

THE GRAVY TRAIN

Written by

James Shearer

shearerja@aol.com

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FADE IN:

EXT. FRANCE. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

An old saloon car occupied by ERIC and his wife, DAPHNE, both late 60s, stops at a junction in a rural area.

A sleek Mercedes driven by AHMED, 40s, rear-ends the saloon.

INT/EXT. SALOON CAR/COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The couple are jolted by the impact.

ERIC  
Strewth! What was that?

DAPHNE  
Oh no, Eric... someone's hit us!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Ahmed, a burly, well dressed man of Middle Eastern appearance, gets out of the Mercedes.

He lumbers up to the saloon and puts his face in Eric's window. His heavily accented English is good. He gesticulates.

AHMED  
It is all my fault. What can I say?

ERIC  
Well, you can say sorry for a start.

AHMED  
Of course... a thousand apologies.  
I will pay for everything.

DAPHNE  
Eric... our holiday.

She leans across Eric.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)  
(to Ahmed)  
We're touring...

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The couple get out of their car.

CONTINUOUS

The trio survey the damage to the rear of the vehicle.

ERIC

Better get the police.

AHMED

There is no need. It will take hours. Questions, papers. They love their red tape.

DAPHNE

What are we going to do?

AHMED

You are touring? Then you will take my car and I will see to the repair of yours. It will be as good as new. Better, perhaps. I have no damage. These Mercedes are very strong.

ERIC

What? We can't do that. What about insurance?

AHMED

I am fully insured. For any driver.

ERIC

But how do we know --

AHMED

That I am the owner? That it is not stolen? That I will return your car?

ERIC

Well...

AHMED

I can show you all the proof you need. My driving licence. A phone call to my office. To my bank. How many days have you left?

DAPHNE

We only left home earlier today and caught a midmorning ferry from Dover --

ERIC

For a weeks touring.

AHMED

I will arrange for your car to be taken to a garage in town. You can pick it up there in a week.

ERIC  
I don't know.

The couple ponder.

DAPHNE  
It's a Mercedes, Eric. You could  
drive it.

ERIC  
Oh, I could drive it all right.  
Well --

AHMED  
Well then, that is settled. Let us  
not delay any longer.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Two MECHANICS are busy taking the saloon apart under the watchful eye of Ahmed.

They load four packages of brown powder into compartments above a wheel arch.

Another WORKER appears. Ahmed thrusts a car key towards him.

AHMED  
Get a copy, just in case.

INT. GARAGE - DAY - **A WEEK LATER**

Eric and Daphne appear in the entrance of the garage.

Their car awaits them, repainted a spanking bright red. Ahmed stands beside it, smiling broadly.

AHMED  
(jovially)  
Ah... how was your holiday?

DAPHNE  
It was super... just wonderful.

AHMED  
See... good as new. I even had it  
resprayed. How was my car?

ERIC  
Your car? Beautiful to drive. It  
went like a dream. But just look at  
our old banger... you know, I'm not  
sure what to say.

AHMED

You say nothing, it was all my fault and now, my pleasure.

ERIC

Thank you. Thank you so much.

AHMED

As I said, it's my pleasure. The least I could do. So, here are the keys and I wish you a pleasant trip home.

The two men shake hands.

ERIC

Thanks.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

Ahmed and the mechanics watch them drive off, then turn and grin at one another.

AHMED

Street value, two million euros!  
(laughing)  
English imbeciles...

EXT. WOKING. A SEMI-DETACHED HOUSE - DAY

A "Sold" sign straddles a "For Sale" sign outside the property.

Eric is mowing the front lawn. The red car is parked on the small drive.

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

A Range Rover drives up and stops. A flabby passenger, HUSSAIN, 40s, clambers out and approaches the garden gate.

A second olive skinned MAN remains at the wheel.

HUSSAIN

(broken English)  
Hello... excuse me.

Eric approaches the gate.

ERIC

Can I help you?

HUSSAIN

I think you can, my friend. Is this your car? I must have it.

ERIC

Sorry?

HUSSAIN

It is what I have been looking for.  
For my wife. It is exactly the  
model and the colour. Wonderful...  
like a gift from heaven!

Daphne appears at the front door.

DAPHNE

Eric? Darling, what is it?

ERIC

I'm not sure. This gentleman wants  
our car.

HUSSAIN

I give you money now. Cash. How  
much is it worth?

Eric appears taken aback.

ERIC

But it's not for sale...

HUSSAIN

How much?

ERIC

It's nearly twenty years old,  
man... you don't want it.

HUSSAIN

How much, sir?

ERIC

Well, if it's that important to  
you, say... I don't know, does two  
thousand pounds sound about right?

HUSSAIN

I give you three. Then you get nice  
new second hand car!

ERIC

Surely you can't be serious? I  
mean...

HUSSAIN takes out an envelope from a pocket and slowly counts  
out £50 notes, placing them into Eric's upturned hand.

HUSSAIN

Three thousand. There!

ERIC

You must be joking...

HUSSAIN

No joke. You don't know my wife.  
She will be most happy. Ecstatic,  
even.

Daphne has joined Eric at the gate.

ERIC

What do you think? Shall we --

DAPHNE

Three thousand pounds? Give him the  
keys, darling!

They stand united and watch their car disappear along the  
road, followed by the Range Rover.

ERIC

She did us well, dear...

The couple embrace.

INT. SEMI-DETACHED. KITCHEN - EVENING

Daphne is pouring over travel brochures. Eric appears with  
four packages of brown powder and rests them on the table  
beside the pamphlets.

ERIC

Fools... think we were born  
yesterday and would fall for that  
one? One of the oldest tricks in  
the book. You can't con a conman.

Eric picks up the kettle and fills it with water.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Well, what's it to be dear once  
we've moved house? World cruise or  
perhaps a fly-drive holiday in the  
states? I've always wanted to drive  
coast to coast.

DAPHNE

What's it to be? Well for starters,  
how about an Indian takeaway this  
evening?

ERIC

I thought we were having lamb chops  
for dinner?

DAPHNE

(opening larder door)  
I've just remembered I haven't  
replaced the Bisto. Chops without  
gravy?

ERIC

You're right... Indian is a super  
idea. I think we can afford it.  
I'll get the menu.

They exchange mischievous smiles.

FADE OUT.