

Passenger Call : "Goutte D'or. Please."

=== intro

\$\$ movie: black \$\$

\$\$ hide\_passenger \$\$

Your next passenger is heavily pregnant.

You go to help her inside but she waves you away with a hand.

LOLA : "I'm fine."

Judging from her accent she's not from Paris. Not from France.

"Things just take a bit longer these days."

She settles in, adjusting her coat around her huge belly.

-> french

=== french

\$\$ travel: start \$\$

You gun the accelerator and set off. Instinctively you find yourself driving more deliberately; not slower.

Just... carefully.

You regard the woman in the mirror. She's staring out of the window with a thousand-yard stare, her hands wringing themselves around each other like a fistful of snakes.

\* "Your French is pretty good." -> french-hub

\* :silence: (Stay silent.) -> french-silence

=== french-hub

She glances at the back of your head.

LOLA: "I know."

\* "Where are you from?" -> french-wherefrom

\* "You're American?" -> french-american

\* "You're English?" -> french-english

\* :silence: (Say nothing.) -> french-silent

=== french-wherefrom

She sighs deeply. It's obviously not the first time she's heard the question.

-> french-uk

=== french-american

She snorts.

LOLA: "Jesus. I'm working on me accent but I didn't know it was that bad."

-> french-uk

=== french-english

LOLA: "Exactly..."

She seems surprised.

-> french-uk

=== french-silent

LOLA: "You're trying to place the accent aren't you?"

You nod sheepishly.

-> french-uk

=== french-uk

LOLA: "I'm from the UK."

LOLA: "Wait... Manchester. I'm from Manchester."

LOLA: "I mean that's in the UK but... the distinction is important. Especially these days."

LOLA: "Say the UK and everyone assumes you're from London."

LOLA: "I fucking hate London."

-> england

=== england

You've driven a fair few British people over the years. Most don't speak a word of French.

Many had an odd sense of pride in their lack of language ability.

But, accent aside, the young woman behind you is fluent.

"I didn't mean to offend."

She looks away from the window and into your eyes. You try a smile. Her face softens.

LOLA: "Don't worry about it. You get used to it."

LOLA: "There're worse things you could've opened with."

She shifts uncomfortably.

\* "How far along are you?" -> england-pregnant

\* "I don't know much about Manchester..." -> england-manc

\* "Say nothing." -> england-silent

=== england-pregnant

LOLA: "It normal for cabbies to ask extremely personal questions from the get go?"

You shrug.

"Some people like to talk. Helps the ride pass quicker."

LOLA: "Does it now...?"

She squirms a little, a small grimace passing over her face.

LOLA: "7 months."

LOLA: "Fuck... feels more like 17."

LOLA: "You any idea how hard it is going for a piss in a crowded shopping centre carrying another human around like a... fucking... personal bus service?"

LOLA: "Another human whose favorite pastime just so happens to be giving your bladder a swift kick every 20 minutes?"

She blows out a sigh. It sounds like hot air escaping a kettle.

LOLA: "It's pretty fucking hard."

Her tone is harsh but looking back you see her hands stroking her belly, and a small smile linger briefly on her lips.

-> england-outro

=== england-manc

LOLA: "Not even United? Or City?"

At first you don't get the reference. Then you realise she's talking about football.

"I don't really follow all that."

LOLA: "Smart man. Bunch of overpaid wankers kicking a fancy balloon about."

LOLA: "If it's not 'Oh you're from London!' it's 'Which team do you support?'"

LOLA: "Spare me."

She pauses and runs a hand over her belly.

LOLA: "We miss it."

LOLA: "Manchester."

LOLA: "Both of us."

LOLA: "Market Street on the way home from work."

LOLA: "Fog Lane park on Sunday morning, brickie's tea and a bacon barm."

She sighs and looks down at her bump.

LOLA: "She hasn't stopped kicking since we left."

-> england-outro

=== england-silent

LOLA: "Took a cab a few days ago. Hospital check-up."

LOLA: "Cabbie took one look at me, heard my accent. Started going on about immigrants, how bad they were for French culture."

She sighs.

LOLA: "Turns out he thought I was from Afghanistan or somewhere."

