

ADIEU, MON AMIE



Museca

Adieu, Mon Amie

A Story with Music from the Last Days of Montmartre

A Musical Performance by Museca

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ADIEU, MON AMIE *A Story with Music from the Last Days of Montmartre*

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This is a work of fiction. Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli were real historical figures, but all dialogue attributed to them is imagined. Celeste Dupont, Katarina Weber, La Grosse Pomme, and all other characters and events are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

The songs (lyrics and music) contained herein are original compositions created for this work.

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Preface

This story began with a question: What would it have been like to witness the last golden nights of Parisian jazz before the world went dark?

In the 1930s, something extraordinary was happening in the clubs of Montmartre. Django Reinhardt — a Romani guitarist who had lost the use of two fingers in a caravan fire — and Stéphane Grappelli — an elegant violinist raised in Parisian orphanages — created a sound that had never existed before. Their Quintette du Hot Club de France fused American jazz with European sensibility, producing music that was at once joyful and melancholic, technically dazzling and deeply soulful. They played in smoky rooms where artists, intellectuals, tourists, and spies rubbed shoulders, where champagne flowed and the future seemed infinitely bright.

Then came September 1939. Germany invaded Poland. The Quintet was touring England when war was declared. Django rushed back to France; Grappelli stayed in London. The two men who had created magic together would not play as a pair again until after the war. Their separation mirrors countless others — friendships, partnerships, and loves torn apart by borders suddenly made impassable.

Adieu, Mon Amie is a work of fiction set against this real history. Django and Grappelli appear as themselves, but Celeste Dupont, Katarina Weber, and La Grosse Pomme are imagined. The story asks what it might have meant to find

truth in a world of lies, to build a friendship across enemy lines, and to say goodbye knowing you might never meet again.

This is also a story meant to be heard. Eight original songs accompany these six chapters, composed in the gypsy jazz style of the era. I encourage you to listen as you read — to let Django's ghost guitar and Grappelli's phantom violin fill the silences between paragraphs. The music is as much a part of this tale as the words.

Some stories are about the moments that change everything. This one is about the years just before — when the music was loud, the friendships were deep, and no one knew how little time remained.

Paris, 1935. The smoke is rising. The champagne is cold. Django is tuning his guitar.

Let us begin.

Entre nous. Toujours.

Part One

Before the story begins, there is music.

Close your eyes. Imagine a cobblestone street in Montmartre at dusk — the distant wheeze of an accordion, the click of heels on pavement, the murmur of café conversations spilling into the autumn air. A lone guitar begins to play, tentative at first, sketching a melody that searches for something it cannot name. Then a violin answers, and suddenly the night comes alive. This is Paris in 1935. This is the world Celeste Dupont is about to enter. Listen to the Overture, and when the final note fades — when you hear a woman's heels crossing a wooden floor and a door swinging open — turn the page.

The audition is about to begin.

Now playing: Overture: Montmartre, 1935

Chapter One: The Audition

Paris, October 1935

The cigarette smoke hung like blue curtains in La Grosse Pomme, drifting through the amber light of the wall sconces. Celeste Dupont stood at the edge of the small stage, her heart beating against her ribs like a trapped bird. She was twenty-three years old, and everything she had ever wanted sat ten feet away, tuning a guitar with two fingers.

Django Reinhardt didn't look up. His dark hair fell across his forehead as he adjusted the strings, his burned left hand moving with impossible grace. Beside him, Stéphane Grappelli polished his violin with a silk cloth, his elegance a sharp contrast to Django's rumpled intensity.

"You have one song," Grappelli said, not unkindly. "Choose well."

Celeste smoothed her secondhand dress — green velvet, bought with two weeks' wages from the hat shop. She had rehearsed a dozen songs. Now, standing before the greatest jazz musicians in Europe, every lyric evaporated from her mind.

Django finally looked up. His eyes were black and bottomless, carrying something ancient — the road-worn soul of the Romani. He studied her for a long moment, then struck a chord.

"Sing what you feel, little bird. Not what you prepared."

The chord hung in the air. A, minor. The saddest key.

