the clock is heard.

Kirill: The most terrible sound in the world.

The clock on the wall shows 8 pm.

K: It's time, we must send for the cab.

V: We left him waiting... (Goes to the window) There he is.

K: I've become dippy.

V: Good lord, what a heap our horsie has put down there.

Особняк вел. кн. Кирилла Владимировича



They arrive at Baltiysky railway station.

The railway station, platform. Victoria and Kirill hurry towards the front end of the train, their carriage is somewhere there. Behind them a porter is pushing a trolley. People are scurrying around with bags and suitcases. Victoria and Kirill get into their luxury car – it is at the head of the train.

The clock on the platform shows 8.50. The train departs.



Промышленные вагоны на торгово-Бауманском вокзале в Санкт-Петербурге, 1912 год



Kronstadt. Eleven o'clock in the evening. In the harbour, there is the battleship *France*, the President's ship. Poincaré is about to leave. The guard change, brief orders are given, boats with guests depart from *France*. The *Marseillaise* can be heard.



The Yacht *Alexandria*. Yanushkevich, Dobrorolsky and Sazonov are standing on the deck, by the railing.

Schilling approaches (to Sazonov): I have some disturbing news. The adviser to the Italian embassy said that Austria-Hungary have presented an ultimatum to Serbia tonight. The deadline is in 48 hours.

S: How long? 48 hours...

The conversation is muffled by a loud salute. Fireworks in the sky.

The night is gorgeous. The Milky Way unfolds, sparkling and pure, in the endless space. Not a single breath of wind. *France* and the accompanying patrol ships are quickly moving to the west, leaving behind them long foamy ribbons that sparkle under the moon like silver streams.

The train.

Night, regular clatter of wheels. Kirill is sitting by the window, smoking; the lights of a city are running past.

Victoria (sleepily): Where are we?

K: It's two in the morning, it must be Estonia, it must be Narva. Sleep, tomorrow will be a hard day.

V: Tomorrow will be a hard week, you should also go to bed.

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9.00 a.m., Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sazonov's office. It is gloomy, Sazonov pulls the curtain. A knock on the door is heard and Schilling enters.

Sazonov: Good morning Mauritius.

Schilling: Not so good really. Two hours ago, our chargé d'affaires in Serbia officially telegraphed the ultimatum.

Sazonov: I must admit that yesterday I didn't quite believe what you told us.

Schilling: No, didn't believe it myself. It's not like these are some children in the sandpit... These are adults.

Attendant: The Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Count Sapari is here.

Sazonov: Mauritius, will you stay?

Schilling: Do you think so?

The Count enters, they greet each other.

Sapari: I have been instructed to pass you a copy of the text of the ultimatum which we were forced to submit to Serbia.

They sit down, Schilling a little further away. Sazonov reads. There is silence for a while. The clock on the wall shows 9.15.

Finally, Sazonov exclaims: Gentlemen, but this means a war in Europe! You are making unreasonable demands and burning all of our bridges. If the Serbians possess any self-esteem and dignity, they cannot accept such demands.

Sapari: Austria-Hungary is a great power. Serbian propaganda is digging under our very home, under our dynasty. Tolerating this any longer would mean allowing the collapse of the monarchy. But this conflict can be considered quite local; it is but a little feud between us and the Serbs. On this occasion, Russia could remain entirely a spectator.

Sazonov: But this is impossible. Russia cannot remain indifferent. We are all bound by treaties; the war between Austria and Serbia would mean a war between Germany and Russia. And not only that, the fire would spread across Europe. Do you really want this?

Sapari: Personally, I understand that the situation is quite dangerous. (They rise.) Is there anything to pass on to my government?

Sazonov: You will receive our answer within a couple of hours, but it is already obvious that you need to extend the term of your ultimatum and change the wording of several points.

Sapari: Very well, I look forward to your reply.

Sapari bids them goodbye, shakes hands with Sazonov and Schilling, then leaves.

Sazonov to Schilling: There you are some children in the sandpit... Do you know, Mauritius, where this custom comes from - the handshake? This is an old knightly ritual – it was shows that you aren't hiding any weapons in your hand.

S: Yes, but are there any knights here?

Sazonov hands the text of the ultimatum to Schilling: Here, read it. I'm off to see the Minister of War.
(Exits)

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THE MOTOR RACE

Day 1

Friday 11/24 July, Tartu (Yuryev) – Alatskivi – Tartu race (86 versts).

Tartu Railway Station, morning.



The clock on the platform shows 9.34.

The train from St. Petersburg arrives. Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich and his wife Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna descend from their carriage onto the platform.

They are met by Mayor Grewingk, Police Chief Klokachev and Prince Kropotkin – each with a bouquet of flowers.

In turn they kiss the lady's hand and exchange handshakes.

A brass band starts playing. At the arrival of the St. Petersburg train, many curious citizens have gathered.

Kirill and Victoria descend the stairs from the platform. Victoria is pressing the armful of flowers to her chest.

The Grand Duke's car is waiting on the street, behind it there are the cars of Baron Wrangell, Count Shuvalov, and so on – five cars in total. Ahead of them is the Opel belonging to Reinhold von Liphart - today he will receive the motorists.

Kirill and Victoria get into their car.

Victoria to von Lieven (the driver): Well, what was the ride like in the freight train?

L: A lot of fresh air, good company. There were three more cars coming to our event. Count Vladimir von Buxhoeveden, Count Alexander Shuvalov, Baron Nikolai von Wrangell - his Lorraine-Dietrich is right behind us (they look around and wave, Betty waves back).

V: I know von Buxhoeveden's wife; they have a house on the corner of Dvoryanskaya and Vulfovaya Streets.

L: They are in the Opel: see, their car is behind the Shuvalov's.

Von Buxhoeveden has arrived in Tartu in a powerful 65-horsepower Opel. He is accompanied by his wife Elizabeth and Countess Olga von Kreutz (daughter of the scandalous Princess Olga Paley).

L: In general, our high society travel on freight trains these days.

They laugh, the column of cars starts moving, the sound of the playing orchestra fades away. The final musical phrase comes from tubas whose sound resembles the Tibetan dungchen horn (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UAudR5O8Hk>).

Victoria's car.

They go via Toomemägi Hill to the city center, from there to the Raadi estate belonging to von Liphart. Everywhere the crowing of jackdaws can be heard, typical of this old university city. Sometimes it sounds quite ominous (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCi88trM1o0>).

Buildings' facades are decorated with state flags, and there are many students in the streets. All of the police forces of the city seem to be out in the streets. The policemen are wearing white gloves; their ceremonial uniforms are adorned with medals. In the city centre, the police have small tricolour flags on them.



V: A pretty little town.

They pass the university main building.

K: This is the University of Tartu, this is our oldest university – it's almost 300 years old.

V: Like the House of Romanov?

K: Yes, that's right.

V: It looks like half of the people in the city are students. And where is the river? We need to cross the river, don't we?

K: The main thing is to keep up with von Liphart: we are going to his place.

Raadi Manor

Baron von Liphart's daughters and servants are scurrying between the house and the garden.

Anna Matilda the housekeeper: Good heavens, there they are, and I've forgotten the coffee.

(Hurries into the house.)



Arrival of the guests.

The column of cars drives in through the gates, von Liphart's car is in the front, followed by the Panhard of Kirill and Victoria.



The weather is beautiful. The sky is cloudless and there is a light breeze.

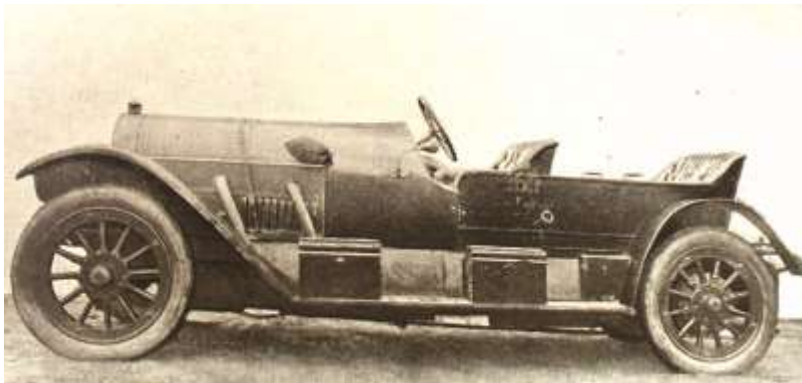
Members of the organizing committee are standing by the car of engineer Eugen Feitelberg. Feitelberg gives Meyendorff and Shuvalov an armful of club flags.

He himself, with a notebook in his hand, calls out: Please step closer, I request all participants of the race kindly to enrol. If you have questions about the rules of the race, also please contact me. Or Meyendorff, or Shuvalov. We also have Kropotkin, who is a knowledgeable person (Kropotkin waves his hand).

Meyendorff and Shuvalov hand out the club flags, help to attach them to the cars, answer numerous questions. People are speaking in German, Russian and French.

Cars keep arriving. Guests meet each other, men discuss technical matters, here and there car bonnets are opened, engines examined.

By the window, a Benz with collector pipes sticking out of the side is parked. This is Baron von Mengden's car. Buxhoeveden, who has arrived from St. Petersburg, is fascinatedly studying this wonder of technology.



Buxhoeveden: A compressor engine?

Mengden: Yes.

B: How many horsepower?

M: A hundred.

B: I thought more, how much petrol does it consume?

M: Don't ask, this trip will cost me dearly.

B: No doubt.

Parked nearby are the cars of the three Transehe brothers - Rene von Transehe's Opel, the Benz with the runabout body belonging to Gaston von Transehe and the Panhard-Levassor of Arved von Transehe. The Panhard with its custom sports body is of particular interest for everybody. All three brothers are at their cars. Gaston is wearing a white ceremonial uniform - he serves as a special envoy with the governor.

Meyendorff and Shuvalov come up to them. Meyendorff gives the brothers three flags.

Meyendorff: How did the Panhard get such a body?

Arved von Transehe: It was custom made in Germany, in Allemeyer's workshop.

M: What's the power?

A: 55 horsepower. The chassis is the original one, Panhard's.

M: So, how does it run?

A (smiling): Fast.

M: Okay, we'll find out soon enough how fast.



The governor is standing by his car and telling two ladies about the history of the brand: Russo-Balt can be considered the first Russian car brand, both the engine and the body - all made in our factory in Riga. (They approach the front of the car) Here, look at this eagle, does it remind you of anything?

A servant approaches: Mr Governor, a telephone call for you.

Zvegintsov: My apologies, ladies, it seems that business has caught up with me.

He hurriedly follows the servant.



Count Ernes Berg in a chic Mercedes drives in through the gate. The body of his car is made in the famous Erdmann & Rossi workshop. As passengers in the car, there are his wife Erna and his uncle Major General Georg Berg. The retired general is not dressed for the weather, he is wearing an officer's overcoat. The chauffeur Johan Püvi is also in the car.

The car of the Belgian company Miesse arrives. A pretty lady is driving. This is Maria von Knorring – French, wife of Woldemar von Knorring. Woldemar is next to him in the passenger seat. A French flag flutters proudly on the hood of the car.

There is applause. Someone exclaims: Bonjour Maria! Vive la France!

Feitelberg indicates her parking spot: Here, my dear, here.

Maria parks in the indicated location.

The famous gynaecologist Edgar Terrepson has been invited. Wearing a straw hat, a walking stick in his hand, he is walking in the garden. His car is the oldest of those that have arrived - it is a little 1907 Apollo Piccolo with a two-cylinder engine. The car is standing a little further away.



To capture the historical event, the well-known Tartu photographer and cameraman Johannes Pääsuke has been invited to Raadi Manor. The crew are scurrying back and forth with their cameras and tripods.



Liphart is being photographed with his Opel.

Liphart (to his wife and daughter:) Come closer. (To Maria von Knorring, who has just arrived:) Maria, you sit in the car. (Maria sits on the back seat.)



Pääsuke behind the camera: That's it!

The first stage of the race is divided into two parts: Tartu – Alatskivi, Alatskivi – Tartu. The race starts at 2 o'clock. Feitelberg is explaining something to the group of participants; Meyendorff is walking around with a flag in his hand. A student who has come to visit, gets a badge of the race fastened on his jacket.



Feitelberg: Attention everyone, the start will be in 15 minutes.

First stage: Tartu - Alatskivi (40 versts). The start is at the gates of the estate.

Feitelberg drives ahead of everyone - his task is to track the time at the finish. Together with him in the car is photographer Johannes Pääsuke.

The start.

Meyendorff, with a wave of a flag, sends off one car after another.

On the road. The cars move in single file in a cloud of dust.

The car of Feitelberg.

Feitelberg to Johannes: What's life like as a photographer? Can you feed a family?

J: I'm still single, but yes, you can live on it. The Eclair and Pathé companies buy films from me very nicely. Eclair are waiting for this very coverage.

F: Well, what do you think? Photography can be considered art. What about cinematography?

J: There are different kinds of photo – there is art, but there is also some boring routine stuff – passport photos, for example. This is certainly not art... although sometimes one could try. But cinema... It's hard to say if it's art or not. Music, for example, is considered art. But look, if a bird sings, then this is real. But music... it actually strives for the real – for real feelings, impressions, for beauty. And sometimes it works out well – then it is art. With the cinema, it's probably the same. When you shoot life as it is, then it's probably art. Because everything real is genuine. When you watch the people whom you shot and it feels not like not you are looking at them, but they are looking at you – then this is probably art. After a hundred years we won't be here, and even then, from their time, they will look at our descendants. Well, and when you shoot a play... Last year I shot one, I thought of the story myself. A comic story about a bear hunt, but somehow it turned out theatrical, not very sincere. This probably isn't art. And I would like to remove the play, so that it would be like reality. The most important thing in art is sincerity.

F: You have your whole life ahead of you: you will be able to make a real film. And you know, sometimes fiction has more logic in it than real life.

J: I will definitely make my own film. And also, I thought of connecting the film camera with a phonograph – so that the movie could have sound.

F: Why not? It's technically possible. You'll have a bird singing on the screen and everyone will hear it. See, that's Alatskivi up ahead.

On the hill the silhouette of the castle is visible. Surrounded by spreading park trees, the building is picturesquely located on a slope near the river valley.

Alatskivi Manor

Pääsuke quickly sets up his tripod and film camera. Cars are fast approaching, Pääsuke is turning the handle, Feitelberg is standing with a stopwatch ready. Count Ernest Berg arrives first in his Mercedes. One by one all the other cars arrive.



At the gates, Baron Heinrich von Nolcken is standing, with two young ladies next to him. The Baron cheerfully greets everybody, kisses the ladies' hands, embraces good friends.

Nolcken: Come in, come in, breakfast is waiting for you. By the way there is a pie which I baked myself.

Tables are set on the front lawn. A servant cuts the pie and serves it out to the guests.

Victoria, with a piece of the pie: It has mushrooms in it, doesn't it?

Nolcken: Not only. Yes there are mushrooms, but also many other things.

V: Does it have a name?

