

Stage(d) Kiss

by
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EXT. PARIS CAFE, 1950 - EVENING

SERGE people watches as he sits in a sidewalk cafe. A slender man in his thirties, he has an intense look as he scans the crowds passing by.

He tinkers with his camera and takes some random shots. A WAITER comes over and plunks a cup of coffee down. Neither he nor SERGE engage in any chit-chat. Beside him, TWO MEN are having a heated discussion.

FIRST MAN

It *is* man's nature to seek out violence! One horrific war barely over and now all the headlines are about Korea!

SECOND MAN

You make a very simple argument, my friend. We live in complicated times. The scourge of fascism was erased, only to be replaced by communism. What are we to do? Allow the reds to take over the world?

FIRST MAN

And you believe such nonsense?! Are you so easily manipulated?!

The Second Man slaps his newspaper.

SECOND MAN

What about this?! China may send troops to Korea. Would you just bow down and let them take over Asia?!

FIRST MAN

It won't make a whit of difference in my life!

They're both silent for a moment. Serge turns his camera towards them. When one starts speaking again, he puts it down.

SECOND MAN

I don't want to talk about that anymore. Look, Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini had a boy. That ends her career.

The First Man gives him a dismissive wave.

Serge notices a young, happy couple, JACQUELINE and ETIENNE. Etienne spontaneously grabs Jacqueline and kisses her.

Serge quickly takes their picture. One of the men pokes Serge on the shoulder.

FIRST MAN

Did you get a shot of those two?
I'm fed up with all this talk of
war and despair. It's Valentine's
Day, for heaven's sake!

SERGE

Dammit, I'm almost certain I
didn't.

SECOND MAN

Then ask them to pose.

SERGE

It was so spontaneous, I don't want
to stage--

The couple approaches Serge, who tenses up a bit.

ETIENNE

Did you just take our picture?

SERGE

If it bothered you--

JACQUELINE

No, we were wondering if we could
get a copy, as a memento of our
first Valentine's Day.

SERGE

Actually, I'm not sure I got you.
The daylight is almost gone, I
should have used my flash. Would
you mind one more kiss, just like
the last one?

The young couple smile. Serge points his camera. Etienne pulls Jacqueline close and gives her another passionate kiss. This time, a burst of flash goes off. Serge captures them.

SECOND MAN

A staged kiss that shows true love.

SERGE

Amen.