Celeste closed her eyes. She thought of her mother, who had died dreaming of stages she never reached. She thought of the cold attic room where she practiced scales by candlelight. She thought of all the years of wanting, waiting, praying for a moment exactly like this one.

She opened her mouth, and the song came.

It wasn't polished. It wasn't perfect. But it was *hers* — a melody about a girl who chased music through the streets of Paris, who believed that a song could open doors that birth and money never could. Her voice trembled on the first verse, then found its footing. By the chorus, she had forgotten the room entirely.

When she finished, the silence was absolute.

Django's cigarette had burned to ash between his fingers. Grappelli's cloth had stopped mid-polish. Even the bartender had paused, a glass suspended in the air.

Then Django smiled — a slow, wolfish grin that transformed his face.

"Where did you come from, little chanteuse?"

"Belleville," she whispered.

"No." He shook his head. "You came from the same place I did. The place where music is the only way out."

He looked at Grappelli, who gave an almost imperceptible nod.

"You start Friday," Django said. "Don't be late. I hate waiting almost as much as I hate being early."

Celeste's knees nearly buckled. She managed a bow, a breathless *merci*, and turned toward the door before they could see her tears.

That's when she noticed the woman.

She sat alone at a corner table, untouched champagne before her. German, by her clothes — expensive, severe, quietly magnificent. Her blonde hair was pinned beneath a charcoal hat, and her eyes were the pale blue of winter mornings.

She was watching Celeste with an expression that was difficult to read. Not jealousy. Not admiration. Something more like *recognition* — as if she had seen something in Celeste's song that others had missed.

Their eyes met for exactly three seconds.

Then the woman raised her glass, the smallest of toasts, and looked away.

Celeste stepped out into the October night, the cold air sharp against her flushed cheeks. She didn't know the woman's name. She didn't know that in four years, she would watch her board a train and disappear into the machinery of war.

She only knew that tonight, for the first time in her life, she was a singer.

Now playing: "*La Petite Chanteuse*"

Chapter Two: The Big Apple

Paris, June 1936

Eight months changed everything.

Celeste Dupont was no longer the trembling girl in the secondhand dress. She was *la petite chanteuse* of the Quintette du Hot Club de France — the voice that wrapped around Django's guitar like smoke around flame. The newspapers had begun to notice. The crowds had doubled. And every Friday night, La Grosse Pomme burst at its seams with lovers of le jazz hot.

Tonight was no different. The club pulsed with bodies — French intellectuals arguing politics, American tourists chasing the Paris of their imaginations, African musicians from the colonial clubs comparing notes with their European counterparts. The air was thick with perfume, sweat, and possibility.

Celeste stood backstage, adjusting the strap of her new dress — red silk, bought with her own money. Django was already onstage, trading licks with Grappelli, their instruments laughing at each other. The crowd roared with every flourish.

"You're staring at your reflection again."

Celeste spun. The voice was honey poured over gravel — warm, but with an edge. Katarina Weber stood in the doorway, a cigarette holder balanced between two fingers like a conductor's baton.

"I'm checking my lipstick," Celeste said.

"You've checked it four times. It hasn't moved." Katarina smiled and stepped closer. "Nervous?"

"Never."

"Liar."

They had spoken perhaps a dozen times since that first night — brief exchanges at the bar, a shared cab after a late show, a conversation about Ravel that had lasted until the waiters stacked the chairs around them. Katarina was a music teacher, she said. From Munich. She had come to Paris to study French technique, to escape the "vulgarity" of what Germany was becoming.

Celeste wanted to believe her. But there were moments — small ones — when the story didn't quite fit. The way Katarina's eyes swept a room before she entered. The way she changed subjects when politics arose. The way her French was almost *too* perfect, as if she'd studied it for purposes beyond teaching piano.

"Come," Katarina said, extending her hand. "I've secured us a table. Front row. I want to watch you make them fall in love."

Celeste took her hand. It was cool and steady.

"You'll make me nervous."

"Good. You sing better when you're nervous. There's more hunger in it."

They walked through the crowd together, and Celeste noticed how people parted for Katarina — not out of recognition, but out of instinct. She moved like someone who expected the world to rearrange itself around her.