N: It's called Nolcurne Pie.

They both laugh.

V: So what is it made of?

N: That's is a secret. It's a family recipe, only the Nolckens can make this pie. If I reveal it, I'll lose my guests; everyone will sit at home baking my pie. But it's boring here without guests.

Feitelberg shakes hands with von Berg: Congratulations on your first victory.

Berg: What was my time?

F: Forty minutes, the next car arrived thirty seconds later.

Nolcken to the guests: If there's time and people would like, I can give you a little tour.

Victoria: I would like that!

Feitelberg (looks at his watch): We have thirty minutes left.

Victoria and a few other people, accompanied by the Baron, heading toward the castle.

Feitelberg to Meyendorff: Okay, I have to go to the finishing line; make sure you don't leave anyone here.

Feitelberg's car starts leaving.

The start. Meyendorff, waving a chequered flag, sends car after car off on the journey. The length of the return journey is 46 versts. The route arcs southwest through Luunja to Tartu.

Victoria's car

Kirill is driving, von Lieven is sitting next to him. Victoria is taking a little nap on the back seat. July landscapes, scorching sun. On the left the River Emajõgi flows, at a distance one can see a fishing boat. Peasants are working in the fields, making hay.



Out front, Hermann von Brümmer is driving his little Opel. Hermann is travelling together with his wife Katharina, Vladimir Radovich is serving as their driver. Suddenly, with a loud pop, a tyre bursts and the car begins veering from side to side.

Kirill brakes abruptly and swerves around the Opel.

Victoria, awaking: What? What happened?

Lieven: Brümmer's tire burst.

Opel stops at the side of the road. Brümmer and the driver hurry to change the wheel.

At Luunja Manor a pretty horsewoman on a white horse rides towards the motorists. The young lady is wearing a wreath of daisies on her head. Surprisingly, the horse is not at all frightened by the car engines.



Finish. Five o'clock in the afternoon. A gate of honour has been erected near the city line; curious citizens have gathered at the side of the road, many of them students of the local gymnasium.



Feitelberg signals with a flag when the finishing line is crossed. A bit further away there is Pääsuke with his camera. The cars park on a little square nearby.

Feitelberg comes over: So, Count Ernes von Berg reached Alatskivi the fastest. Berg's time was forty versts in forty minutes (a round of applause). On the way back, the winner was the Benz of our engineer Kreisler, 46 miles in 45 minutes (applause). By the way, Brümmer, in his little Opel, drove the distance in 55 minutes, and he lost about ten minutes replacing a wheel (applause). Now we'll have a reception at the German Artisans' Society in Tiigi Street. I will drive ahead.

The procession of cars makes its way along Tiigi Street, the cars pulling up outside the building of the Artisans' Society.

The building of the Artisans' Society.



A brass band of firefighters are playing the March of the Preobrazhensky regiment.

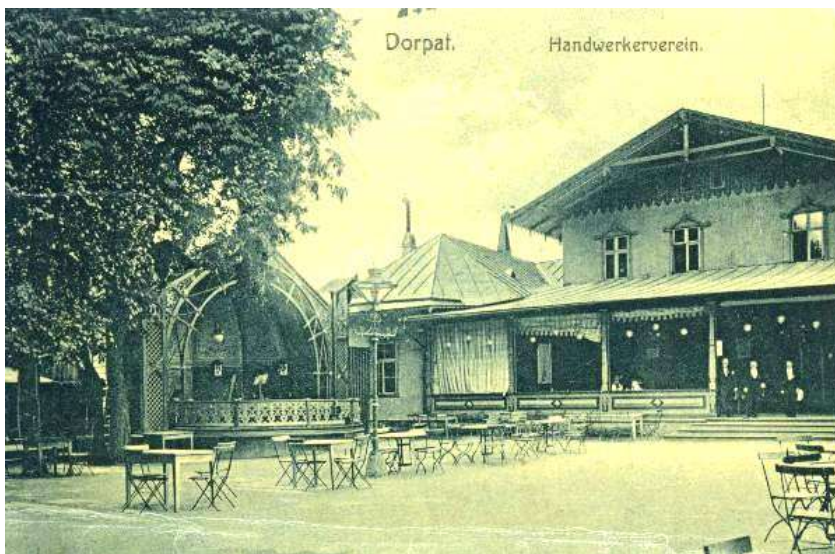
Anderson, the head of the firemen, approaches Kirill: Allow me to greet you on behalf of the Tartu Volunteer Firemen's Society.

Kirill: What a wonderful brass band you have. Health and success to all of you!

In answer, a cheery "Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" is exclaimed.

Carpets are spread out in front of the main entrance in honour of the guests; the facade of the building is decorated with flowers and garlands; portraits of the parents of Kirill Vladimirovich, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich and Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, are also displayed.

The guests enter the gate, and go to the garden, where tables are waiting, set with light snacks and tea.



The Garden.

Noise of jackdaws. A string quartet is playing on a small bandstand. The guests are served champagne. Pops of champagne corks; a flock of jackdaws, screeching, shoot up into the sky.

The mayor Grewingk stands up: I propose we raise our glasses in honour of the Grand Duke and his charming wife.

Glasses clink. Suddenly a flying jackdaw hits Victoria's hand. The glass falls and breaks. The princess is quickly handed a new glass.

Victoria: I hope this means good luck.

Guests sit at the table and have a snack. Snatches of conversation can be heard.

Grewingk (during a pause in music): To commemorate this day, we now ask our honoured guests to plant two trees in our park.

They go to the park, where Kirill and Victoria are given shovels and they plant two trees.

The guests are at the table again. Glasses are filled.

Grewingk (after another piece of music): On behalf of our university city, I have the honour to present this silver punch goblet to the participants of the race.

Kirill takes the goblet. Round of applause.

Kirill: On behalf of our automobile club and myself, I thank you, Mr. Grewingk, as well as the owners of this wonderful establishment for such a warm welcome.

Applause.

Feitelberg (clinking his glass with a teaspoon): And now ladies and gentlemen, it's time to return to the Lipharts' place. They are already waiting for us.

The guests head to the cars.

It is about six o'clock in the evening. The procession of cars travels along Rütli Street, across the Wooden Bridge to the left bank of the Emajõgi River that flows through the city, to von Liphart's manor.



The courtyard of the manor.

Cars one after another are driving in through the gates. Kirill and Victoria accompanied by von Liphart enter the house. A huge malachite vase in the front hall looks imposing.

Liphart: This vase was presented to Count Alexander von Benckendorff by Nicholas I for extinguishing a fire in the Winter Palace.

Paintings on the walls. Antique sculptures in the corners.



V: I have heard about your collection. (Stepping to one of the paintings) Botticelli?

L: Experts argue whether this is Botticelli or Filippo Lippi.

V: All this must have cost a fortune?

L: No, this is the actual fortune. It's been gathered by three generations. I hope my descendants will carry on the tradition.

They pass through the library - this is a huge hall with a dome above, then they walk along the corridor.

L.: Well, here is your room, your luggage will be taken care of.

There is bustling in the house; the guests are coming in with their luggage, the servants are showing them to their rooms.

Evening, the banquet hall. Laid tables, sound of chatter.

Corridor.

In the corridor there are Reinhold's wife Anna and their two daughters Helene and Mary. Today it is primarily them who have been in charge of looking after the guests.

Anna: I'm tired. It seems that we have done well, everything seems to be on schedule.

Reinhold comes to them: Well done my dears.

Anna: We were just saying the same.

The great hall. A small orchestra is playing, some couples are dancing.

The room with the vase.

Zvegintsov, Kropotkin and Kirill are in the room with the malachite vase, in semi-darkness. The pendulum of the grandfather clock in the corner is swaying gravely. The clock strikes, it is half past midnight. Sounds of music can be heard.

Zvegintsov: I got a telephone call from Petersburg. The situation is extremely dangerous. Austria put forward an ultimatum to Serbia yesterday, threatening war. Today at a ministerial meeting we discussed the mobilization of our troops if there is an attack on Serbia.

Kropotkin: Perhaps we should cancel our race.

Z: I don't think so. It's unlikely that the war will start within a week. Negotiations are still ongoing. And there is still hope that the Emperor and the Kaiser will be able to agree.

Kirill: Are there any instructions yet?

Z: These are expected tomorrow.

Kropotkin: Well, while they aren't yet shooting, let's go and get some wine.

Garden.

After a hot day, a gentle evening breeze feels refreshing. At dusk, an amazing manor park can be seen with terraces descending towards the lake. The fireworks begin. The guests come out to see the spectacle, many of them holding champagne flutes in their hands.

Victoria to Maria: You drive very well. When did you learn?

Maria: My father taught me, I was still a girl. Actually, I'm a Parisian, my father is a doctor, he was the owner of one of the first cars in Paris. But I married a local nobleman and came here.

My brother and I bought our first car six years ago, in 1908. Our family has an estate 30 versts from Tartu and we have to travel all the time. So we decided to keep up with progress and replace the horses with a car. That was actually my idea. By the way, then we bought a Panhard, just like yours.

Victoria: Why don't you drive the French Panhard, then?

M: Ours is very large, the Miesse is easier to steer, and it's newer. Our Panhard was actually the first car in the city. When I first drove in the city, people were scared. They hid their children away.

V: Yes, this sounds familiar to me.

M: Well, now a car doesn't surprise anybody. Two years ago, the Imperial Race passed through our city. Although there weren't that many cars, a film was made about it and then showed in the cinema. It was filmed by the same photographer who is with us now; his name is Pääsuke - that means swallow in Estonian.

V: Good name. This time we, too, will probably appear in the cinema.

Fireworks.

Victoria to Kirill: What a divine beauty. I feel that I'd like to live here.

Gleams of lights on the lake's mirror-like surface. Victoria raises her glass to the lips. Against the background of multicoloured lights the champagne is coloured red.

Day Two

12/25 July Tartu – Pärnu (188 1/4 versts)

Raadi. Night. Victoria and Kirill's room. Noise resembling a passing train can be heard. Two glasses rattle on the small table. One of them falls over the edge and breaks. Silence falls.



Victoria gets up and goes to the window. She pulls back the curtain, wipes the mist with her hand. Sunrise. There is some kind of anomaly in the sky - there are two suns on the horizon.

After a pause: Good lord, what's this?

Kirill walks up, opens the window.

Kirill: Perhaps it's the fog.

V: Is it? And what is behind this.... fog? Is everything all right there? I'm a bit scared, you know.

K: Who knows what tricks fog can play. Let's get some more sleep, it's early.

Courtyard of Raadi Manor. Morning.

Before the start. Contestants are gathering in the yard. They throw bewildered looks at the sky – there are two suns.



The car of Maria von Brasch. Maria, her brother Woldemar von Knorring and her husband Ernst von Brasch are standing by the car, looking puzzled. They go to Feitelberg, who is nearby, studying the map with the von Bergs. Pääsuke is loading filmmaking devices into the car. Victoria and Kirill go to their Panhard, followed by a servant carrying their luggage.

Victoria waves to the photographer: Good morning, Swallow!

Pääsuke: Good morning, Your Highness!

Feitelberg: Why is the Princess calling you Swallow?

P: This is what my surname means in Estonian. By the way, Germans call me Schwalbe.

Woldemar von Knorring approaches Feitelberg: We have an unexpected problem. I need to travel to Berlin immediately... but my wife Maria wants to stay with you.

Maria: Can I drive alone?

F: Well, well... According to the rules, there must be at least one passenger in the car. And also, the co-driver. Believe me, you cannot do this alone, there is a journey of over 1000 versts ahead of us. Ermes and Georg Berg step closer.

Ermes: I can lend you a driver. I have three of them at home – three brothers. It's not far from here.

Georg: Wouldn't I do as a passenger? (To Ermes) For you, your wife is sufficient.

M: Are you sure you don't mind? We're going all the way to Riga, after all.

G: With such a lovely lady I would not only travel to Riga, but to the end of the world.

F: Well, that means everything is sorted; we'll write down the passengers... General Georg Berg and driver Johan Püvi.

Georg to Maria (playfully): Let me introduce myself – Georg Berg, Major General, the former aide-de-camp to Emperor Alexander II, a participant in every war possible and impossible. My friends know me as Gora.

M: And am I a friend?

G: If you don't mind?

M: So, Gora?

G: Gora.



The cars move through the gates then turn right. The column of cars drives away, leaving behind the magnificent manor park and the hospitable house of von Liphart.

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St Petersburg. Demonstration.



A crowd walks along Nevsky Prospekt, some one thousand people. Mostly officers and students of various higher education institutions. Singing the anthem, the people walk along Nevsky to Liteiny Prospekt. Exclamations can be heard: Long live Serbia! Down with Austria! Long live France, long live England! Long live the Russian army! Long live the Emperor!

The protesters are holding Serbian and Russian flags and slogans. Someone is carrying an icon... Faces of protesters, placards...

A car with a placard attached to it.

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The column of cars.

From Tartu they go in the direction of Põltsamaa. The weather is cloudy. Along the route, at the Lustivere estate a festive arch has been erected in honour of the motorists. The owner of Lustivere Manor, Leo von Wahl, is taking part in the race, in his 50-horsepower Mercedes. He is accompanied by his wife Lilli and her friend.

Von Wahl drives under the arch. The gathered crowd greet him: Leo, Leo!
The people in the car wave in answer.

The road. Maria's car.

Maria is driving, Gora is sitting next to her.

Maria: General, in the newspapers they talk about an imminent solar eclipse, but what is going on (pointing up) over there?

Gora: At least with the eclipse everything is clear, and the main thing is that after that there will be light again. A couple of years ago I experienced the same sort of apocalypse in Paris.

M: And were there also two suns there?

G: No, there was definitely only one sun. After all, some kinds of eclipses are constantly happening all over the world – they are not so rare. But two suns – such a thing I can't remember seeing before.

They drive towards Põltsamaa.

Põltsamaa, 8 a.m.

The town is decorated with flags, there are many curious locals out and about.

The cars, slowing down, drive past the local attraction - the historic castle of the Livonian Order. They continue their journey in the direction of Olustvere. Breakfast is scheduled there.

Olustvere Manor.



The cars drive up to the main building. The car of the owner of the manor, Count Nikolai Fersen's Benz, is standing there. He is a member of the most famous automobile organization - the Imperial Russian Automobile Society.

Fersen, accompanied by his wife Sofia, warmly welcomes the guests: I greet you, colleagues, on behalf of the Imperial Automobile Society. Come into the house. By the way - it's not you who hung up the second sun?

Kropotkin: This was organized by Feitelberg (they laugh).

They enter the house; there are paintings and photographs on the walls.

Fersen stops at a photograph of a horse-drawn carriage: This is Reval. My companions and I set up a horse tram there almost 20 years ago.

Pointing to a photo of a beautiful palace: And this is my wife's estate, Dolgorukov's Malaya Alupka palace in the Crimea. I find it easier here. Come on in, otherwise lunch will get cold.

The guests enter the hall, where the table has been laid.