LOLA: "Cause that's what they all look like, the Muslims. Me."

She shakes her head in disbelief.

LOLA: "Once he figured out I was from Britain he changed his fucking tune."

LOLA: “You’re one of the good ones!’ he said.”

LOLA: “Prick.”

LOLA: “Junior here kicked up a storm whenever she heard his voice though.”

LOLA: “Good judge of character already, if a little fucking aggressive about it.”

-> england-outro

=== england-outro

LOLA: “She’s a feisty one that’s for sure. That’s her French side.”

“She’s half French?”

LOLA: “Not sure it’s half. I’m the one doing the heavy lifting.”

LOLA: “But a definitely a good third or so yeah.”

LOLA: “That’s why I’m over here. Ahmed insisted the little bugger pops out over here.”

LOLA: “Gets herself an EU passport.”

The smile on her face dies in place, and she stares out of the window again.

LOLA: “And he needed to get out of the UK. After... everything that happened.”

\* “He didn’t like it there?” -> Ahmed-lik

\* “You mean the... political situation?” -> brexit-intro

\* :silence: (Say nothing.) -> ahmed-silence

=== Ahmed-like

LOLA: “He liked it fine. Really got on with pasties for some reason.”

LOLA: “It was the country that decided it didn’t like him.”

LOLA: “Or me.”

-> brexit

=== brexit-intro

She sighs.

LOLA: “Fucking Brexit.”

As soon as she’s spoken her mouth folds into an O and a groan spills from her throat.

LOLA: “I swear, every time I talk about Brexit...”

Another grimace.

LOLA: “...she kicks the shit out of my fucking womb.”

She rubs her belly and mumbles a few soothing words. After a moment, she returns her attention to you.

LOLA: “But yeah. Fucking... B-word.”

-> brexit

=== ahmed-silence

LOLA: "We had a flat. He got himself a few gigs doing kitchens."

LOLA: "Saturday nights down the cinema watching all night horror-thons."

She smiles.

LOLA: "It was lush."

LOLA: "Then it all went sideways."

-> brexit

=== brexit

LOLA: "I mean, no-one thought it was actually going to happen..."

LOLA: "You'd see the campaigners out on the streets, remain and leave. You'd pass them off as fanatics or something."

LOLA: "I wasn't into politics but when it's on the news every night something leaks through."

LOLA: "Something gets you thinking."

LOLA: "Ahmed was more into it than I was. Kept bringing home these fliers, blue for remain, red for leave."

LOLA: "Like it was a fucking primary school popularity contest. Or something."

You look back and notice her hand go to her mouth. She starts plucking nervously at her bottom lip.

\* "Must have been scary." -> brexit-scary

\* "It looked insane..." -> brexit-insane

\* (Say nothing.) -> brexit-silence

=== brexit-scary

LOLA: "Nothing was ever positive. Every argument, every headline... non-stop fucking negativity."

LOLA: "Fucked if we stay, fucked if we leave."

LOLA: "Promises from every side. Numbers, predictions, posters, billboards..."

LOLA: "A few weeks before the vote, no word of a lie the whole fucking city felt like a bomb about to explode."

LOLA: "People at work kept getting into slanging matches about this bit or that bit."

LOLA: "How could you possibly think...' vs 'You don't know what you're talking about.'"

-> brexit-outro

=== brexit-insane

"From the outside I mean."

LOLA: "Didn't feel insane. Not at first."

LOLA: "At first it was... exciting."

LOLA: "I'd never voted before. Couldn't be arsed. It was always either this old fuck or that one that got in."

LOLA: "But this felt real, you know?"

LOLA: "Like you could actually make a difference?"

-> brexit-outro

=== brexit-silence

LOLA: "Who even knew what the fucking European Union was?"

LOLA: "I didn't. No-one I knew did."

LOLA: "Europe's a continent innit? How can you leave a continent?"

LOLA: "Weird thing was, even with all the adverts and campaigning they were doing... no-one ever told us what we were voting on."

-> brexit-outro

=== brexit-outro

LOLA: "When the result came back there was about 20 minutes of celebration."