Django spotted them from the stage. He tipped an imaginary hat to Katarina, then shot Celeste a look she couldn't quite read. *Be careful*, it seemed to say. Or maybe: *I see what you don't*.

But then Grappelli counted off the next number, and there was no more time for worry.

Celeste took the stage. The lights hit her like warm rain. She looked out at the sea of faces — and found Katarina's eyes, pale and steady, watching from the front row.

She sang.

She sang about Paris in summer, when the Seine sparkled like champagne. She sang about the jazz that poured from every doorway, mixing languages and colors and histories into something entirely new. She sang about La Grosse Pomme itself — the big apple, sweet and forbidden, waiting to be bitten.

And when she reached the final chorus, the whole room sang with her.

Afterward, breathless and buzzing, she collapsed into the chair beside Katarina. A bottle of champagne had materialized — the good kind, not the swill the club usually served.

"You were magnificent," Katarina said, pouring two glasses.

"You're just saying that."

"I never say anything I don't mean. It's a German failing."

They clinked glasses. The bubbles rose like tiny prayers.

"Why do you keep coming back?" Celeste asked suddenly.

"You must have heard me sing a hundred times by now."

Katarina was quiet for a moment. The jazz played on behind them — Django launching into a solo that sounded like a man arguing with God.

"Because," she said finally, "when you sing, I forget who I am. And lately, that is the only peace I know."

Before Celeste could respond, Katarina raised her glass again.

"To La Grosse Pomme. And to forgetting."

They drank. And somewhere beneath the music and the laughter, Celeste felt the first cold thread of something she couldn't name.

Now playing: "La Grosse Pomme"

Chapter Three: Between Us

Paris, March 1937

The rain had emptied La Grosse Pomme early. By midnight, only the staff remained — and Celeste, who sat at the piano picking out a melody she couldn't quite catch. Django and Grappelli had left hours ago, Django to his caravan in the suburbs, Grappelli to whatever elegant mystery occupied his evenings.

The door opened. Celeste didn't need to turn around.

"You're wet," she said.

"Astute observation." Katarina shed her coat, leaving a trail of raindrops across the wooden floor. "I was walking. Lost track of time."

"In this weather?"

"The rain helps me think."

Celeste finally turned. Katarina looked different tonight — her usual composure fractured around the edges. Her hair had come loose from its pins. Her eyes were red, though whether from rain or tears, Celeste couldn't tell.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Everything." Katarina laughed — a hollow sound.

"May I have a drink?"

They sat together at the bar, a bottle of cognac between them. The bartender had gone home; they poured their

own glasses. Outside, the rain beat against the windows like a thousand small fists demanding entry.

"I received a letter today," Katarina said quietly. "From home."

"Bad news?"

"Instructions." She stared into her glass. "There are... expectations. Of what I should be doing here. Of what I should be *reporting*."

The word hung in the air. Celeste felt the ground shift beneath her feet.

"Reporting?"

Katarina met her eyes. For a long moment, neither spoke. Then something in Katarina's face simply... collapsed. The mask she had worn for eighteen months fell away, and beneath it was someone younger, more frightened, utterly exhausted.

"I am not a music teacher, Celeste."

The cognac burned in Celeste's throat. She set down her glass carefully, as if it might shatter.

"I know."

"You know?"

"I suspected. Small things. The way you watch exits. The way you never answer questions about Munich directly. The way

your French is too perfect — learned for a purpose, not for love."

Katarina closed her eyes. "And yet you stayed. You kept... being my friend."

"Yes."

"Why?"

Celeste reached across the bar and took Katarina's hand. It was trembling.

"Because I am not a singer. Not only, I mean." She took a breath. This was the edge of a cliff. Once she jumped, there was no returning. "I work for the Deuxième Bureau. French intelligence. I have for two years."

Katarina's eyes flew open. For a terrible moment, Celeste thought she might bolt — or worse, that something cold and professional would slide back into place.

Instead, Katarina laughed. A real laugh this time, edged with hysteria but genuine.

"We are both liars," she said. "Trained liars. And somehow we became the truest thing in each other's lives."

"It appears so."

"This is absurd."

"Completely."