Maria and Gora are standing at the doorway to some room.

Maria: I heard that soon after an eclipse some trouble happens, (smiling) or vice versa?

G: In fact, every misfortune gives a sign of itself in advance, but as a rule, people don't notice it. You know, Maria, I'm already an old, and (jokingly) I don't hesitate to say, a wise man. I'll tell you a big secret – when you're pretty certain that the light will go off, you need to stay close to the switch (smiling, turns the light on and off a couple of times; they laugh).

The yard. It is drizzling. The cars are leaving Olustvere. The rain has glued the dust onto the road and made the air a bit fresher.

Silhouette of the city of Viljandi.

Viljandi.

Flags are up on many buildings; numerous people have gathered on the sides of the streets. Motorists drive through the city at low speed, so that the townspeople have the opportunity to take a closer look at their cars. They pass through the city slowly, but without stopping.

At the junction, the local photographer Jaan Riet has taken the position with the camera on a tripod. Pääsuke waves from a passing car: *Tere* Jaan!

The photographer waves in response, quickly resuming snapping the racers.

The journey continues towards Pärnu. They go through the small villages of Abja, Tihemetsa and Nõmme. Here and there, by the side of the road, local farmers cheerfully greet the passers-by.

Tihemetsa - the home manor of Heinrich von Stryk. He takes part in the race in his Mercedes. Another magnificent gate of honour has been erected here. By the road, manor workers wave their hats to Heinrich as he drives by.



The village of Nõmme.

The local fire brigade is lined up by the road. They play a rousing fanfare. Their well-polished fire helmets sparkle in the rays of the midday sun.

On a red horse, as if on a throne, the local constable is proudly sitting in full-dress uniform.



After they have driven through Nõmme, a heavy downpour begins, and then passes very soon. The winding road is covered in mud, and there are many puddles. The racers have to drive slower. A two-tier rainbow is visible ahead.

Before getting to Pärnu the motorists almost get lost. The road goes through a thick forest, where lots of little roads fork off.

Thick forest.

On the forest road Maria's Miesse and Victoria's Panhard are moving, followed by von Wrangell's Lorraine Dietrich. Another fork – there are three roads and the racers take the middle one. The road gradually gets narrower, then turns into a footpath.

Maria: Goodness, where are we now?

The cars are turned round with difficulty, and the motorists return to the fork.

Wrangell: It's like a fairy tale – you turn right, there's one trouble; turn left, there's another. And straight on we've already been. Fortunately we're still alive and well.

The sound of their conversation echoes. Betty, Wrangell's passenger, claps her hands: there's an echo of clapping. A gust of wind resounds in the treetops.

Betty: It really is like in a fairy tale.

Gora: My whole life, I've always turned right.

Victoria: What if there's a dead end again... or some trouble?

G: There are no dead ends. Let's go right.

Victoria: But we've just been to a dead end.

G: We'll be at a dead end if we don't get out of here; and we will get out, so let's go right.

Victoria: As you command, General, but if we stay in this forest forever, it will be your fault. You will blame yourself for the rest of your life.

The cars take the right fork. The road goes through the forest for a long time, there is a sense of general uncertainty. Finally, light can be seen ahead.



The forest ends, a bright light blinds everybody's eyes. Strangely the city starts almost right there.

G: Well, you see, we chose the right way.

Johan: Like this, by chance, any way may turn out right. If only they put out some signposts.

They speed up – the finish line arch is ahead.

Pärnu

Von Wrangell, Kirill and Maria pass under the arch; behind them at a distance the other cars can be seen. They drive through the city. A festive dinner awaits them at Pärnu Beach Pavillion. There are flags on the facades of houses, and the pavements are filled with curious citizens.

Beach Pavilion.



Policemen are standing by the doors, but the restaurant's outdoor terrace is open to the townspeople – they are admitted if they have tickets. Guests get out of their cars.

Members of the Pärnu Volunteer Fire Society in luxurious uniforms and sparkling helmets are lined up in front of the restaurant. A brass band begins to play.

The guests enter the restaurant, which is decorated with garlands. Tables are set in a lordly style - an abundance of delicacies, the finest wines. Guests are seated.

Heinrich von Stryk stands up: On behalf of our club, on behalf of all the participants in our race I would like to thank the Mayor of the city, as well as all those helping him, for such a warm welcome. A round of applause.

The Mayor of Pärnu Oscar Brackmann: I am very glad to welcome all our guests, and on behalf of the city of Pärnu I am honoured to present this wonderful trophy to the Baltic Automobile and Aero Club. Kirill stands up and receives the gift. A round of applause.

Victoria stands up and addresses the head of the Fire Society: I would like to present a commemorative finial for your banner as a gift of deep respect for the brave firefighters of this fine city. She hands over the present. Round of applause.

Pääsuke with his camera, a flash.

The sound of champagne bottles opening, waiters scurrying back and forth, general hubbub.

The jetty. Victoria and Maria are walking along the stone pier jetty towards the sea. Through the windows and open doors one can see the people dancing in the restaurant. Strings of electric lights are swaying gracefully with light breezes of the coastal wind.



Maria: You have a beautiful name -- Victoria.

V: The full name is Victoria Melita. I was born in Malta, hence the name Melita. Victoria is in honour of my grandmother, Queen Victoria of England. And my friends call me Ducky.

M: And where does Ducky come from?

V: This is from English - it means darling.

M: Lovely. What is the life of a Grand Duchess like? Probably endless balls and receptions?

V: This is true, you wouldn't envy me. I would like to live my own life. After the race, Kirill and I will travel to Germany, to Coburg – we have a family estate there, we'd like to have some rest.

Pause, the waves are quietly whipping against the stones.

V: Actually, Kirill marrying me was a big problem for the royal family. It could be said that Kirill and the Emperor seriously quarrelled because of me, but time has done its job; about five years ago they reconciled. (After a pause) It's so pleasant when the wind blows, it feels like it carries away every bitterness.

Fireworks. It looks particularly impressive in the night sky over the sea.
The two suns are setting.



V: Oh, this is not good. (pause) Let's go back, otherwise those'll hit us here.
Jumping over the stones, they go back.

Midnight, and the cars go in single file to the place of their overnight stay – this is the nearby Audru Manor. The motorists have been provided accommodation by the Land Marshal of Livonia, Adolf Pilar von Pilchau.

Audru Manor.



Von Pilchau at the doorstep: Come in, come in, the servants will show you to the rooms.
Guests enter the house, some of them carrying luggage. Everybody is tired.

The courtyard of the manor.

July night, chirrup of crickets. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAh-LMiy-Q>). A car pulls up. A man in a military uniform knocks at the door. Von Pilchau opens the door.

The military man: An urgent dispatch for the governor.

Von Pilchau leaves. After a while, the governor steps out.

The military man: Here's an urgent message for you, the ship is waiting for you.

Zvegintsov (takes the parcel, enters the house): Wait a moment.

Von Pilchau and the military man are waiting at the door. The **crickets** continue to chirp. After a few moments, the governor comes out with his son, both carrying travel luggage. They are accompanied by Nikolai Kropotkin.

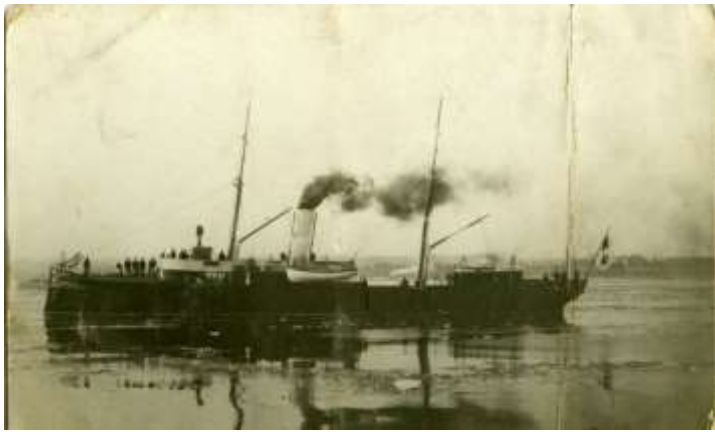
Kropotkin: I will see you off.

Zvegintsev: Very good, let's go.

Three cars drive off the estate.

The Marina.

Night-time. A small patrol boat named the *Condor*. Sailors lay down the beams, roll the car onto the boat.



On the pier, the governor and his son are both about to leave. Kropotkin is beside them.

Zvegintsev: The term of the Austrian ultimatum expired today. From the midnight on the entire territory of the empire, a “state of the preparatory period for war” has been declared. I must be in Riga. And you make sure that the race turns out a success. See you in Riga.

Kropotkin: Oh, I have a bad feeling about it, Nikolai Alexandrovich.

Z: Hope always remains that somehow things will work out.

K: This is what we call perchance.

The car is now on the boat.

Z: Looks like it’s time to go.

K: Okay, see you in Riga (they say goodbye).

The governor and his son walk along the gangplank onto the ship.

The ship leaves, vanishing into fog; a whistle can be heard from the distance.

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Krasnoye Selo.

Light drizzle. Dobrorolsky and Yanushkevich surrounded by the military; some horsemen nearby.

They put a camping tent into the car.

They get in the car and drive off. Some distance off, the emperor’s car is visible, Nicholas himself is riding a horse — the review of the troops is going on.



On the road. Dobrorolsky and Yanushkevich are travelling in the car.

Y: There was an order to immediately prepare a decree for the partial mobilization of our army. This is in case Austrian troops cross the Serbian border.

D: What does it mean, partial mobilization?

Y: This refers to four southern military districts adjacent to Austria-Hungary - Kiev, Moscow, Odessa and Kazan.

D: But there can be no question of partial mobilization - such a plan has not been developed. Train schedules, deployment of troops – everything will be hopelessly mixed up. What kind of order was this?

Y: The highest order.

D: Then after that the real mobilization will be two weeks late.

Y: If it's late then it's late, but it is not yet possible to mobilize troops on the German border. We mustn't give Germany any excuse. Peace with Germany is strongly desired.

D: If only they wouldn't give us an excuse, either.

Ahead, on the left side of the road, there is an upside-down cart. Things are scattered on the ground, the frightened horse is looking around. An elderly woman is trying to turn the cart over without success. Dobrorolsky and Yanushkevich stop: What happened?

The woman: The horse got scared of an engine again, it just won't get used to them.

The three of them set the cart right.

Y: Sergei, you hold the reins, the lady and I will push.

They roll the cart onto the road.

The woman: Thank you, soldiers, God bless you.

D: Thank you, mother, blessing is very much needed for us now.

They drive off and travel in silence for a while.

Y: You know what, this is not just a mother - this is Mother Russia. It is we who must protect her, or else we are worth nothing.

They drive up to the General Staff, get out of the car.

D: So, what are we soldiers going to do then?

Y: What shall we do? Our soldierly job is to carry out our orders. However, you can overdo it a bit and, just in case, draw up another version of the decree - about the general mobilization. And then we'll see which one they choose. In any case, nothing good is shining on the horizon.

D: Yes, and in general, if you spend too long choosing between two ills, usually the worst possible option remains.

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Day Three

13/26 July Pärnu - Sangaste (Zagnits) (163 versts)

Sunday morning, 7 a.m.

City boundary

The start is at the previous day's finish line arch. Kirill is checking the mounting of the spare wheel; Victoria takes a seat in the car. Shuvalov is holding the starting lists in his hand. Meyendorff is sending cars off with a flag. Feitelberg's car has already left.

Meyendorff: Where is our Governor?

Kropotkin: He had to return to Riga urgently at night. So, the Vice-Governor in the humble form of me will have to do.

M: What happened?

K: I hope nothing yet.

Cars start to drive off one by one.

Victoria's car.

Everybody is silent, von Lieven is driving. First the route follows the road they had travelled the previous day. The familiar thick forest, then well-groomed fields. Gradually the landscape changes - picturesque hills appear and in the valleys between them mysteriously gleaming forest ponds can be seen. The weather is warm and clear.



Local farmers are working in the fields - making hay and harvesting wheat. Horse-drawn carts filled with hay ride towards motorists.

Neat sheaves of wheat are standing in the fields. Under the rays of the July sun, the golden yellow tones of the sight bring in mind a landscape by Brueghel. High in the sky a lark is singing.

In the village of Kamara there is a windmill with blades spread. At the gate there is a muscular black horse, which has brought the scales for weighing grain. Two strong men covered in flour dust unload the scales and put them onto the ground.



Maria's car is at the curb.

Maria is in the back seat; Johan and Gora are by the open bonnet.

Victoria's car is passing by (they wave from there); then Shuvalov's one. Shuvalov slows down.

Gora: We are cleaning the carburettor.

Shuvalov drives on. A castle's tower is visible ahead.

Taagepera.



Most of the cars are already there. Breakfast is served right in the courtyard. The guests are greeted by Hugo von Stryk and his wife Anna. Finally, the Panhard arrives. Kirill and Victoria get out of the car. Heinrich von Stryk approaches them: Allow me to introduce my family: Hugo von Stryk, Anna Sophia - his wife, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich and his wife Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna.

Kirill kisses the lady's hand, and Hugo kisses Victoria's; men shake hands.

Kirill: Well, you've got quite a palace here. Only the knights and ghosts are missing.

Hugo: You are mistaken. We're a bit short of knights these days, but as for ghosts, we can't complain.

Victoria: Oh, tell us.

H: Once upon a time, a wooden manor house stood here. According to legend, a young girl was walled up in the foundation of that building hundreds of years ago. Her name was Dora. This house burned down and apparently the arsonist was the girl's spirit. Some of the foundations of the old building have been preserved under my castle, and sometimes at night, quiet singing can be heard from somewhere in the back of the house.

V: Are you not afraid of a fire?

H: No, I haven't done anything bad to her. We get along well: she can sing if she likes. Alright, do go and eat, you still have to get to Berg in Sangaste.

V: Is there also a haunted castle there?

H: Well, as to that, they've been deprived. But do ask, perhaps I haven't heard the latest.

They laugh and go to the tables with snacks.

Maria's car pulls up. The new arrivals hurry to the table.

Victoria to Gora: What was wrong with your car?

G: Something with the carburettor, Johan says the engine doesn't sound right. In the evening in Sangaste, he and his brothers will take care of it – they are all drivers.

The cars are driving off.

Maria is driving. The landscape is changing, spruce forests are becoming more majestic. Among them, from time to time, islands of civilization open up – well-groomed fields and lovely farm buildings.

Baron Franz von Hahn's Benz is at the head of the column. The road becomes windy, sharp curves appear. Maria slows down, Hahn moves farther ahead and disappears behind a bend.

Suddenly, a cloud of dust rises ahead. Getting closer, it becomes clear – the car of the Baron has crashed into the ditch by the bend and turned over.

Baroness Jenny Anna Louise von Hahn is lying on the lawn, there's blood on her side. Things are scattered on the ground.

The Baron's leg is stuck under the car. The driver is trying to free him with no success.