LOLA: "Then the brakes kicked on something harsh."

LOLA: "Walking to work that morning you couldn't help but... judge everyone."

LOLA: "Like, 'I wonder which way she voted?'"

LOLA: "There were a couple of fights at work. Like, proper fights, fists swinging all over the place."

LOLA: "If there's one thing insecure fucking men need it's something to throw punches about."

\* "How did you feel?" -> brexit-outro-feel

\* "How did your partner take it?" -> brexit-outro-partner

\* (Say nothing.) -> frexit-intro

=== brexit-outro-feel

LOLA: "Like everyone else I suppose. Confused. Scared."

LOLA: "By the afternoon you could see none of the fucks in London knew what to do."

LOLA: "Did you see those Leave cunts on TV? Supposed to be jumping up and down about winning and they're stood there looking like they shat the bed."

LOLA: "Which was, you know, ironic cause that's exactly what they did."

LOLA: "Now we're god knows how many months since and fuck all's happened except everyone's even more scared."

-> frexit-intro

=== brexit-outro-partner

LOLA: "Bad. Worse than me."

LOLA: "I hadn't seen him cry before that."

LOLA: "Came home from work and we just hugged till he stopped shaking."

LOLA: "When his gran died, his fucking family dog... never so much as a tear."

LOLA: "But this was too much."

LOLA: "Had a cry meself. After it turned out all those twats in London didn't know what the fuck to do next."

LOLA: "Yeah, it unravelled pretty quick."

-> frexit-intro

=== frexit-intro

LOLA: "Things got real bad after."

LOLA: "Ahmed had a few run ins with Brexiteers. You know, the hardline knobs with Union Jack hoodies and Winston Churchill tattoos."

LOLA: "Most just told him to fuck off home. He could deal with that. He'd had the same over here."

LOLA: "But one group..."

LOLA: "We were together one time and a group of em told me to fuck off with him. Called me a traitor."

LOLA: "Idiot squared up to them. Things got... tense."

LOLA: "First time I'd ever been glad to see a copper."

LOLA: "So yeah. We fucked off."

LOLA: "Wasn't worth it over there. Ahmed's jobs had dried up anyway, no-one wanted to hire a foreigner."

LOLA: "Been staying with his lot over here ever since. Spare room."

LOLA: "His mum don't speak a word of the Queen's, her dad tries bless him."

LOLA: "They love baked beans."

She smiles to herself.

LOLA: "But now this one's almost here. I dunno."

LOLA: "I don't fucking know."

-> frexit

=== frexit

She shifts again, the seat creaking under her weight. That's a sound you seldom hear.

LOLA: "What would you have done?"

LOLA: "I mean, if you lot ever have a... Frexit vote or something."

LOLA: "How would you vote?"

\* "I'd vote to remain." -> frexit-remain

\* "I'd vote to leave." -> frexit-leave

\* "I don't know..." -> frexit-dontknow

=== frexit-remain

"The EU isn't perfect. It's... pretty bad actually, from what I've heard."

"But division isn't an answer, it's a statement."

"And the people behind such statements have their own goals. Goals that aren't on any billboards or fliers."

-> frexit-admission

=== frexit-leave

"I read an article in the newspaper about the EU wanting to limit driving time per day. For safety reasons."

"Another about how they wanted to regulate the type of cigarettes we can import."

"Something about the bendiness of bananas, even."

You shake your head.

"I don't know a whole lot about it all, but seems to me we'd be better off making our own rules."

-> frexit-admission

=== frexit-dontknow

"I don't really know what would happen either way, so how could I make a reasoned choice?"

"It would just be guessing."

"Then again... If I can't make a decision, who can?"

-> frexit-irritated

=== frexit-admission

Your answer seems to shake your passenger. She tugs on her lip aggressively and her other hand balls itself into a fist.

She sniffs.

LOLA: "Everyone was so scared. After the vote yeah, but before an' all."

LOLA: "We had the Remain side telling us how fucked we were if we left."

LOLA: "The Leavers telling us how fucked we'd be if we stayed."

LOLA: "But I saw mam raise me and my brother on nothing."

LOLA: "Nothing."