They sat in silence, hands still intertwined. The rain softened to a murmur. Somewhere in the distance, a car horn echoed through empty streets.

"What do we do now?" Katarina whispered.

"I don't know. What does your letter instruct?"

"To gather intelligence on foreign nationals in the jazz clubs. Artists, intellectuals, anyone who might be... useful." She paused. "To report on my contacts. My *friendships*."

"And will you?"

Katarina looked at her — really looked, with nothing hidden.

"I would rather die."

Celeste squeezed her hand. "Then we tell them nothing. Both of us. We protect each other."

"They will grow suspicious. Both sides."

"Let them. We give them scraps — enough to satisfy, nothing that matters. We keep this..." She gestured between them. "We keep this sacred."

"Entre nous," Katarina said softly. "Between us."

"Between us. No one else."

They raised their glasses. The clink was barely audible over the rain.

"You know this cannot last," Katarina said. "The world is moving toward something terrible. I feel it in every letter from home. Germany is not what it was. And France..."

"France is afraid. I know." Celeste finished her cognac. "But tonight, we are not Germany and France. We are just Katarina and Celeste. Two women who found each other in a jazz club and refused to let go."

"Even though we should be enemies."

"Especially because of that."

Katarina leaned her head on Celeste's shoulder. They sat that way for a long time, watching the rain paint silver rivers down the windows.

"Sing something," Katarina murmured. "Something just for us."

Celeste didn't move to the stage. She stayed right there, at the bar, and sang softly into the empty room — a song about secrets shared in the dark, about two souls who built a country of their own, population two, borders drawn in trust.

When she finished, Katarina was crying silently.

"I will remember this night," she said, "when everything else has burned away."

Now playing: "Entre Nous"

Chapter Four: Before the Storm

Paris, November 1938

The posters appeared overnight.

PRÉPAREZ-VOUS. Prepare yourselves. They lined the Métro stations, the café windows, the kiosks along the boulevards. Gas mask distribution points. Air raid shelter locations. Instructions for blackout curtains.

Paris was holding its breath.

Celeste stood outside La Grosse Pomme, watching two workmen paste another poster to the wall. A mother hurried past, dragging a child by the hand. An old man sat on a bench, reading a newspaper with the headline: *HITLER DEMANDS SUDETENLAND*.

"It won't come to war," Django said, appearing beside her with a cigarette dangling from his lips. "The English will give him what he wants. They always do."

"And if they don't?"

Django shrugged. "Then I will play guitar in a foxhole. The acoustics might be interesting."

He studied her face for a moment, his dark eyes seeing too much.

"You look tired, little bird. And thin. You're not eating."

"I'm fine."

"You're lying. You and the German — you've been circling each other like wounded animals for weeks. What happened?"

Celeste shook her head. She couldn't explain. Couldn't tell him about the letter Katarina had received three weeks ago — the one with the official seal, the one that had made her hands shake as she read it aloud in Celeste's tiny apartment.

You are recalled to Berlin for reassignment. Report no later than December 15.

Recalled. Such a clean word for such a violent thing.

"It's nothing," Celeste said. "Just the times we live in."

Django took a long drag of his cigarette. "The times we live in," he repeated. "Yes. These times have teeth, don't they?" He flicked ash onto the cobblestones. "Be careful, Celeste. I have seen what happens to people who love across borders. The borders always win."

He walked inside, leaving her alone with the posters and the gray November sky.

Katarina was waiting in the dressing room. She stood by the window, watching the street below, her silhouette sharp against the fading light.

"I'm not going," she said without turning around.

Celeste closed the door. "Katarina—"

"I told them I need more time. That I'm close to something important. An intelligence breakthrough." She laughed bitterly. "They want names, Celeste. Real names. People I can give them."

"And if you don't?"

"Then I am a traitor. And traitors don't get recalled to Berlin. They get... collected."

The word dropped like a stone into still water.

Celeste crossed the room and took Katarina's shoulders, turning her gently. Her face was gaunt, her cheekbones sharper than they'd been a year ago. The elegant German woman who had raised a champagne glass in 1935 had been worn down to wire and nerve.