Maria runs up to the Baroness, helps her up. Her hand is injured; fortunately, the wound is not very serious.

Victoria's car pulls up. The men run up to von Hahn's car and together they manage to turn the car over. It seems that Hahn is only bruised, the bones are intact.

Victoria has a roll of gauze bandage in her hand, together with Maria they bandage the Baroness's hand.

Shuvalov's, then von Buxhoeveden's cars arrive.

Shuvalov to von Buxhoeveden: Can you take the Baroness into your car?

B: Of course, do sit with us.

Victoria and Maria help the Baroness to sit in the Opel.

Buxhoeveden (playfully): Now I have three women in the car, not a good sign.

S: You go, we can handle it. If anything happens, Kropotkin is coming along behind you.

Buxhoeveden drives off. Kropotkin pulls up.

Shuvalov to Kirill and Johan: Okay, you go too, we'll sort it out.

To Kropotkin: Well, let's pull it out.

He goes to von Hahn's car with a rope.

Shuvalov and Kropotkin at von Hahn's car.

Shuvalov: It seems that springs of the rear axle have been dislodged.

Kropotkin: We'll have to leave you out of the competition, Baron. You can tighten the springs, but the axle can't be adjusted during the race.

B: It's all right, even if I'm outside the competition, the main thing is to stay in a good company.

K: Are we good company then?

H: Aren't you? I don't trust that many people, but our club – no question there.

Shuvalov from behind the wheel: All right...

Von Hahn's car, trundling over bumps, rolls onto the road. Behind the car its owner walks, limping.

The three of them manage to fix the springs, the car is ready to go again.

Three cars continue the path to Berg's castle: Sangaste.

Sangaste.



The cars drive up to the castle.

Johan to Maria: My brothers and I will tinker with your carburettor a bit: at the moment it sounds uneven and isn't getting petrol properly. You go, you'll be nicely received.



At the front door, Ermes's father Friedrich is talking about the castle: Once I got involved with the daughter of an earl in England but I did not get her parents' consent. Her father announced: "I won't give my daughter to some lumberjack from Russia!" Can you imagine how tragic it was – we loved each other. Well, I decided to prove, probably mostly to myself, that I am able to build a castle no worse than the one of Windsor. And I built it.

V: What happened to this earl's daughter?

F: We haven't been in touch for a long time. At first we wrote to each other for a while. I heard that she married some lord who was much older than her. He soon died; they had no children. I can say that my life has turned out much better. (He strokes the head of his grandson standing next to him.)

Banquet hall, laid table, chatter.

Maria comes out of the castle, goes to her car, which stands at an outbuilding. The three brothers Karl, Filip and Johan Püvi are busy at the open bonnet. Gora is standing nearby, explaining something. A young boy pulls up on a bicycle. Already from some distance he announces: The cow began to calve!

Brothers: Go Johan, we'll get it done here.

Gora: Take Ermes's Mercedes.

J: I can't do it like this, without asking.

G: I'll sit in the car and give you the order.

They head for the Mercedes.
The old general settles in the back seat.
Maria: May I come with you? I have never seen...
G: Quick, take a seat.
They drive off.

Well-groomed farm, a rural crib.

Amanda, mother of the Püvi brothers: The waters have already broken. (To Johan) Is this your girlfriend?
J: Oh, come on, she is a baroness, her name is Maria.
M: I am no baroness.
A: So, the head is out, come here no-baroness... let's pull... easy...
M: Dear me, how slippery.
F: Yeah, go on.
The cow pushes, gradually pushing out the calf.
A: Pull, pull, now catch.
They lower the new-born to the floor.
Amanda (pleased): A bull. So, here, take this cloth, he has to be wiped clean.
They wipe the calf. Johan and Gora are standing at the door, looking on, pleased. The calf gets up, then falls, after several attempts even if unsteadily, stands. Placed next to his mother, the calf eagerly begins to suck milk.

Maria goes out into the courtyard; Johan directs her to the well: Soap and towel are over there.
On the table by the well stand a beautiful washbowl and jug.
Maria is washing her hands. Johan is pouring from the jug.
M: Cold.

Farm, orchard, apple trees.

They are driving back.

Gora to Maria: Look, I walk the earth with a firm step and I seem to be strong enough but my life has been lived. Soon I will be gone. But this calf that now barely stands on its feet, will then be a healthy bull in the prime of life. He is actually much stronger than me. There is strength in weakness.

(after a pause)

M: Dear Gora, maybe we don't really get old, perhaps we just slowly turn into adult children?
G: Yes, that little child that we once were will remain inside us forever.

The castle.

There are a lot of cars in front of the castle. Guests have arrived in Sangaste both from the neighbouring estates and from Riga, the capital of Livonia. Music is playing.
Maria to Gora: I'll go and change.
Gora ascends the stairs and meets his brother Friedrich in the hallway.
F: Where have you been?
G: I had a little ride in the car.
F: Hadn't you had enough?

G: Not quite.

Through the open door, dancing couples are visible.

Kirill and Victoria in their room, Kirill is at the table, studying the map.

K: Good God, we still have so far to travel.

On the table there are some old books.

Victoria picks up a shabby volume and reads: And this morning he told his disciples that their efforts to comprehend existence were futile, for the meaning of existence was merely to itself, and not in anything else...

K: What is this, the Bible?

Victoria turns the page: So, you go and roam the world in the search of truth, while preaching your own stupidity... (Thumbs through the pages) No, not the Bible, I don't know what it is, there is no beginning... and there is no end either.

Through the semi-open door, piano music can be heard.

Victoria: Someone is playing, let's go and see.

Kirill and Victoria go down the stairs and reach the foyer at the bottom.

Kirill: This is Stella Meyendorff playing. She and her husband are travelling in Shuvalov's car.

Victoria: That's Chopin – she plays well. I've seen her on stage in St. Petersburg. There is something in her. Believe me, one day she will be a famous actress.

A few people have gathered in the foyer. Maria joins the small audience. She listens to Stella's playing, then goes out into the yard.

Garden.

Night. The moon shines onto the lawn.

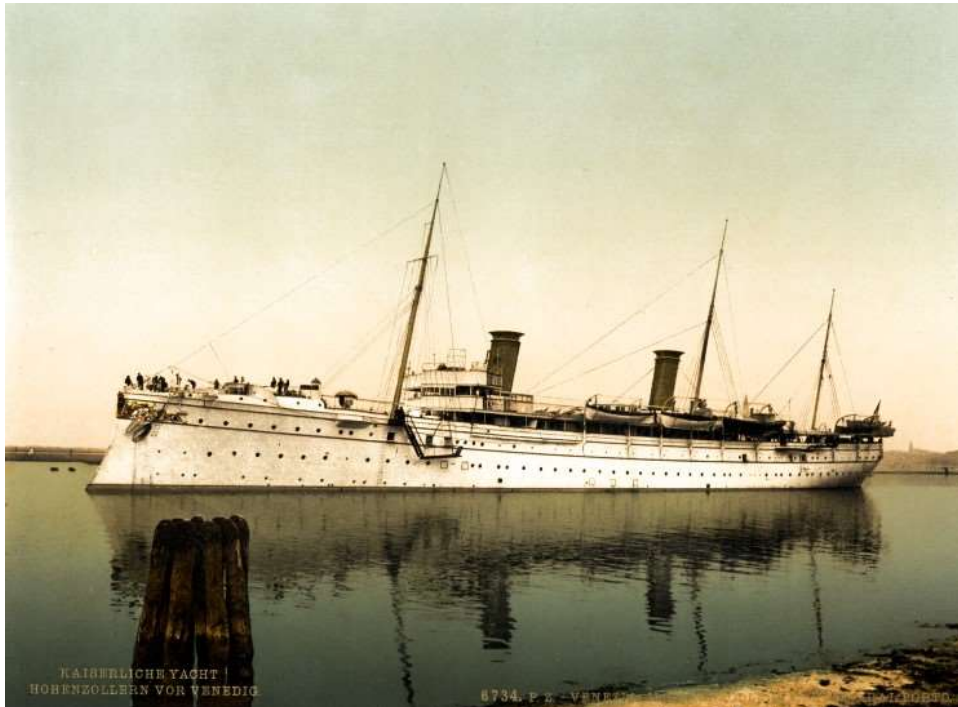
Maria lays down on the carpet of moss and curls up.



Day Four

14/27 July, Sangaste – Jaungulbene (155 versts)

.....
Port of Potsdam, about one o'clock in the afternoon.



The Imperial yacht *Hohenzolle* is arriving. German Emperor Wilhelm II is returning from his annual sea voyage through the Norwegian fjords.

A crowd has gathered on the shore, carrying German and Austrian flags, someone is holding the Emperor's portrait. Exclamations: *Hoch Osterreich! Serbien muss sterbien!* ...

A motorboat goes up to the yacht. Two officers of the General Staff ascend to the deck.



The deck.

The officers salute and hand the Emperor a document: Here is Serbia's response to the ultimatum. Wilhelm reads, music is playing in the background.

W: Well, everything seems to be over, this is a complete surrender. It seems that the conflict can be resolved. The grounds for the war fall away. What is Russia doing?

Officer: There is no full mobilization yet, but their preparatory measures are very extensive.

W: I am surprised at such a painful reaction by Russia. Those responsible for the murder of Franz Ferdinand must be punished. I'll talk to Nicholas and Franz Joseph. I think that mutual understanding can be found between Austria and Russia.

The orchestra sounds louder.

.....

Sangaste.

Morning. Flourish of a trumpet. Johan is playing the car horn; Shuvalov is standing next to him, grinning.



The motorists are about to drive off. Johan is behind the wheel, Gora is next to him, Maria is sitting on the back seat.

Johan's mother comes running with a bundle: Here, my daughter picked these for you for the road (passes the bundle to Maria). So, are you really a baroness?

M: I'm not a baroness. Sorry, I missed your name.

Johan's mother: Amanda, or even Amanda Rosalia.

M: Thank you, Amanda, I will remember yesterday for the rest of my life.

They drive off.

At first, the road winds among the fields, then they enter a forest. The road is getting gradually worse. They have to cross ditches and bumps. The cars stick together.

Kirill, at another obstacle: Is it possible ever to get there on this road?

Ernes: It is, I've been there, but it's going to get a little worse, even.

K: Thank you for the reassurance.

A huge puddle ahead, they stop.

Shuvalov: I'll go and check how deep it is.

He breaks a branch, measures the depth: We can't go round, we have to take a chance.

Several cars are stuck, they need to be pushed, men are struggling in the mud.

The engine of Hermann von Brümmer's Opel stalls in the puddle. Shuvalov with his powerful Benz takes the car in tow.

For some time, the road rises, it becomes drier. There are traces of civilization. By the road there is a pile of logs: lumberjacks have been working here. Then the road goes down the hill. Another barrier: a deep ditch across the road. Here and there logs stick out.

Ernes Berg: There used to be a bridge here... there's been a flood, I think.

Victoria: There were some logs by the road.

Shuvalov unhooks Brümmer's Opel: Well, we must build a new bridge – there's no other way.

Kropotkin and I will bring the logs, but here... Feitelberg, you take the command.

Shuvalov and Kropotkin drive off.

Feitelberg and Gora at the ditch.

Gora: Two logs are probably enough for the length and the rest will go across.

Feitelberg: In principle, yes, we just have to choose two thicker ones. (To the departing cars) bring a couple of bigger ones to start with!

Johan makes a bonfire, sets up a hanging pot, some young ladies sit closer on a moss-covered log.

Johan at the car, rummaging in the luggage, finds a tin box with tea and some camping mugs.

He goes to the fire, the water is already boiling. He makes tea.

After some time, Kropotkin and Shuvalov's cars appear, followed by logs dragged with ropes. Several journeys have to be made for the logs.

The construction of the bridge begins, all the men are busy here. Johan and Kirill pick up the first supporting log. The photographer, too, takes off his jacket and rolls up his sleeves.

Feitelberg: This work is not for you Swallow, you take pictures of us, you are the chronicler. Let the princes beaver away.

Young ladies are sitting by the fire, drinking tea.

Maria to Victoria: Look, the Grand Duke and my driver are dragging a log together.

Victoria: It's a great honour for the prince; he can't make such tea.

Stella Meyendorff: Perhaps this will be the bridge to a better new world where everyone is equal?

Betty: Like in Paradise?

V: Are you sure all are equal in Paradise? I'm afraid it's more like that in Hell. People get more equal in misfortune.

Stella: If you believe Dante, then in Hell it is all much more complicated.

V: Don't believe him, then.

M: Does it even matter what will happen later?

V: What does matter, then?

M: I don't know, but I think what is happening right now matters the most.

B: What matters right now?

Stella stands up and jumps over the path of ants: Now? Now and later... I think the most important thing in life is not to hurt on an ant.

The first logs have to be installed while the men are standing waist-deep in water. Wrangell is helping Kirill and Johan. Logs begin to roll onto the supporting beams. Three wet and muddy pioneers crawl out of the ditch and go to the bonfire to warm themselves.

Victoria: The three of you now look exactly the same.

Kirill: Well, that took a bit of work.

Stella: But you did it well.

Betty: By the way, we've been wondering here... Do you know where this bridge will lead us? We here thought of a new world, a happy future.

Finally, the crossing is ready. Feitelberg is the first one to drive across, followed by Shuvalov with his Opel in tow.

The young women get up, get each in their cars.

Betty: Look, Brümmer is being dragged into this new world on a leash.

Maria: So maybe he doesn't really want to go there.

Kirill: We should all bite our tongues.

Cars cross the new bridge one by one. The road is much better now, it brightens up, the forest is becoming less thick. Finally, on a hilltop the outlines of Jaunlaicene Manor appear.

Manor of Jaunlaicene.



Tables have been laid in the courtyard.

Guests are warmly welcomed by the owner of the house, Baron Ralph von Wolff: I've been waiting for you, the coffee has probably got cold. Please, everyone, let's move to the table!

Kirill: We should have a wash.

Ralph: Yes, of course, let's go to the house.

Ralph is followed by Johan, Kirill and Wrangell.

Ralph: I have a supply of travel suits, I can lend you some to travel to Gulbene; yours will be washed there.

There are wash bowls in the courtyard; the guests wash their hands and sit at the table.

Brümmer and his driver Vladimir Radovich are bending over the open bonnet of the Opel; Hermann's wife Katharina is watching them nearby with a worried look on her face. Feitelberg and Shuvalov come to them. Brümmer: It seems that the race is finished for me... it's the magneto, it probably got soaked in that puddle.

Shuvalov: How annoying. You have a fast car, you could have won in Tartu if it weren't for the tyre.

B: Yes, I lost ten minutes there.

S: Okay, maybe next year you'll be more successful.

B (with sadness): Let's hope so.

Johan, Kirill and Wrangell come out of the house – all three in identical plaid suits.

Laughter, someone is clapping their hands.

Betty: Look at them, again you can't tell one from the other.

Victoria: No indeed; (pointing to Johan) one of them seems to be younger than the others, I'll have this one.