LOLA: "Benefits didn't amount to anything, no one wanted to help a black, single mother provide for her kids."

LOLA: "And then we get these fuckers turning up at our house telling us how much worse off we'd be if we leave."

LOLA: "I mean, how much worse could it have gotten?"

LOLA: "When you're in the shit, change becomes very fucking attractive."

LOLA: "If you had people offering you the same-old-same-old, and others pushing for something new..."

LOLA: "...promising change, and a new start..."

LOLA: "...how the fuck do you think you're gonna vote when the same-old ain't given you shit?"

\* "You voted leave?" -> frexit-admission-leave

\* "But... your partner is French..." -> frexit-admission-partner

\* (Say nothing.) -> frexit-admission-silence

=== frexit-admission-leave

LOLA: "What else was I gonna do?"

-> frexit-admission-outro



=== frexit-admission-partner

LOLA: "Yeah. And?"

LOLA: "They weren't talking about cutting us off from the rest of the world. Stopping him living here."

LOLA: "Not before it happened they weren't."

-> frexit-admission-outro

=== frexit-admission-silence

You don't answer the rhetorical question.

The atmosphere has turned tense, and in these situations you find it best to just... let the conversation end.

-> frexit-admission-outro

=== frexit-admission-outro

She sucks a gallon of air into her lungs and continues.

LOLA: "Before the vote it was all about making our own laws again. Stopping people 2000 miles away telling us how to live."

Her accent thickens as her voice cracks.

LOLA: "It were about making sure we were looked after, you know?"

LOLA: "Mam's almost on her pension. I wanted... I just wanted to do best by her."

LOLA: "There was no talk of stopping anyone who ain't English living there."

LOLA: "It weren't about that to me."

She sniffs again.

LOLA: "And now it's all fucked."

-> outro

=== frexit-irritated

LOLA: "But you'd just pretend it wasn't happening?"

LOLA: "Close your eyes, hope everyone else makes the right choice for you?"

LOLA: "Nah mate. Nah."

Her accent thickens as she goes on.

LOLA: "One way or the other you have to take a side."

LOLA: "Nothing that irritates me more than those cheery fucks in the middle telling everyone to just... get on."

LOLA: "That's not people, is it? We ain't designed to get on."

LOLA: "Put two people on a island with enough food for both and within half a fucking hour one of them'd kick shit out of the other over some biscuits."

LOLA: "Problem wasn't the voters guessing, problem was the people asking the question making shit up."

LOLA: "Using photos from Africa saying they were immigrants wanting into the UK."

LOLA: "Putting made up numbers on the side of fancy red buses."

LOLA: "Telling us horror stories about rioting and civil war."

LOLA: "That were the problem. Not our fault if we had to guess."

LOLA: "Was their fault for asking the wrong fucking question."

-> outro

=== outro

You pull up to her destination and she fumbles her fare over to you.

LOLA: "Sorry about all that."

\* "No problem. I understand." -> outro-understand

\* "Stress is bad for the baby." -> outro-baby

\* :silence: (Say nothing.) -> outro-silence

=== outro-understand

LOLA: "Yeah."

LOLA: "At least over here everything's... well, over there."

LOLA: "I don't have to think about it every fucking moment."

-> admission = 1 ? outro-ahmed

-> outro-end

=== outro-baby

You glance in the mirror and see the woman glaring daggers at you. For a moment she looks like she's about to say something, but instead she lets out a low, exasperated sigh.

-> outro-end

==outro-silence

Your passenger chuckles mirthlessly to herself.

-> admission = 1 ? outro-ahmed

-> outro-end

=== =outro-Ahmed

LOLA: "I never told Ahmed that I..."

LOLA: "You know. Voted the way I did."

LOLA: "He wouldn't understand."

-> outro-end

=== outro-end

She moves to leave. You go to help again but she smiles a refusal at you.

LOLA: "Really, it's ok."

LOLA: "But I appreciate the offer."

LOLA: "Makes me feel welcome."

A few moments later she waddles slowly to a door. Her hands continue to twist themselves into shapes as she waits for an answer, until finally she disappears inside.  
You sigh, and set off into the night.

-> END