"Then we run," Celeste said. "Tonight. I have contacts — people who can get us papers. We go to Spain, to Portugal, anywhere—"

"And leave everything? Your music? Django? The Quintet?"

"Yes. If it means keeping you alive."

Katarina's eyes filled with tears. She cupped Celeste's face in her hands.

"You beautiful fool. You would throw away everything you've built — for me?"

"There is no everything without you. Don't you understand? You are the only person who knows who I really am. Not the

singer. Not the spy. Me. If I lose that, what does any of it matter?"

They stood there, foreheads touching, breathing each other's air.

"I can't let you sacrifice yourself," Katarina whispered. "And I can't run. Not yet. If I disappear now, they'll come looking. They'll find you. Everyone connected to me becomes suspect."

"Then what do we do?"

"We buy time. I give them something — not names, not real intelligence. Rumors. Misdirection. Enough to keep them satisfied until..."

"Until what?"

Katarina pulled back. Her jaw was set, but her eyes were terrified.

"Until the storm breaks. And then, in the chaos, perhaps we can disappear."

Outside, the first drops of rain began to fall. Somewhere in the club, Django was tuning his guitar, the notes drifting up through the floorboards like prayers.

"There's a show tonight," Celeste said. "The last one before the benefit hiatus. Full house. Everyone is coming — they want to feel alive before..."

"Before the world ends?"

"Before it changes. Will you be there?"

Katarina took her hand and kissed it.

"I will always be there. Until the very last song."

The show that night was electric — the desperate energy of people dancing on the edge of an abyss. Celeste sang like she was trying to outrun something. Django played like a man possessed, his guitar screaming and laughing and weeping. Even Grappelli, usually so composed, attacked his violin with an intensity that left the audience gasping.

And in the front row, Katarina watched. She didn't applaud. She didn't move. She simply watched, memorizing every note, every gesture, every breath.

When Celeste sang the final song — a new one, unrehearsed, the words spilling out of her like a confession — Katarina finally allowed herself to cry.

The song was about a storm gathering on the horizon. About two people holding hands in the darkness, knowing the lightning was coming, refusing to let go.

The audience didn't know what it meant.

But Katarina did.

And when the last note faded, she raised her glass — just as she had three years ago, on the night they first met.

A silent toast. A promise. A prayer.

Now playing: "Before the Storm"

Chapter Five: One Last Song

Paris, September 1, 1939

The news came at dawn.

Celeste was asleep when the pounding started — her neighbor, old Madame Bellamy, hammering on the door with the heel of her shoe.

"Wake up! Wake up! The Germans have invaded Poland!"

By noon, the radio announced what everyone already knew. France and Britain had issued ultimatums. By September 3rd, they would be at war.

The city erupted into chaos. Men rushed to enlistment offices. Families packed cars with mattresses and silverware, fleeing south. The cafés emptied. The jazz clubs fell silent.

All except one.

La Grosse Pomme opened its doors that night for the last time.

No one had planned it. Django simply appeared at seven o'clock, guitar case in hand, and began to play. Grappelli arrived an hour later, fresh off a telephone call with London — he had been offered refuge there, a standing engagement at a club in Soho. His train left at midnight.

"One more show," he said, rosining his bow. "We owe them that much."

Word spread through the darkened streets. By nine o'clock, the club was full — not with tourists or thrill-seekers, but with the true believers. The musicians, the artists, the dreamers who had built this world and now watched it crumble.

Celeste stood backstage, unable to move.

Katarina found her there.

She was dressed for travel — a gray wool coat, sensible shoes, a small leather suitcase at her feet. Her face was pale but composed. The mask was back in place, but her eyes told the truth.

"My train leaves at eleven," she said. "I bribed an official for a seat. They're sending everyone home — all foreign nationals."

"Where will you go?"

"Switzerland first. I have... friends there. People who don't ask questions." She attempted a smile. "Perhaps I'll teach piano after all. Become the woman I pretended to be."

Celeste couldn't speak. Her throat had closed around everything she wanted to say.

"I have something for you." Katarina reached into her coat and withdrew a small envelope. "Don't open it until I'm gone. Promise me."