The new arrivals hastily pile food onto their plates.

Meyendorff and Kropotkin are sending the cars onwards.

Maria's car. The road.

After lunch, the race continues towards Gulbene. Here and there, local residents are standing at the side of the road, joyfully greeting passers-by. In Aluksne there is a stunning view of the lake on the left side of the road. On one of the islands, the ruins of the castle of the Livonian Order are preserved.

After Aluksne, the landscape gradually becomes hillier and the road more winding. Heavy clouds rise in the sky. It's getting dark.



A wagon is approaching, pulled by a bony pale grey horse. As the cars get closer it becomes clear that this is a funeral procession. The coffin is more like a box knocked together from unfinished boards. The cart is followed by a few people; someone is carrying an unpainted wooden cross. They watch the passing cars with a sullen look.



Gora: Everyone begins their life journey more nicely than they finish.

Maria: There's a chill in the air.

G: This is death.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-ALVM9zOZM&list=RDV-ALVM9zOZM&index=1>)

Before they reach Gulbene, a heavy downpour begins, thunder rumbles, lightning flashes.

Jaungulbene.

The majestic Jaungulbene manor house is visible from afar. The gates are decorated with garlands. The cars drive in one after another.



The owner of the castle, Paul von Transehe, comes out to greet the arriving guests. He calls out from the porch: Quick, quick here!

Guests hurry into the house. Drivers quickly cover up the cars, then they, too, run to the manor house. Two girls, squealing with delight, are jumping barefoot in the puddles. Gaston von Transehe's wife Karin: Girls, you will catch cold – into the house, now! Noisily, the girls rush into the house.



The whole of the Transehe family, including the female members, are taking part in the race. Gaston von Transehe: Everybody, do come to the fireplace room, we can keep warm there.

To his brother: Rene, do go and show the way.

A cosy fireplace room, burning logs crackle in the fireplace; the ladies move closer to the fire.

Gaston, Arved, and Rene pour out hot mulled wine.

Gaston to Johan: Johan, help ladies to get warm.

Johan: What do you mean?

They both laugh.

Johan begins to deliver mugs of wine, still wearing the checked suit from Jaunlaicene.

Paul: The hot toddy will be ready in a moment.

Kirill: We've got two goblets for toddy, I'll get them.

Paul: The Linnemann Trio, the famous band from Riga, are visiting us just now.

Enthusiastic exclamations: Incredible! That's great!

After a while Kirill enters, holding the two trophy goblets high above his head. People cheer, someone applauds. Jugs with steaming toddy are brought in. The Transehe brothers fill the goblets, which then are handed around.

P: They will perform in our hall, so we'll take these canisters with us (pointing to the cups) and move there.

Maria and Victoria, together with Buxhoeveden's co-travellers, are sitting by the fireplace. The ladies protest: We don't want to leave here, it's so warm and cosy ...

Music starts playing. The Linnemann Trio performs salon music popular at the time. The party slowly moves to the hall. First everyone takes a seat; after a little while, Kirill invites Victoria to dance, then another couple join in. The two little girls are a fooling around a bit, dancing with each other. Everyone is having a good time.

Shuvalov and Buxhoeveden are standing at the window, passing the goblet of toddy between them. Kropotkin joins them. The men are discussing something in a lively manner. Somewhere a clock starts striking.

Karin: Girls, it's time for bed.

Girls in unison: What about the fireworks?

K: It's late, it's really late, it's time for children to go to bed.

Girls run up to Victoria: Please help us, you are the queen, you can, (in unison) please!

V: I'm not quite a queen, but let's ask together...

Shuvalov, Buxhoeveden and Kropotkin by the window in a plaintive voice to Mrs. Transehe: Please, please!

Everyone laughs.

Karin: That's not fair... All right then.

Girls happily: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Paul von Transehe: Well, let's go to the garden.

Night, park, fireworks. The girls are holding Victoria's hands. There is a magical performance of lights in the night sky.

The guests return to the house.

Paul von Transehe: Everyone is welcome to sleep here, but those interested in a nocturnal architectural experience can spend the night in Cesvaine Palace – it's not far from here. Wilhelm von Wulf, one of the members of our club, has agreed to receive you there.

Wulf waves his hand: That's me!

Maria: I love nocturnal architecture.

Baron von Wrangell and his fellow traveller Betty: We do, too.

They go out.

Wulf: Let's go in my car, I'll bring you back in the morning.

The night road.

Gnarled trees in the headlights.



In the distance the silhouette of a mysterious castle appears.

Cesvaine (Seswegen).

They arrive; a friendly dog comes to greet them.

Wulf: Today we are alone with him (petting the dog). A cup of tea?

The guests: No, no, we need to get some sleep.

W: You must come and look – there will be no time in the morning. In this castle there's such a... it's called an acoustic hall. You can't hear anything there and it generally feels very strange. (They walk along the corridor, the owner opens a door.)

Wulf: I myself... I'll wait here.

A round room with a domed ceiling.

The ladies: Ahoo, ahoo...

The sound is heard as if through a pillow and vanishes almost immediately.

M: A strange room indeed: it makes me dizzy. I'm going to bed.

Betty, not hearing her properly: Bed?

M: Yes, yes, it's time for bed.

She goes out.

Maria to Wulf: Do you have ghosts too?

W: Of course – you will soon hear... Dreams are usually full of ghosts here.

They walk along a long corridor: Well, here is your room.

Betty and Baron Wrangell are still in the mysterious hall.

Nikolai steps aside and says quietly: I love you.

B: What? Did you say something?

N: I love you.

B: You can't hear anything here, come closer.

Nikolai comes up to her, takes her in his arms, they kiss.

Maria is in bed, the moon shines through the window. The pendulum of the wall clock swings slowly. It is three o'clock in the morning. A quiet sound like the rustling of a dress can be heard from the corridor. A dream: the sleeping Maria's body slowly rises and hovers above the bed.

Day Five

15/28 July, Jaungulbene - Krustpils (Kreuzburg) (231 versts)

.....

Tsarskoye Selo, park avenue, from a distance the Alexander Palace is visible. Tsesarevich Aleksey is driving a small car, the Peugeot B  b   – it is a gift from his grandmother, Empress Maria Feodorovna. The Emperor and the Empress are sitting on the bench. Their daughters Maria and Anastasia are beside them.

Olga is riding a horse next to the car. They are about to race.



Nicholas to Maria and Anastasia: Girls, get out of the way, there will be a race now.

With her tennis racket lifted up, Tatiana counts: three, two, one (lowers the racket) ... go!

The car and the horse set off in a race. At the end of the path they circle the flowerbed and hurry back. The horsewoman arrives first.

Olga: Let's do it again.

Alexey to his father: Can I put it into second gear? Otherwise the pedal is pressed all the way down and the car still barely moves. This is not fair. Nicholas: What do you mean barely moves, you drive like a real racer. Next year we'll think about second gear.

Alexey (disappointed): We'll think... promise that I can then do it.

N: Okay, I promise. Let me signal the start for you. Nicholas goes over to Tatiana and takes the racket in his hand: Three, two, one, go!



The car and the horse set off. The Empress is watching the race from the bench.

.....



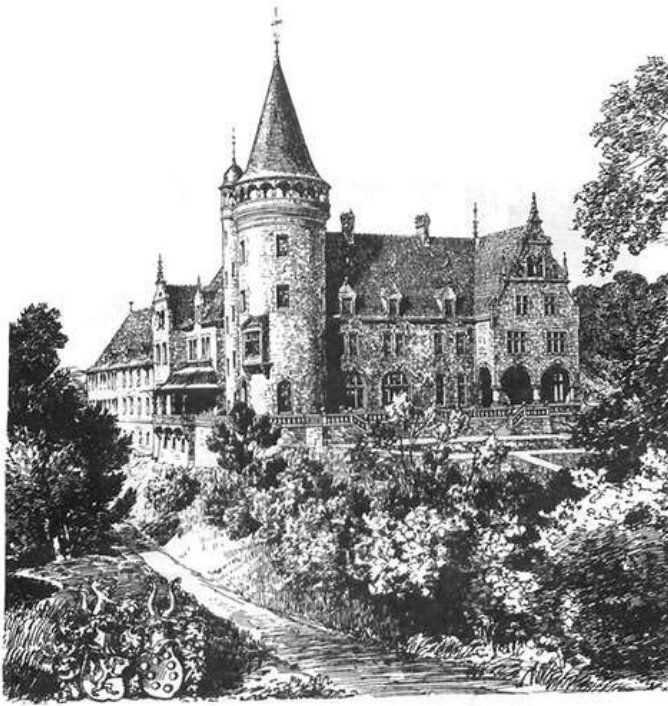
Cesvaine.

Early Morning. The bench in front of the castle, a few bags on it. Maria and Betty are standing near the pond.

The familiar dog is sitting by the water.

Smooth surface of the pond, apples in the water.

Wrangell carries the bags into the car. They all get in the car, Wolf is behind the wheel, they drive away from the castle. Now it is visible in all its glory. A tall tower topped with an elegant steep spire of bright red tiles. From a distance, all this gives the building a fabulous look.



In front of Jaungulbene Manor house.

Feitelberg is explaining something to Shuvalov. Pääsuke takes a few photos with his camera, then puts his equipment on the back seat. Baron von Korff and his wife Irene are walking past.

Irene to the photographer: *Guten Morgen, Schwalbe!*

Pääsuke: *Guten Morgen!*

Feitelberg, pointing towards the Korffs: Today we'll be put up by Baron von Korff and his charming wife in the castle of Kreutzburg. At the end of the way we'll have to cross the river – there is a ferry.

Feitelberg's car drives off. The rest of the cars follow one after another – there is a long journey ahead.

The road.

After yesterday's rain there are a lot of puddles and mud. Cars go in single file, gradually increasing distances between them. Shuvalov, as organizer of the run, stays at the back.

Shuvalov's car

Alexander is driving, Paul von Meyendorff is sitting next to him, Stella has taken the back seat. Engineer Kreisler overtakes them, followed by Schultz von Ascheraden in his Studebaker. Meyendorff: The Ascheradens have an estate somewhere nearby.

Shuvalov: Yes, just round the corner – Liezere, we will almost pass it.

M: I wouldn't buy a Studebaker.

S: Why not? It's a durable car, the price is all right, it's quite good for everyday driving. If there's something missing, it's the compressor engine, like, for example, the one Mengden's got, but for that, of course one should buy a German car.

M: What's up ahead?

They drive closer. Ascheraden's Studebaker is on the roadside, Kreisler's Benz is a bit further away in the field.

S: What happened?

Kreisler: I did a little jump, and a nasty stone was waiting for me over there (he points towards his car). Bent the front axle.

Stella: You are not hurt, are you?

K: I'm not, but the car is hurt quite badly.

Shuvalov: Let's get it onto the road, then we'll see.

They fasten the towrope to Shuvalov's car and begin to tow. Kreisler's Benz approaches the road backwards, then rolls over the curb.

Meyendorff to Shuvalov: The Studebaker wouldn't break or hit anything.

Ascheraden to Kreisler: My estate isn't far from here, I don't think...

K: Let's see.

Kreisler turns on the engine, starts the car. The car, slightly swaying, moves forward.

Kreisler to Ascheraden: Thank you, Alexander, but I will try to continue on the route. Korff has a forge in Kreutzburg, I'll get it fixed there.

Shuvalov: So?

K: So, I'm going to Kreutzburg.

S: Seriously?

K: Yes, I'm going to drive to Kreutzburg.

S: We'll think of a special prize for you if you get there.

They all drive off.

Shuvalov and Meyendorf take a look back, maybe having second thoughts.

Kreisler's car is juddering unsteadily.

The route onwards goes through Keipene, Madliena and Krape to Lielvarde, where breakfast is waiting for the racers.

Lielvarde.



The cars approach the estate. The guests are received by Arthur von Wulf. There is a Benz in front of the manor house – Arthur is also a member of the club.

Tables have been laid in the courtyard. Arthur greets the succession of arriving motorists.

He points them to the buffet tables. Everybody eats in a hurry, there is a long journey ahead.

Arthur points to a hillock visible in the distance: See this hill. There was a castle during the time of the Livonian Order, now there are ruins. At this very place Lacplesis, the hero of the Latvian epic died.

Elizabeth Buxhoeveden: How did he die?

A: In combat, with a man called the Black Knight.

The cars of Ascheraden and Shuvalov arrive. They tell the rest of the story of Kreisler's accident.

Shuvalov to Arthur: Arthur, our friend might be in trouble. He bent his front axle, but he is driving here.

If he's not here by the evening, could you go and meet him? Just in case, you never know.

Arthur: No problem, I can go right now.

S: No, don't go right away, as according to the rules, his car must drive the whole route by itself, otherwise one has to withdraw from the race.

A: Okay, I'll wait until the evening.

The motorists finish breakfast.

Arthur instructs a servant, who hastily packs the snacks from the table into a wicker basket and hands it to Stella Meyendorff.

A: You didn't have time to eat anything.

Stella: Thank you, Arthur – all the best.

They follow the other cars.

The rest of the journey to Krustpils follows the River Daugava.

Victoria's car.

The weather is fine and everybody is in a very good mood. Colourful landscapes run past; here and there little houses can be seen among greenery, looking like toys from the distance. The Daugava flows on the right-hand side. The town of Koknese. On the hill near the bank of the Daugava, the majestic ruins of Koknese castle can be seen.



The local church. In front of the church there is group of girls in bright white dresses.
Victoria: Does anyone know: is there some kind of holy day of obligation today?
Lieven: A confirmation or something... Something is happening here.

The journey continues.

Suddenly, there is a knocking on the bonnet. Everyone is astonished. In the middle of July, there's a hail storm.

Kirill: Something really is happening here.

They enter the town of Plavinas – there is a ferry here crossing the Aiviekste river.

Ferry pier.

Feitelberg directs the loading, next to him there is the tireless Pääsuke with his camera. Wrangell's car is rolled onto the ferry, Maria's Miesse is already there. Victoria's Panhard is next. Buxhoeveden has just arrived in his Opel. This is the last car – four cars can be loaded on at a time.

The Benz of Baron Korff arrives – it is in his palace that the racers will find shelter tonight. However, the ferry is full.

Victoria: Baron, how can we do without you, who will meet us there?

Korff: Do not worry, instructions have been given, they are expecting you there. I will get onto the next ferry, it won't be long.

The ferry leaves.

Opposite shore, cars go in a single file. A wide sandy road suddenly leads riders into a dark forest, and after a while, just as suddenly, into an open area. There, in front of the gaze of the motorists in all its grandeur stands Krustpils Castle.



Krustpils (Kreutzburg).

The cars drive up to the castle. Guests are greeted by the housekeeper. The guests are shown to their rooms. The travellers welcome the opportunity to rest for a moment. Kirill and Victoria go to the first floor. A servant brings up their luggage.

Victoria lies down on the bed: I'll rest for a bit.

Kirill, opening the window: What a view – it's so beautiful.

A lark is singing somewhere in the sky.

