

BLUE BALLOON
By
PENNY GEORGIU

2019

pengeo129@gmail.com

BLACK SCREEN:

SUPER: 1989 Edinburgh

WHISTLES blowing, train doors SLAMMING shut, the rhythmic THUD of footsteps, and the HUM of the commuting crowds.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O)
Platform eleven. Five thirty
Scottish Rail to Glasgow via
Linlithgow, falkirk and
Cumbernauld. Final call.

FADE FROM BLACK TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM 11 - DAY

The platform ATTENDANT, focused and efficient, SLAMS shut the door of coach C. Beyond him stretch twelve coaches, labeled from A to L. He swiftly moves to the next.

He repeats the action, SLAMMING shut coach door D.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

A pair of red heels with three-inch spikes pound the ground, each step rapid and urgent. Beside them, small blue Velcro sneakers hustle to keep up, their tiny legs encased in jeans.

The bustling sounds of the station are drowned out by the relentless rhythm of their footsteps.

INTERCUT BETWEEN: PLATFORM-11/RUNNING FEET.

An attendant slams each coach door shut. The scene slices back and forth between the doors and the feet.

REVEAL:

ELLA (7), in a blue coat with bouncing pleats, clutches her mother's hand. CINDY (30s), short blonde hair, coffee cup in hand, runs beside her daughter with poise despite her heels.

Ella's free hand clings to a long string, her gaze darting between the path ahead and the glittering blue balloon trailing behind her.

The attendant slams coach door K and moves toward the final coach.

TOP VIEW:

The vastness of the station sprawls out, with Platform 11 in the center.

The attendant nears coach door L.

Cindy and Ella round the corner, bursting onto Platform 11.

INT. - PLATFORM 11 - DAY

Attendant's P.O.V: Cindy and a grinning Ella running towards him.

CINDY
(raising the cup)
Wait!

Reverse P.O.V: The attendant's hand on the door.

ATTENDANT
Nick of time.

CINDY
Thanks.

ELLA
Thank you, mister!

SHANE (7) watches from his window seat as Cindy and Ella board Coach L (first class). His eyes widen, catching sight of the trailing balloon.

INT. COACH L - DAY

The coach door SLAMS shut as ROBERT (30s), smartly dressed, strides in from Coach K. Cindy collides with him, sending a splash of coffee onto his cream shirt.

INT. - PLATFORM 11 - DAY

The attendant turns, blows his whistle, and signals to the driver with an orange paddle. He's oblivious to the balloon floating outside the train.

The engine hums as the train begins to pull away.

INSIDE THE TRAIN:

Shane's eyes are fixated on the balloon. Opposite him, a man reads a broadsheet newspaper--his father.

OUTSIDE:

As the train gains distance, the balloon's string stretches and contracts.

The attendant notices the balloon.

ATTENDANT
Well, that's a shame.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Ella tugs on the balloon with both hands, watching it dance in the whooshing air outside the door window.

CINDY (O.S)
I wasn't looking. I have tissues.

ROBERT (O.S)
It's okay. It will come out in the wash.

ELLA
Mum. Mum! My balloon. It's stuck, Mummy... Mum!

Ella looks up at Cindy rummaging in her handbag.

CINDY
You wouldn't believe the day I've had. I had to-

Cindy pulls out a packet of tissues.

CINDY
(interrupting herself)
Found them.

Ella tugs on Cindy's coat as Cindy starts to smudge the stain. Robert stands awkwardly accepting the fuss, but waiting to pass through the narrow entrance to Coach L, blocked by Cindy.

CINDY
(Looking down at Ella)
In a minute, sweet pea.
(whispering) Remember what I told you about embracing opportunities?

Cindy shifts her eyes toward Robert--the opportunity.

ELLA
But Mum, my balloon. It's...

Cindy re-engages with Robert, smiling sweetly at him.

CINDY (O.S)
Kids. Who'd have them, aye!

Cindy laughs. Robert chuckles politely. Ella frowns, watching her mother flirt.