Celeste took the envelope. It weighed almost nothing.

"Katarina—"

"Don't." Katarina's voice cracked. "If you say what you're thinking, I won't be able to leave. And I must leave. You know I must. If I stay, they'll find me. And then they'll find you. Everything we built — everyone we love—"

"I know." Celeste pulled her close. They held each other in the narrow hallway, the sound of Django's guitar bleeding through the walls. "I know."

"Sing for me tonight. One last time. So I can carry it with me."

"I will."

"And Celeste?" Katarina pulled back, her hands framing Celeste's face. "Whatever happens — whatever you hear about Germany, about the war, about me — remember this: I was never more myself than when I was with you. You gave me four years of truth in a life built on lies. That is no small thing."

She kissed Celeste's forehead.

Then she was gone, slipping through the backstage door into the crowded club.

Celeste walked onto the stage at ten o'clock.

The room fell silent. Django nodded to her, his face unreadable. Grappelli raised his bow.

She looked out at the audience — at the tear-streaked faces, the clasped hands, the desperate hunger for one more moment of beauty before the darkness came.

And there, in the front row, Katarina. Her gray coat still buttoned. Her suitcase at her feet. Waiting.

Celeste didn't announce the song. She simply began to sing.

It was a melody she had never performed before — something she had written in fragments over the past year, piecing it together in the small hours when sleep wouldn't come. A song about endings that weren't really endings. About love that survived separation. About the strange mercy of having known someone so completely that no distance could erase them.

Django's guitar wept beneath her voice. Grappelli's violin soared and broke and soared again. The audience didn't breathe.

When she reached the final verse, Celeste looked directly at Katarina.

*One last song before we part I'll keep you safe inside my heart
The borders close, the lights go dim But this is not the end of him
Of her, of us, of what we knew One last song — mon amie — for you*

The last note hung in the smoky air.

Then Katarina stood. She raised her hand — not waving, just... reaching. Across the room. Across the war that was already swallowing them.

Celeste raised her hand in return.

For one infinite moment, they held each other across the distance.

Then Katarina picked up her suitcase and walked out of La Grosse Pomme.

The door swung shut behind her.

The applause erupted, but Celeste didn't hear it. She stood frozen on the stage, her hand still raised, watching the empty doorway.

Later — much later — Grappelli embraced her before leaving for his midnight train.

"You sang beautifully," he said. "I don't know what that song meant. But I know it meant everything."

Django said nothing. He simply pressed his burned hand against her cheek, his dark eyes filled with a sorrow older than the war.

"The music doesn't die, little bird. Remember that. We carry it with us."

Then they were gone too.

At two in the morning, alone in her apartment, Celeste opened the envelope.

Inside was a photograph — the two of them at La Grosse Pomme, taken by a street photographer they'd hired on a

whim. They were laughing, their heads tilted together,
caught in a moment of pure joy.

On the back, in Katarina's careful handwriting:

Entre nous. Toujours.

Between us. Always.

Now playing: "One Last Song"

Chapter Six: Celeste's Lament

Paris, September 1939

The chairs were stacked on the tables.

Celeste stood in the doorway of La Grosse Pomme, watching dust motes drift through the pale morning light. The club had been closed for two weeks now — shuttered like everything else, waiting for a war that had already begun somewhere far away and was slowly making its way home.

She shouldn't be here. The owner had given her the key to collect her things — a spare dress, some sheet music, a tube of lipstick she'd left in the dressing room. Simple errands. Twenty minutes at most.

That was three hours ago.

She walked to the stage. Her footsteps echoed in the emptiness. The piano sat beneath a white dust cloth, like a corpse awaiting burial. Django's chair was still in its place, slightly angled, as if he'd just stepped away for a cigarette.

Celeste sat down on the edge of the stage, her legs dangling over the side. This was where she'd stood on that first night, trembling in her green velvet dress. This was where she'd become someone.

And this was where she'd said goodbye.

She reached into her pocket and pulled out the photograph. It was already creased from handling — she'd

looked at it a hundred times in the past two weeks, memorizing every detail. The way Katarina's head tilted toward hers. The blur of laughter caught mid-motion. The ghost of a hand reaching for hers, just out of frame.