After a while car horns can be heard; the passengers from the next ferry have arrived. Boris von Korff's Benz is in the front. Boris's wife Irene, his brother Nicolaus and driver Arthur Fay also arrive in his car.

Again, the guests enter the house. This time the guests meet the hosts.

Someone says: Welcome to Kreutzburg.

On the walls of the castle there are portraits of the ancestors of the Korffs.

Boris tells the guests: On this wall hang are portraits of our ancestors from more than three centuries. It is a tradition in our family to call the eldest son Nicolaus, that's my brother's name (points to brother). Thus, here on the wall there are basically all the Nicolauses - there are about twenty of them.

After talking to the servant: There are tables laid in the salon, so, those who have not yet eaten, do go there. Upstairs we have a cosy room, where we will later listen to some music. By the way, at the very top, in the tower there is a telescope, if anyone is interested. (Guests go in different directions.)

Salon, a table set with snacks, but not a lot of people. Many wanted a short rest.

Boris and Irena at a cabinet, sorting out a stack of phonograph records.

Irene: I don't even know, we have so much piano music... That's not appropriate, is it?

Boris: Here are the romances.

I: Only one.

B: Two, no, three.

I: Perhaps you'd like to sing yourselves?

B: Who among us sings?

I: Shuvalov, for example. You remember that wedding?

B: Okay, but... then we should offer something with the appetizers, it's necessary to create an atmosphere. Do we have sherry?

I: Yes, but do you have cigars?

B: I do. Brilliant, now it's all sorted, now Alexander will definitely sing.

They both laugh.

B: Well, let's take these romances too... to warm up with.

The tower.

Evening. A round room in the tower, a group of men have gathered here. They are smoking cigars, on the table there are a few bottles of sherry, a popular Russian romance is playing on the gramophone.

Korff is telling a story: Last year I travelled to Riga. It was in the autumn. Somewhere after forty versts I ran out of petrol. It was getting late. What was I to do? An old man rode past in a cart. I asked him if there were any pharmacies nearby. He replied that there was no pharmacy, but there was a tavern half a verst away. I took the petrol can and rode with him. Of course, they had no petrol in the tavern, but they were able to find some moonshine. Well, what was I to do, I took ten liters of moonshine – it's fuel, after all. I poured it in, at first the engine backfired a little, but started up - and so I got to Riga on moonshine. The smell was... When I arrived in the city, one constable hung around for quite a while, sniffing, but couldn't work out what the matter was.

The song finishes, there is a pause in the talk and for some time the record revolves. The pendulum of the clock swings slowly. Midnight. Korff takes a guitar from the wall: Alexander?

Shuvalov takes the instrument, fingers the strings, tunes the guitar: Black raven...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVDmfXomG18>

Someone starts singing along, soon everybody joins in.

Garden.

Night-time; Gora, Maria and Victoria are in the garden, Kirill comes up with a cigar in his hand. From the open window of the tower singing can be heard. They look at the sky in silence. Stars are falling. Looking charmingly ominous, the crimson red sickle of the new moon hangs in the sky. The chirrup of crickets, the distant hoot of an owl.

Gora: It's like the sixth day.

Victoria: As in the Book of Revelation?

Gora: Yes.



Sound of an engine, a beam of headlights – Kreisler's car arrives.

Victoria: Kreisler, dear, you got here! Let's go in, everyone will be so happy.

Kreisler: Thank you, your highness, but I'm off to the forge – I'll spend the night there.

Korff's blacksmith comes up: I've been told...

Kreisler: I know what they told you, let's go to work.

Kreisler and the blacksmith leave.

V: I am proud of our club, seriously, I am proud, we have such people...

The forge.

In front of the forge, Kreisler's car is standing with its front propped up on some logs; the front axle has been dismantled. Work is in full swing in the forge – hammers are knocking, iron is ringing, bright sparks scatter in the twilight, light glimmers on the faces of excited workers.

Text behind the scene (voice of a little girl):

And, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

.....

Midnight.

Bank of the Danube. Newsreel.

Loud cannon shot. The bombardment of Belgrade has begun.

On the Austrian bank of the Danube there are siege weapons, which are hitting the sleeping city.

Glow over the city, screams.



(War correspondent of the French *Journal* Henry Barby wrote: “Belgrade was asleep at night on July 28, 1914 and suddenly the Austro-Hungarian reflectors on the other side of the Sava River cast light onto the Serbian capital. The first shell exploded at midnight. Austro-Hungarian bombs fell into the centre of the Serbian capital; there were particularly many in the part of the city by the river”).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdYH7D28pNQ>

Day Six

16/29 July Krustpils – Riga (243 versts)

2.30 p.m, General Staff.



The car of General Yanushkevich drives up. Dobrorolsky is talking to someone at the entrance.

D: Are you coming from him?

Y: Yes, from Peterhof.

D: Did he sign it?

Y: He did.

D: Which version?

Y: He signed both decrees, ordered me to be in contact with Sazonov and play it by ear.

D: Well, what's Sazonov's opinion?

Y: I don't know, Sergei, we are soldiers, we do our soldierly job. Start collecting the signatures. Sukhomlinov is in his office, and Maklakov should be too. In the Admiralty they'll tell you where to find Grigorovich.

D: So, general mobilization then?

Y: Yes.

Ministry of War, 3 p.m.



Dobrololsky enters. The attendant salutes him. Dobrorolsky goes up the stairs. The Minister is received.

Dobrorolsky to the adjutant: Kindly tell Vladimir Alexandrovich that I'm on an urgent matter.

The adjutant goes into the minister's office.

Voice of Sukhomlinov from the office: Come in, Sergei Konstantinovich.

Minister's office.

Dobrololsky (handing the telegram to the Minister): We need your signature.

Sukhomlinov reads: But this means war. I so much do not want to sign it... but if this is a command from the highest level... (signs, hands back the document). You still need the signatures of Maklakov and Grigorovich. The Minister of the Interior should be in his office, but the Naval Minister is in Kronstadt today, and as far as I know, will return after seven.

D: Well, I'll go to Maklakov's office and wait there.

Dobrololsky gets into the car and drives off.

Ministry of the Interior.



Reception room.

Adjutant: Sukhomlinov called, they are waiting for you.

Dobrololsky enters the office. There is an atmosphere of prayer in the room. Opposite the minister's desk is a small table covered with white cloth. There is an icon on it and in front of it an icon-lamp and several candles are burning with a dim light.

Maklakov turns to the icon, crosses himself: War cannot be popular with our people. For the people, revolutionary ideas mean more than victory over the Germans. These revolutionaries are only waiting for the war to finish up what they started in 1905... but there is no escape from fate.

He crosses himself again and signs the document.

.....

Krustpils.

Early Morning. Kreisler and the local blacksmith, their faces sooty but happy, are standing at the gates of the forge; the car is back in service.

The start is at six o'clock. One by one the engines start.

Feitelberg: Today we have the longest journey – it's 243 versts to Riga. Lunch is at Count Komorowski's, in Kurmen.

Feitelberg drives off. Meyendorff, flag in hand, sends the cars to the journey.

They go from Krustpils to Courland via the bridge over the Daugava. On the other side of the river there is a small town called Jekabspils. It is early morning; the streets are deserted.

Forest roads. The cars drive through fog one after another.



Further on, the road turns left. They are heading south, and somewhere here is, Nereta, the family estate of Alexander Shuvalov.

Nereta.



The cars pass the estate of Shuvalov, which is to the left of the road in the fog. Shuvalov's car is the last. Alexander is driving, Paul von Meyendorff is sitting next to him and his wife Stella is on the back seat. The car stops and Shuvalov goes to his house. There is no one there, everybody is still sleeping. He walks through the garden, goes to the river. He throws a few coins into the water.

The river, water is slowly twirling through algae, the coins are gleaming in clear water. *(These are some coins from the future - Estonian and Latvian coins)*

Shuvalov gets back to the car. Stella and Paul von Meyendorff are waiting by the car.

Paul: Shall we go?

They drive off.

After a longer pause.

Stella: We have a very similar house, not far from Reval.

S: In terms of architecture?

Stella: In terms of privacy.

Shuvalov: I spend most of my time in St. Petersburg, but here... it feels good here.

Stella: Doesn't it feel good in St. Petersburg?

Shuvalov: Not like this; here it's peaceful, and from here the world is better visible and it's easier to look into oneself.

Stella: Your people will wake up and not even know that you were here.

Shuvalov: I left them a sign.

Stella: Like... from the future?

Shuvalov: Well, kind of.

Stella (after a pause, wrapping herself in the cloak): I'll take a little nap.

After Nereta, the road turns sharply to the northwest. The sun softly warms the faces of the tired travellers. On their left the river flows, murmuring melodiously.

The avenue begins, another arch is ahead. This is Erberge Manor, belonging to Baron von Hahn. The onlookers are waving to the racers. The motorists wave back, passing without stopping. Another spell of thick forests.

Kurmene.



Another avenue, the small estate of the Komorowskis stands ahead. Lunch is scheduled here. Guests are welcomed by the owner of the house, Count Peter Komorowski and his wife Maria. Komorowski, pointing towards the lawn: This way, please.

The cars are parking.

K: Welcome, I didn't think you would get here so fast.

A row of cars arrive.

K: Come to the table (to the new arrivals) Lunch is served. It's all modest, but with good intentions. Tables have been laid in the courtyard.

Guests sit down, but although it is lunch time, they have not much appetite. The sleepy faces of the travellers show that several of them have been overcome by fatigue.

Maria to Feitelberg: Let's make a change to the rules: let's rest here a for day or two. (To Komorowski) You don't mind, Count, do you?

They laugh, but it is clear that several of them would not mind making a short break.

K: I don't mind at all! Do stay, usually we live here like hermits.

Maria Komorowska: But then again, we have peace and quiet. Not like.... in your capitals. You'll soon end up with a war there.

K: Come on, you'll bring bad luck.

Maria Komorowska: Just look what's happening in the sky.

High in the sky, through the clouds, two suns are still visible.

Shuvalov and Feitelberg get petrol tanks from their cars. Drivers fill the tanks – ahead of them is the last leg of the journey to Riga.

The guests begin to get up from the table, about to get back to the road; they thank the hosts.

Phrases can be heard: Thank you; thank you so much; it was really very tasty; oh, how I would like to stay with you for a day or two...

Komorowski, pointing towards the church tower visible in the distance: See the church? It was built by our family.

Victoria: Well, then in the universe of loving kindness, guardian angels are surely there for your family. Up there (pointing up), they are keeping a record of such acts.

All laugh.

Komorowski: I don't know, I'm afraid there isn't an angel for everybody.

V: There is! Each of us has their own angel. Well, it's time for us to go, time to say goodbye.

K: You know, Victoria, if I may call you that...

Victoria: Of course, of course, Count.

K: So, Victoria, I think the time when God had time for everyone is long gone. Now he's preoccupied with something rather... Well, it's time to say goodbye. By the way, my wife exaggerated a little, we are not such hermits really. We often go to Warsaw; we have roots in Poland – our family is from there.

V: I don't agree with you, Count. I am sure He has time for everyone.

Cars start to drive off; they head towards Bauska. Thick forests again. The weather is unusually stuffy, the air is heavy.

Maria's car.

Johan is behind the wheel; Gora is sitting next to him. (The camera slowly turns to the left in a circle) An endless road, a mysterious forest lake; Maria is curled up, dozing on the back seat, Gora turns around and straightens her blanket.



Bauska.

The local fire brigade is lined up along the road. Copper helmets are sparkling in the scorching sun; the band is playing. Some trumpeters are playing out of tune. The townspeople are waving flags. The motorists continue towards Eleja.

Rundale.

Kirill's Panhard, Lieven is driving.

To the left of the road the magnificent Rundale Palace becomes visible.

Kirill to Victoria: This is the palace of the Shuvalovs; it's owned by Alexander's cousin Andrei Shuvalov.

Victoria: It reminds me of Versailles.

K: That's what it's called, Courland's Versailles; it was designed by Bartolomeo Rastrelli.

V: I'm thirsty.

She takes a bottle from her bag, drinks, passes the bottle to Kirill.

Kirill to Lieven: Prince, would you like some water?

Lieven: Thank you. A bit later.

V: At Eleja, I'll start driving, you will be able to rest.

L: From there it's a little over a hundred versts to Riga.

V (jokingly): That suits me perfectly.

Eleja, the crossroads.

Here, the direct route to Riga begins. At the crossroads there is a sign: "Riga 117 versts".

Kirill and Victoria's car reaches it, stops, and the travellers swap seats. Victoria gets behind the wheel, they drive off.

A moment later Maria's car arrives, driven by Johan.

Maria: I will also get behind the wheel.

They stop, change.

Gora: Look out that you don't speed.

There is a wide straight road ahead, now one can speed up. The landscape is flat and open, there is no protection from the scorching sun (or in fact suns). The road is very dusty.



Jelgava (Mitau).

The cars pass under the festive arch. The people are cheerfully greeting them. From here to Riga it is 40 versts - half an hour to the finish.

The road.

Mengden's powerful Benz rushes past. After a while, the Panhard appears, driven by Victoria, then the Miesse with Maria behind the wheel.

The Miesse catches up with the Panhard, they are now side by side.

Maria calls out to Victoria: Let's catch him!

V: What?

Maria points ahead: Let's catch him!

The two cars rush along side by side; there is a cloud of dust from Mengden's car ahead of them, but it is moving away. The race turns into a contest between the two women, side by side. Victoria's hat, bought in St. Petersburg, comes off her head.

Finish.

Five miles before Riga, there is the finish line arch. Feitelberg and Pääsuke are at the finish line. Pääsuke is setting up the camera.

F: What is the most interesting thing that you have shot?

P: Well, it depends. I've shot a lot not for commercial reasons but to capture the times. City views for example, and ethnographic images for our museum. The year before last I took photos of the car race that passed through our city – it was the Imperial race. I also photographed the flight of an aeroplane, that was also the year before last.

F: So did you shoot Utochkin? It was I who organized his rides. I remember a funny thing happened to us. We raced against each other from Mitau to Riga. He was in his aeroplane, I was in this very car (points to his car). It so happened that we were moving at approximately the same speed. About

halfway there, his hands got very cold up there. He landed on the road, I lent him my gloves, and we flew and drove on. We arrived in Riga at more or less the same time. By the way, we have an aero section in the club. Your countryman Theodor Kalep used to be in charge there. At his factory, called “Motor”, he built the empire’s first aeroplane.

The first car appears in the distance. At a great speed, it is approaching the finish line, followed by a huge cloud of dust.

F: That’s Mengden... What a car!

Mengden’s car crosses the line, Feitelberg marks the time. Then two more cars appear from a cloud of dust, rushing alongside. Pääsuke is turning the handle of his film camera. Spectators back away, behind the sidelines.

Panhard and Miesse cross the finish line at the same time. Slowing down takes a few moments. Cars turn around and drive back. The audience are applauding.

Victoria to Maria: You are good!