ROBERT
(Looking at his shirt)
I think that's sorted it.

The stain looks worse.

CINDY
(Smiling)
I blame the heels.

Cindy extends her leg, showing off the heel. Robert's eyes drop to the shoe, then skim her outstretched leg to her black pencil skirt before meeting Cindy's seductive stare.

ROBERT
I see the problem.

Ella rolls her eyes and turns back to the balloon. Behind her, Shane squeezes past Cindy and folds his arms, unnoticed by Ella.

SHANE
You need to let go.

Ella turns to Shane, switching the string from her right hand to her left. She frowns.

ELLA
(shaking her head)
Nut-uh.

SHANE
The tunnel will pop it.

Ella scowls and tucks her chin. Shane laughs.

ELLA
It's not funny, boy!

SHANE
I'm bigger than you, at least by a frog's head, and my dad said you should listen to your elders.

ELLA
Bigger doesn't mean older. And my granny is older than your dad, and she once told me to hold on.

SHANE
Well, balloons are ten a penny.
That's what my dad said.

ELLA
Nut-Uh. I paid fifty pence for this
one.

SHANE
Girl, you got cheated.

ELLA
It has glitter in it and sticks to
the ceiling. It doesn't just fall.

SHANE
If you let it go then, it might
reach heaven. There are angels in
heaven.

ELLA
You don't know.

SHANE
Yes I do. My Mum's an angel. Been
one a year now.

Beat.

ELLA
(undips her brows)
Does she have wings?

Shane shrugs.

SHANE
I've not seen her, 'cause angels
are invisible.

ELLA
I've never seen my real dad. I have
other dads though. Five!

SHANE
Liar!

Ella turns and looks up at her mother, who is now scribbling
a phone number on Robert's arm. She tugs on Cindy's coat.

ELLA
Mum. The boy called me a liar. Tell
him I have five Dads.

Ella watches the bouncing chins of the grown-ups.

SHANE

I don't think she heard you.

Ella looks out the window again. Shane moves to the door and leans on it, looking up at the balloon.

ELLA

If I let go, will an angel return
it to me?

SHANE

(looking at Ella)

It's just a balloon. I think angels
have more important work.

ELLA

It's not just a balloon, boy!

SHANE

My name's Shane. And it is just a
balloon. A piece of blow-up rubber
with glitter inside. Anyway, all
balloons eventually pop or shrivel
and die. Just like people.

ELLA

This balloon is magic.

SHANE

There's no such thing.

ELLA

That's because you don't believe in
magic, but it's really real 'cause
I've seen it. My mum's magic.
That's why my dads disappear.

SHANE

Maybe you just don't see them
walking out the door. I had a
stepmum that did that. She was
there, then she wasn't. It happens,
girl.

ELLA

My name's not girl, it's Ella, and
my now dad will not disappear if he
has this balloon. Blue's his
favorite color.

SHANE

Kids like balloons, not grown-ups.
I might be too old for them now.

ELLA
(frowning)
I'm too old to believe in angels,
and heaven doesn't even exist. It's
a fairytale.

Shane peers out the window, spotting the tunnel beyond the bend. He twists his head to Ella.

SHANE
The tunnel is almost here.

Ella moves towards the window, looking ahead to the tunnel and then at the balloon. Shane places a hand on Ella's shoulder.

SHANE
You have to let it go, or it will
pop and that's worse because it
can't have another journey. If it's
meant to be in your life, it will
find you.

ELLA
The angels will return it to me?

SHANE
Once they're finished with their
other jobs.

Ella contemplates, her gaze fixed on the balloon as Shane remains focused, his attention locked on the tunnel ahead.

With a deep breath, Ella's hand relaxes its grip on the string, allowing it to slip through her fingers like spaghetti. Together, they watch as the balloon ascends into the sky, shrinking into a mere dot in the distance.

The train plunges into the tunnel, swallowing the coach in darkness. The CHUGGING of the engine reverberates.