Entre nous. Toujours.

She didn't know where Katarina was. Switzerland, perhaps. Or already swallowed by the machinery of a Germany she no longer recognized. The borders were sealed. Letters were impossible. Even her contacts at the Deuxième Bureau could tell her nothing — they had bigger concerns now than tracking one German woman who might or might not have been a spy.

Celeste closed her eyes.

In the silence, she could almost hear it — the phantom music that lived in these walls. Django's guitar, laughing and crying. Grappelli's violin, elegant and wild. The clink of champagne glasses. The murmur of a hundred conversations in a dozen languages.

And underneath it all, Katarina's voice: *When you sing, I forget who I am.*

Celeste opened her mouth.

At first, no sound came. Her throat was tight, her chest heavy with all the things she'd held inside since that night at Gare du Nord. But she pushed through — the way she'd pushed through her first audition, her first heartbreak, her first lie for her country.

She sang.

Not for an audience. Not for Django or Grappelli or the crowds who would never return. She sang for Katarina — wherever she was, whatever she had become. She sang for the woman who had seen her truly, who had held her secrets like precious things, who had walked out of a jazz club and into a war without looking back.

The song had no structure. No verses or choruses. Just a melody that rose and fell like breathing, like grief, like the tide coming in and going out.

When she finished, the silence was absolute.

But it was a different silence than before — not empty, but full. Full of everything they'd shared. Everything they'd been.

Celeste stood. She looked around the club one last time — at the bar where they'd shared their secrets, at the front row where Katarina always sat, at the stage where she'd become *la petite chanteuse*.

Then she walked to the door.

Before she left, she paused. Reached into her pocket. Pulled out a small card — her own photograph, taken the same night, her address written on the back.

She tucked it behind the bar, in the spot where they used to hide their private bottle of cognac.

If Katarina ever came back — if the war ended, if the borders opened, if miracles still happened — she would know where to look.

Celeste stepped out into the September morning. The streets were quiet. A few pigeons scattered at her approach. Somewhere, a church bell tolled the hour.

She didn't know what came next. She didn't know if she would survive the war, or if France would survive, or if anything they'd built would remain when the smoke cleared.

But she knew one thing with absolute certainty:

The song would survive.

It lived in her now — every note, every word, every silence. And as long as she carried it, Katarina was not truly gone.

Celeste turned her collar up against the autumn wind and walked toward the river.

Behind her, La Grosse Pomme stood empty and waiting.

Fin.

Now playing: "Celeste's Lament"

Coda

Years pass. Wars end. Borders open and close and open again.

We do not know what became of Katarina Weber — whether she found safety in Switzerland, whether she survived the madness that consumed her homeland, whether she ever returned to Paris to search behind a dusty bar for a photograph with an address written on the back. History swallows so many stories whole, leaving only silence where lives once burned bright.

But we know what became of the music.

It survived. It always survives.

Somewhere, even now, a guitarist is learning Django's runs, fingers dancing across strings in that impossible Romani style. Somewhere a violinist draws a bow and channels Grappelli's elegant fire. And somewhere, perhaps, a singer hums a melody she cannot quite place — a song about two women who met in a jazz club, who shed their masks on a rainy night, who built a country of their own and called it *entre nous*.

The clubs of Montmartre are gone now, or changed beyond recognition. La Grosse Pomme exists only in imagination. But the songs remain — passed from hand to hand, voice to voice, heart to heart. This is how we keep the

dead alive. This is how we honor the friendships that war tried to erase.

Celeste sang it best: *The song remembers what we were, when all else becomes a blur.*

And so we end where we began — with fragments of melody, now transformed by everything we have witnessed. The hopeful arpeggios of a girl in a green velvet dress. The joyful swing of a room alive with possibility. The tender intimacy of secrets shared. The desperate defiance of lovers before the storm. The breaking voice of a final goodbye. The lament of an empty room.

All of it woven together. All of it reaching across time.

Not goodbye. Just *adieu* — until we meet again.

Entre nous. Toujours.

Between us. Always.

— *Now playing: Adieu, Mon Amie (Reprise)* —