M: I was a bit scared.

V: Me too.

They both laugh.

Victoria to the photographer: Did you get us in the film, Swallow?

Pääsuke: I sure did, and very well, too.

V: Oh, I’d like to see it soon.

P: You certainly will.

The motorists gather at the table with light snacks and tea. Above all, they are thirsty.

Kirill to Gora: You can safely go into battle with such women.

They both laugh.

G: Better if not needed.

One by one, other participants of the race arrive. The Mayor of Riga and the Police Chief have come to greet the motorists. The Mayor of Bulmerincq is busy with a bouquet of flowers – he divides it in two. He goes over to Victoria and Maria.

Mayor: On behalf of the city, I have the honour to congratulate the beautiful and brave ladies.

He hands over the bouquets. Applause again.

Feitelberg: I’d like to remind you that we are going to the Leutner factory. We need to weigh the cars before tomorrow’s race. Today there will be no events, everyone can relax.

He goes to Kirill: You are provided with an apartment in our club building on Schulenstrasse.

Kirill: Great, thanks. Perhaps we could take a little look at the city.

The silhouette of Riga. A procession of cars is heading towards the city.

Leutner Factory.

The motorists are met at the gates by Alexander Leutner and a few other people. The cars drive in through the gates.

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Admiralty.



Dobrorolsky arrives at the admiralty, goes up the stairs.

Reception room of the Minister.

Dobrorolsky to the adjutant: Not here yet?

A: Ivan Konstantinovich will be here after eight.

D: Okay, I'll wait. He takes a newspaper from the table, sits down to read.

Adjutant: How are you doing Sergei Konstantinovich?

D: Well, what can I say? No one knows what will happen to the world.

A: Smells like gunpowder?

D: Like gunpowder, and blood.

A: You're talking about Belgrade, aren't you? Yes, when their generals realize that this is all for real, it may be too late.

D: Yes, that's what it looks like.

A: So, you think it already is too late?

Footsteps can be heard. The clock shows 8.20 pm. Dobrorolsky gets up. The Naval Minister enters.

Dobrorolsky salutes: I'm here on a very urgent matter, Ivan Konstantinovich.

Grigorovich goes to the office: Come in, General.

Minister's office.

G: What's happened?

Dobrorolsky hands Grigorovich the document that already contains the signatures of two ministers. Grigorovich cannot believe that the telegram brought to him for a signature is about universal mobilization: What? A war with Germany? Our navy won't have a chance against the German one.

Grigorovich calls Sukhomlinov: Dobrorolsky is here with this telegram... (after a long pause) Well, what can we do? (Signs, hands the document back to Dobrorolsky.)

Dobrorolsky, coming out of the office, to the adjutant: Please telephone the central telegraph office and ask them to wait for me.

A: Certainly, Sergei Konstantinovich.

Dobrololsky gets into the car and drives off.

St. Petersburg Main Telegraph Office

A huge telegraph room, everything is ready to receive the mobilization telegram.

The room of the director of the telegraph office. The clock shows nine in the evening.

The director of the telegraph office holds a telegram in his hands, reads: Good god, really a war?

The phone rings.

The director picks up the phone, hands it to Dobrorolsky: General Yanushkevich... it's for you.

Dobrorolsky listens: Okay, I'll wait.

Dobrorolsky to the head: We will have to wait for the arrival of Staff Captain Tugan-Baranovsky.

Dobrorolsky is waiting at the entrance, smoking. A car pulls up.

Tugan-Baranovsky jumps out of the car, salutes: I've been chasing you all over the city. The sovereign telephoned the Minister of War and ordered the abolition of general mobilization. An hour ago, he received a telegram from the Kaiser. Wilhelm promised to use his influence, to negotiate with Austria and settle the conflict, and our mobilization could become an obstacle in this matter.

D: Good relations between people never prevented states from fighting among themselves.

Tugan-Baranovsky: Our Minister tried to explain to the Emperor that mobilization is not a wheelbarrow that you can push now here and now there. However, the sovereign insisted, so we have to do his bidding. The option of our partial mobilization against Austria-Hungary remains in force.

Tugan-Baranovsky goes into the telegraph building, Dobrorolsky gets into the car and leaves.

.....

Apartment of the Auto Club.



Evening. Victoria is at her open suitcase, sorting things out.

Kirill goes to the window, lights a cigarette: Well, we had a good ride, now we can relax.

V: The day after tomorrow we should go to Germany.

K: Well, we're travelling by train; this is already a holiday. And in Coburg... I hope your relatives haven't organized any mandatory events for us.

V: My relatives are all right, there more problems with yours.

K: Come on, and anyway, our relatives are kind of shared.

(after a pause)

V: I saw how you looked at her today.

K: Maria?

V: Maria. As if hypnotised.

K: Come on, I admired both of you.

V: Why – she is younger, prettier.

K: Believe me, you are my queen.

Hugs Victoria.

V: There is something in her... something wild... gypsy-like...

A lantern is lit outside the window. Clatter of hooves is approaching, then departing. From time to time fragments of the conversations of passers-by are heard.

V: I'd even forgotten how good it feels when you hug me... But my hat flew away.

K: Good thing we bought two.

V: This was the second one.

K: Where's the first one then?

V: Ah, don't ask.

.....
At about one in the morning, Sazonov's apartment.

Corridor, the phone rings. The servant comes in, knocks on the door. A sleepy Sazonov opens the door.

The servant: The German Ambassador, Sir. He urgently asks you to receive him.

Sazonov: Okay, I will, I'll put something on.

Reception room. The clock shows one in the morning.

Pourtalès is deeply concerned and agitated: For God's sake, do forgive me such a late visit, but maybe we can avoid a big disaster. I have received the information that mobilization was announced in Russia.

S: This is a partial mobilization, it concerns only four southern military districts on the borders with Austria-Hungary. You know of course that in Austria eight corps were mobilized and the bombardment of Belgrade has already begun.

P: Germany may perceive this as a threat to itself and also declare mobilization. We both know that while in Russia one can later declare demobilization, then according to our rules, mobilization means war (*dies wurde aber den Krieg bedeuten*). This is basically the greatest danger. Would it suffice for Russia if Austria-Hungary promised not to infringe the territorial integrity of Serbia?

S: This is obviously not enough.

P: But could you formulate some proposal that I could immediately wire to my government? What could be the conditions under which Russia would agree to suspend its weapons?

Sazonov paces the room, stands at the window for a long time, finally says: Well, I'm obviously exceeding my authority, but I'll propose the following formula. If Austria declares its readiness to exclude from its ultimatum points violating the national sovereignty of Serbia, Russia would stop its military preparations.

Sazonov writes down what is said on a piece of paper and hands it to Pourtalès.

P: I know that the Kaiser has already made attempts to persuade the cabinet in Vienna to make concessions.

S: I hope the bombardment of Belgrade was satisfaction enough for Austria.

P: I will immediately pass on your proposal. Thank you for coming here.

S: Goodnight.

Portalès leaves.

Sazonov opens the window. St Petersburg at night. Light drizzle. A carriage rides along the street. From the distance the cries of seagulls can be heard.

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Day Seven

July 17/30 One-hill uphill race in Lorupe

Lorupe. Morning.

The contest takes place fifty miles from Riga, not far from Sigulda, in the valley of the Lorupe River. The weather is beautiful.

A lot of people from Sigulda, as well as from more distant places have gathered at the elegant arch erected on the starting line. Many arrived in their cars, which are standing nearby.

Seven charming little girls in bright white dresses are fooling around by the arch. They are holding copper trumpets sparkling in the beams of the blazing sun.



Feitelberg's car arrives. Pääsuke unloads his film camera, mounts it on a tripod.

A column of cars is approaching along the road – the contestants arrive.

Feitelberg's car drives off. His task is to keep time at the finish line.

The ones who have just arrived take their places in a queue at the starting line, Victoria's Panhard goes first.

Maria's car goes last. Meyendorff with the start list is standing nearby.

Shuvalov in a loud voice: The rules are simple. This is a one-verst race - whoever travels the verst the fastest is the winner. After that we'll go to Prince Kropotkin's – he will offer us breakfast.

Meyendorff raises the flag and the match begins. A total of nine cars are participating. The starting of each car is accompanied by a fanfare. Pääsuke is turning the handle of his film camera. Maria, at the wheel, calls to the camera operator: Come sit with us.

Pääsuke hastily settles in the back seat. Johan helps him to set up the camera.

Start. Pääsuke twists the handle, films the take-off of the car ahead - this is the Benz of Nikolai Koch. Suddenly, his car slows down, stops and starts rolling down the hill backwards. Meyendorff whistles to announce the cancellation of the race, but Maria has already moved off.

Koch's Benz is rolling towards Maria, the sound of the engine cannot be heard. The speed increases, the cars are rapidly approaching each other. Very narrowly, Maria manages to evade the collision.

Koch rolls back to the starting line and manoeuvres to park near the arch. Soon Maria returns as well. Shuvalov and Meyendorf at Koch's car, leaning over to look under the car.

Meyendorff: It seems that you have some issue with the drive shaft, and in reverse the brakes didn't work.

Koch: Shame, and on the last day, too.

F: What can you do? You have to withdraw from the competition.

Maria's car, Meyendorff gives a new start. A flourish of trumpets. From somewhere a low note is heard, similar to the sound of the Tibetan dungchen horn – this sound gradually comes to dominate.

Maria's Miesse disappears around the bend on a hill.

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Around 11 o'clock, Palace Square.

Sazonov pulls up to the General Staff building

General Staff building.

Sukhomlinov, Yanushkevich, Dobrorolsky and others. Sazonov enters, they greet.

Yanushkevich: Sergei Dmitrievich, our mobilization could be postponed for another day at the most, but by then it would be far too late. From now on, Austria fades into the background. The greatest danger is now Germany. There is some evidence that covert mobilization has been going on there for some time. Thanks to the perfection of the German military organization and general discipline, this happens without noise, via individual calls. Thus, a significant part of the mobilization will be carried out before the official announcement of mobilization.

We must again convince the sovereign of the need to announce general mobilization.

Sazonov to Yanushkevich: Tell me frankly, General – do we have any chance left that there will be no war?

Yanushkevich (after a pause): No.

Sazonov telephones Peterhof.

Sazonov: This is Sazonov, yes...

A minute of suspense passes.

I am speaking from the office of the Chief of the General Staff.

(Nicholas: What do you want, Sergei Dmitrievich?)

S: I urge you to receive me, bringing an emergency report, preferably before lunch.

Another spell of waiting.

S: At three o'clock.

The generals breathe a sigh of relief.

Y: Please phone me as soon as the Tsar's decision is known, (in a whisper) after that my phone will probably break down.

Sazonov looks at his watch: I still have time for breakfast, the Minister of Agriculture invited me to the Donon restaurant.

Restaurant Donon 12.30.



A wooden outbuilding with a private room, the garden and tables visible from the window. Tatar waiters scurry here and there.

At the table sit Krivoshein, Sazonov and Baron Schilling. The mood is rather gloomy.

Sazonov (holding a menu in his hand): Well, gentlemen, even if we risk going to war, we shouldn't starve to death, at least. I would love to treat you to a portion of Charlotte Pompadour.

Krivoshein to the waiter: And some stronger tea, please.

The waiter leaves.

Schilling: This morning another telegram arrived from the Kaiser.

Sazonov: The third in total?

Schilling: Yes, the third and a very hostile one.

K: How's that? The sovereign ordered the general mobilization be halted.

Schilling: Yes, he and sent a telegram to Wilhelm at night, thanked him for promising to pacify the Austrians. But the thing is that the morning telegram was not the answer to the last, but to the previous telegram sent by the sovereign. There, the emperor demanded explanations from the Kaiser, after Pourtalès had threatened war.

Sazonov: Well, not Pourtalès himself. The ambassador handed me a telegram from your colleague, the imperial chancellor. In this they did indeed threatened an immediate attack if we continued military preparations. This was called a “friendly warning” (*‘eine freundliche Mahnung’*).

Schilling: The sovereign was beside himself. He sent off a rather tetchy answer just before he received the Kaiser’s telegram yesterday.

K: So, the answers crossed?

Schilling: Yes, so they seem to have done. It is incomprehensible to the mind how, but the Kaiser’s telegram yesterday took fifteen hours to get here. If it had arrived an hour earlier, war could have been avoided.

They drink tea in silence.

Sazonov: And here in the courtyard there once was a pond. Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote about this. (Looking at his watch): All right, it’s time to set off for Peterhof.

Rises, says goodbye and leaves.

K: God save us all.

Sazonov and Schilling get into the waiting car, drive off.

.....

Sigulda (Segewold).



A procession of cars approaches the castle. Cars drove into the courtyard, Koch’s car in tow from Shuvalov’s. Kropotkin goes to meet the guests.

Kropotkin: Welcome everybody, come in, come in My whole life is here in Segewold. It took me twenty years to turn this place into a resort. And now they call this place the Switzerland of Livonia.

Someone asks: How is our famous father of anarchy Peter Kropotkin related to you?

K: He is my uncle. But believe me, I’m not an anarchist, although we debated with him, oh how many times, but he hasn’t managed to persuade me.

Victoria, pointing to the castle: How are things with ghosts here?

K: I must regrettably admit that on this front I’ve been badly deprived.

Ernes Berg: I can talk to Hugo Stryk. I think if you ask him nicely, he'll give you a couple of stones from his foundations - then you'll get your ghost.

K: Is that the girl who burned the estate? Thanks but no thanks; in 1905 a whole bunch of such ghosts visited me here. My peasants came to my aid, otherwise they would've burnt everything down here.

Feitelberg: Don't overdo it with food; remember, in the evening we'll have a banquet in Majorenhof. We are travelling from Riga, at 8 pm a special train is awaits us.

Buxhoeveden talks with Shuvalov: It's interesting that in most cases ghosts are young girls.

S: I think it only seems so to us.

By the open hood of the Benz Baron Alfred Schilling, his wife Lilia and brother Edgar are standing.

Victoria steps over to them: Baron Schilling!

The two brothers laugh: Which of us?



Victoria smiles: Well, both of you, and your lady, too. I almost forgot: Your relative from Petersburg – Mauritius Schilling – sends his regards.

Alfred: Thank you very much. We haven't seen each other much recently, but we talk on the phone. His life is quite hectic there.

V: But yours is peaceful?

They all laugh.

A: So far, yes. Thank you for not forgetting, though.

V: Don't mention it.

The cars start driving off.

Shuvalov to Koch: I'll tow you to Leutner; he'll get your car fixed.

Maria's car; Johan behind the wheel, Maria and Gora on the back seat.

Maria: To Riga, please.

Laughing, they take off.

Kirill's Panhard.

Lieven: I'll take you to the club, but from there I'll drive to right the station to load the car onto the train. Actually, you could do with a newer car when you come back from Germany. Think about it.
Kirill: All right. When we're back, we'll have a think and discuss it.

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Road to Peterhof.

A car rides along a forest road. It is driven by a chauffeur, with Sazonov on the back seat.
They arrive at the palace.



Peterhof.

Sazonov goes up the stairs.

Reception room. The emperor looks tired and preoccupied.

Nicholas: Good afternoon, Sergei Dmitrievich, do you mind if General Tatischev stays here during our conversation? He is travelling to Berlin in the evening or tomorrow morning.

S: Good afternoon, I'm very glad that he's here, but I think it's unlikely that he will be able to return to Berlin.

N: So, you think it's already too late?

S: It looks that way.

At the Sovereign's call, General Tatischev enters the office.

The clock shows ten past three.

S: At night Pourtalès, the German Ambassador visited me. There is no doubt that he is an honourable person and quite sincere in his desire to avoid a war. He asked me to draw up proposals for his government – to indicate the conditions under which we could stop our military preparations.

I took responsibility and suggested that Austria should immediately declare its readiness to exclude from the ultimatum clauses infringing the independence of Serbia as a state. However, in the morning,

our German ambassador, Sverbejev, passed on the response of State Secretary von Jagow that such an offer was unacceptable to Austria and that the Habsburg monarchy would not allow itself to be humiliated and its prestige undermined.

N: So, he spoke for Austria?

S: So it seems. He also added that after our mobilization against Austria-Hungary, Germany too was forced to mobilize its troops, and therefore nothing more could be done and that from then on diplomats should give the floor to the guns.

At the General Staff I was told that, thanks to this special intelligence, there was not the slightest doubt that the German mobilization had moved much further than anticipated. Russia may be in a disastrous position.

I fully share the opinions of Generals Yanushkevich and Sukhomlinov about the danger of any further delay to the general mobilization. There is no longer any hope for peace, and it seems that this has long been decided in Vienna and Berlin.

N: I received a telegram from the Kaiser in the morning.
He passes it to Sazonov.

N: Only threats; I suggested transferring the Austro-Serbian dispute to the Hague court. Not a word about that.

The sovereign continues in an agitated voice: He requires the impossible from me. He's forgotten or doesn't want to admit that the Austrian mobilization was begun earlier than the Russian one, and now demands the cessation of ours, without mentioning a word about the Austrian activity. You know that I already delayed the decree on mobilization once and then agreed to a partial one. If I now agreed to Germany's demands, we would be unarmed against the mobilized Austro-Hungarian army. That's crazy.

The emperor goes silent. Then, with emotion in his voice, he says: This means dooming hundreds of thousands of Russian people to death. Faced with such a fact, how can one not pause and think?

Finally, as if hardly able to pronounce the words: You are right. We have no choice but to expect an attack. Convey to the Chief of the General Staff my order for mobilization.

The clock shows four o'clock.

S: May I use your phone?

N: Of course.

Sazonov hurries to the ground floor of the palace to the telephone.

Sazonov to the duty officer: Kindly connect me to the General Staff.

(To Yanushkevich): Now you can break your telephone.

16.00 General Staff.

Yanushkevich hurries down the stairs. A car is at the front door, the engine running, Dobrololsky is standing next to it.

Yanushkevich: Drive to the Mariinsky Palace. Now all the ministers are sitting there, we will collect all the signatures at once.

D: So, mobilization?

Y: Yes, the decision has been made.

They drive off.

Central Telegraph office. 6 o'clock in the evening, the car of Dobrorolsky drives up. Dobrorolsky enters the hall. The director of the telegraph office is meeting him. Dobrorolsky silently passes him the document. Deafening silence. A large clock on the wall shows 6 o'clock in the evening. A few dozen telegraph machines are ready. The telegraph operators are at their devices in anticipation of the historic telegram; the young women look uneasy.

The click of a burnt-out bulb sounds frightening.

A few minutes later, the silence is interrupted by the loud sound of rattling telegraph machines. This is the end of the old world and the beginning of a new era.



Majori (Majorenhof). Railway station



Evening. A train whistles. A train made up of two carriages arrives at Majorenhof. Guests exit onto the platform and head to the restaurant. Governor Zvegintsov is among the arrivals.

Shuvalov to Buxhoeveden: Our Kropotkin built this station.

B: Yes, well done.

Wrangell: Swallow, where is your movie camera?

Pääsuke: There isn't enough light for filming, so I brought the stills camera.

W: Take a lot of pictures, then; there will be... (comes closer and explains something quietly).

P: I won't forget, I promise.

The banquet.

After everyone has taken their seat, Kirill stands up: The race for the prize of my charming wife has successfully been completed for the third time. We still don't know for sure the names of the winners, but our event would have been worthless if the fair sex had not adorned it with their participation. I propose to raise glasses to our dear companionesses.

Applause, clinking of glasses.

Nikolai von Wrangell stands up: Talking about our beautiful fellow travellers, I would like to add something. I think I'm the happiest person in the world right now because... because I'm in love. (Turning to the lady) Betty, I love you! Will you become my wife?

A moment of silence. Then Betty stands up, takes Nikolai's hand and, looking into his eyes, says: Yes.



Flash of the camera. The whole company applauds, glasses are clinking
Kropotkin to Ermes Berg: At least for the sake of that sort of thing it is worth arranging car races.

The orchestra begins to play. Nikolai invites Elizabeth to dance. A few more couples join them, among them Kirill and Victoria. The mood is elated.

The banquet is in full swing. Chatter; people are discussing the adventures and incidents that happened on the way, remembering with kind words the hospitable owners of estates; toasts get proposed in honour of the brave ladies participating in the race.

A few steps away from the others, Shuvalov and Buxhoeveden are discussing something. Shuvalov clinks his glass against a bottle: Count Buxhoeveden would like to sing a song to our tireless photographer.

Buxhoeveden starts:

*Aus der Jugendzeit, aus der Jugendzeit,
Klingt ein Lied mir immerdar;
O wie liegt so weit, o wie liegt so weit,
Was mein einst war!*

Gradually the whole company joins in, the orchestra plays along. A joyful Pääsuke is at the camera.

*Was die Schwalbe sang, was die Schwalbe sang,
Die den Herbst und Frühling bringt;
Ob das Dorf entlang, ob das Dorf entlang,
Das jetzt noch klingt?*

...

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFLBSB0AdhI>)

Suddenly, a man in military uniform enters the hall. He looks around and, seeing the governor, hands him a piece of paper. The air is heavy with a sense of foreboding.

Zvegintsov: Ladies and gentlemen, I have some urgent news. I have just received a telegram. By the highest decree, martial law and general mobilization have been declared in the country.
Someone's voice: What is this, war?

Paul von Meyendorff, Stella and Gora are standing nearby.

Stella: It's really war? For what reason?

Gora: Wars, just like trivial quarrels, usually happen for no reason.

Paul: Or due to a misunderstanding.

S: Which of those is it now?

G: Such questions are sorted out later. They will choose the option that suits everyone. As for the truth – it is what it is.

Feitelberg is animatedly discussing something with Kropotkin, then, tapping a glass with his spoon: My friends, the prince and I have conferred. We are proposing to cancel tomorrow's events, go to our club right now and hold the awards already (looking at his watch) tonight.

In the twilight, a procession of cars is heading towards the city.

Pääsuke to Feitelberg: Oh, I don't like trains; I don't even know why, but when I get on a train, this anxiety grabs me.

F: But how are you going to get home?

P: Our dear Maria will take me: first to Sangaste – we will take the General home, and from there the two of us will travel to Tartu.

A steam train puffs into the station. The party get into the carriages. A whistle sounds, the train departs.

Clubhouse, night.

The grandfather clock standing in the corner shows 1.25. Award table. A little fuss, the noise of chairs being moved. Finally, there is silence.

Kropotkin: The absolute winner in the category of powerful cars was Count Ermes Berg. He receives our main award – the prize of Grand Duchess Victoria Fedorovna. Ermes stands up, Feitelberg presents him with the award. (Round of applause. Camera flashes.)

The second place in the same category, and the prize presented by the city of Riga, goes to Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich.

(Round of applause.)

In the category of medium-powered cars, the winner was Arved von Transehe.

(Round of applause.)

In the category of low-powered cars the winner was Baron Egon Wolf. (Round of applause.)

By the way, in his category he was the winner of the race also last year.



For an absolute speed record with his compressor engine, a valuable present is given to Baron Felix Mengden. (Round of applause.)

Our beautiful women almost caught up with him, but he managed to escape the chase.

Count Shuvalov rises: As I told some of you, my personal and very special prize goes to Vladimir Kreisler for his courage and technical skills.

Shuvalov takes his gold watch from his pocket and hands it to Kreisler. Round of applause.

Farewell scene.

Wrangell, Betty and Gora are standing next to each other

Wrangell: And it's really war now?

Gora: Seems like that... I've seen many wars, and, you know Colonel, a war is sometimes a strange thing: only at the beginning it all seems clear, but later... sometimes you might be defeated by someone, whom you didn't even count as an enemy, but sometimes you later don't know who the winner was; or, after some time it turns out that the winner is actually the loser.

W: How is that, general? After all, the enemy is the enemy. If you defeat the enemy, you've won.

G: You will fight in a war and understand. Only one thing is certain. Many innocent souls will perish. And not only human ones, no difference there. We are all God's creatures. There is a soul in everyone, life is dear to all.

Betty: My mother told me that death is always the birth of something or someone somewhere, that harmony reigns in the world.

G: Each creature is its own little world, a small universe, and every death is a small apocalypse.

B: Perhaps we should accept that the world is so arranged?

Wrangell: Well, let's say goodbye (They shake hands). God willing, we'll see each other again.

Betty hugs the old general.

Farewell scene.

Maria and Victoria hug.

M: God bless you, Ducky.

They both wipe away tears.

Some people, among them Maria and Gora, leave the club.

EPILOGUE

Clubhouse.

Kirill to Victoria: We have to go to St. Petersburg immediately.

Victoria: But our car went off on the train.

Shuvalov: Let's go in my car.

V: But Count, would you go that way because of us?

S: I've got to go to St. Petersburg anyway.

Kreisler: Baron Korff and I will go to Adsel to see Wulf, it is on the way.

Baron Hahn: I'll join you.

The clock shows three in the morning.

There are a few cars in front of the club building. The headlights go on; cars drive off.

The road. Four cars are going along the road. The cars' headlights illuminate tree branches.

Shuvalov's car is in front; Kirill is sitting next to the Count, Victoria is in the back seat.

Victoria: Oh, don't drive so fast, Count.

Later in the morning, they stop at a fork. Farewells; Kreisler, Korff and Hahn turn left, three cars disappear into the distance. Shuvalov, Victoria and Kirill continue their journey.

Early morning, fog. Continuous rumbling of the engine. Something is ahead... the car slows down.

In the middle of the road there is a bull is standing in the fog.



Victoria: I'm scared.

They slowly go around the beast. Then they continue their journey more cautiously. The fog is getting thicker.

V: I'm cold.

Kirill shuffles in bags, passes Victoria her travel blanket.

Victoria settles down comfortably, with her legs tucked under herself, wrapped in the blanket.

Behind them the roar of the bull echoes, resembling the sound of the dungchen.

V: I keep thinking about this eclipse. This time it definitely isn't a good sign.

K: No, believe me, I don't even know... the main thing is not to worry.

V: Will that help?

K: Surely things will be sorted out (after a pause), or then, perhaps not.

V: I've got the feeling that then some other world will emerge.

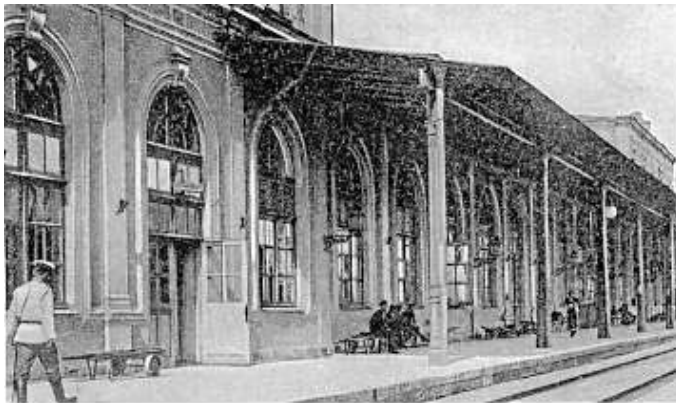
Shuvalov: Remember the first day in Tartu at the Lipharts'? A beautiful sunny day, and everyone was happy. Everyone had some plans for the future. And that was only a week ago. But a war is a tough thing. You never know who you will have to shoot there.

So you realize how fragile the world you live in can be. Life has taught me to appreciate simple things – ordinary peace and quiet, the little things in everyday life, good human relationships, ordinary joys. It hurts when at one moment you lose all this, and this usually happens unexpectedly.

It is getting lighter. People and horse-drawn carts hurrying somewhere begin to appear on the road. Closer to Pskov, there are more and more of them - the mobilization is underway. It is becoming increasingly difficult to advance; they drive into the city.

Kirill: You know what, Count, let's go to the railway station. Perhaps we can get on the train.

Railway station.



Kirill and Shuvalov at the ticket office. There is a huge queue, mostly reservists with some documents in their hands.

They go to the stationmaster: The thing is, my good man: I am Count Alexander Shuvalov, and this is Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich. He and his wife urgently need to get to St. Petersburg.

Stationmaster: You see what's going on here. Are you travelling as well?

Shuvalov: No, I'll carry on by car.

Stationmaster: So, two places... (leafing through a notebook) two places, two places Only in third class, there is no other possibility... and there perhaps won't be that one either.

Shuvalov: All right.

Kirill is given two tickets.

K: How much do I owe you?

Stationmaster: Everything is free today. The train goes in twenty minutes, do hurry.

K: Thank you.

They go out.

Shuvalov: I think you were lucky. Believe me, third class is not so bad. I travelled from St. Petersburg to Tartu in a freight train.

They laugh and go to the car.

Kirill to Victoria: It's sorted, the count got us two deluxe places in third class.

V: As long as they aren't on the roof.

S: Why don't you travel light? I'll bring your luggage.

They pick up a few things, go to the platform.

The train pulls up.

Kirill: Well, let's say goodbye...

They shake hands. Victoria gives Shuvalov a hug.

Victoria: You know, Count, to be honest, I'm not quite sure where I'm headed... and in general – I'm afraid they've already hurt an ant there.

Train whistle sounds; Kirill and Victoria rush into the carriage, the train departs.

Departing train, the clatter of wheels gradually subsides.



It is getting dark, the solar eclipse begins.



THE END

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During the war, Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna, Count Shuvalov, engineer Kreisler, Prince Kropotkin and other members of the club organized a car squad to transport the wounded.

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In 1924, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, as the senior representative of the Romanov dynasty, proclaimed himself Emperor of Russia Kirill I.

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Shuvalov's fellow traveller Baroness Stella Meyendorff became a film actress. In the cinematic world, she is known as Stella Arbenina.

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Cameraman Johannes Pääsuke served as a front-line photographer during World War I.

He died in a train crash in 1918, aged twenty-five.

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