

Allison threw open the door to the room Kara and Ilaria shared in the Cyborg Warehouse.

"You guys! You won't believe this! It's awesome! It's fantastic!" she exclaimed, breathing heavily.

"What?" Laine asked from where she sat on Kara's bed.

"*Top Gear* is holding a fan video contest! The winner gets a whole bunch of *Top Gear* swag, tickets to a taping and a Vuxhall VXR8 Bathurst Edition saloon!"

"Why would they do that?" Laine asked.

"It's all the rage on the Internet," Allison noted. "There is that Dutch group who call themselves '*Top Gear* Flanders' and those three blokes in Los Angeles who did a 'Best Driving Road in California'. They all make these fan tributes and post them up on YouTube. Now with *Top Gear* Live running around the world, evidently the BBC have decided to hold a contest to make an actual *Top Gear* episode."

"Where did you find out about this?" Kara asked.

"It's on their website," Allison replied.

Kara opened a new browser window and navigated to the site. Sure enough, there was a banner for the "I Can Make a Better Episode Than Those Three Wazzocks" splashed across the top page.

"Contest open to residents of the United Kingdom, Ireland and the European Union. Each episode must be filmed in HDV or DV and must include one car review with a Power Lap at a closed circuit and one challenge with a price limit of £1500 / €1750," Kara read.

"We'd so ace this!" Allison gushed. "We'd review one of Michele's super exotics and then for the challenge we could build drift cars!"

"What cars?" Triela asked.

"Drift cars! Go to YouTube, Kara, and search for 'Yasuyuki Kazama'," Allison instructed. Kara did so and called up a video with Kazama teaching Richard Hammond how to drift a Vauxall Monaro VX-R.

"Hey, I remember that episode," Laine noted. "That's the one where James May recorded the theme song using engine noises."

"Anyway. I love drifting and I love tinkering so I can help us find three solid cars and tweak them out. Plus we're in Italy so we can add an epic drive to Stelvio and get the handler's to film it," Allison added.

"Just where do you expect to find the time to do all this?" Laine asked.

"I thought I'd ask Brian for some time off. I think two weeks would be enough," Allison noted.

"Damn, you **are** new here," Triela noted with a laugh. "The Chief would be lucky to give you two *days* off and if Jean had his way, asking for two *hours* of free time would require Papal Dispensation."

"When's the due date for the movies?" Laine asked.

"Uh, about three weeks," Kara noted.

"We'll we could shoot the car review and build our drift cars during our downtime. And you and Michele are going to Track Day next weekend at Vallelunga, right?"

"You're not seriously considering doing this, are you?" Kara asked.

"Why not? We staged that Epic Race to London a few months back. I mean, how hard can it be?"

"Don't say that!" Kara and Triela exclaimed together, and a moment later all four girls were doubled-over from belly laughs.

"It will be great, Kara! Since we'd be using one of your handler's cars, you can take Clarkson's role and perform the road test," Allison noted. She turned to Laine. "With your love of muscle cars, I think you'd make a good Richard Hammond--"

"You'll need your teeth whitened," Triela noted, a moment later taking a pillow to the face from Laine.

"So you'll be James May?" Kara asked Allison.

Allison shook her head. "No, I thought I'd take the role of The Stig's little sister. I thought Triela could fill the role, since she has her license now."

"It sounds like a fun idea, but unfortunately Hilshire and I have...engagements...in Naples, Brindisi and Siena over the next two weeks so I'll either be away from the compound or when I'm home, I'll be deep in training."

"Damn," Allison said. "We need three presenters, so I suppose I could do both roles, since you don't see The Stig with the others usually."

"Claes can drive," Triela noted.

"Really?" Allison said. She looked to Kara.

"Well..." Kara noted. "Michele taught her and she drove the Gallardo from Milan to Florence, but I wouldn't say she's qualified. Plus I don't think she'd be interested."

"Interested in what?" Claes asked as she walked in.

"Performing the role of James May in a *Top Gear* video homage we're

thinking of doing," Laine said.

"No thank you," Claes said.

"Oh come on, Claes," Triela said. "James May is the sensible one so you can just be yourself."

Claes merely replied with her trademark scowl.

"I think it's a great idea," Michele replied when Allison's handler Brian McDonnell brought the *Top Gear* challenge up the following morning.

"Seriously?" Clayland Stanaway said.

"Kara needs to socialize more," Michele replied. "She's friendly enough with the original girls, but she doesn't spend much time with the Generation 2's outside of your Laine and Ilaria, and the latter is more because they share a room. And Claes certainly could do with more social interaction, now that she's active again."

"My Allison tends to get a bit...excited...about things, but she's a good kid. And she loves to tinker and tune. She really knows her car mechanicals," Brian noted.

"Well Kara may look like a gear head, but she's really all about the driving," Michele noted. "She can identify the major parts of an engine, but she confided to me that she has no interest in the actual mechanics themselves. All she asks is that it goes fast when she puts her foot down and tracks well in the corners."

"So you're okay if they take a stab at this?" Brian asked.

"Sure. I'm going to be away for a week-plus with the PM on his visit to Asia and Australia so both of the girls are effectively on stand-by while

I'm away." He turned to Laine's handler.

"Clayland?"

"As long as Laine doesn't get behind the wheel of any of your supercars, I'm okay with it. I can't handle a five-figure insurance claim if she stuffs your Aston Martin in Trevi Fountain," Clayland noted.

The day before he left on his trip, Michele took delivery of a new Mercedes SLR McLaren roadster in Crystal Covelline Blue Metallic with Sand interior. Allison suggested that Kara use this car for the video review as opposed to the original plan of the Gallardo Spyder because while the SLR had made a number of appearances on *Top Gear*, it had always been the coupe. Kara readily agreed since she was already quite familiar with the Lamborghini.

Michele, through his retired Aeronautica Militaire General father, had arranged the use of the Practica di Mare and Latina air bases for filming. Well before dawn, Kara drove the SLR to Practica di Mare with Brian and Allison leading in a Citroën CX Familiare estate, chosen because it's self-leveling suspension provided an incredibly stable platform for the Sony HVR-S270U HDV camcorder. Brian lay in the back with the tailgate open, allowing him a 180° field of shooting, while Allison drove. They shot the footage at the airfield and then drove back to Rome.

"So, how was it?" Laine asked Kara and Allison as the three of them filled their plates at the breakfast buffet.

"Brian played back a bit of the footage on the drive back and it looked sharp," Allison replied.

"And you loved the car, of course," Laine asked Kara.

"It was a blast to drive, but if it was my money, I'd have saved most of it and bought an SL55," Kara admitted.

"On the bright side, it will be nice to drive to Romania," Allison noted.

"Romania?" Kara exclaimed. "What's in Romania?"

"Oh, didn't I mention it? Since the Stelvio Pass is still snow-bound, we need a new road. I looked on the Internet and found this place in Romania called the Transfăgărășan."

"The what?"

"Transfăgărășan. It's a road in Romania. You have to see it to believe it. Think of the greatest corners of the greatest race tracks. Eau Rouge at Spa. The Lesmos at Monza. 130R at Suzuka. Tamburello at Imola. The Maggots-Becketts-Chapel complex at Silverstone. This thing has them all – and more. It makes Davos to Stelvio look like a slot car track."

"You want us to drive to *Romania*..." Kara said.

"It's only 2000 kilometers! We could be there and back in a weekend!" Allison replied.

"*Ro-main-eee-ah.*"

"Jeremy Clarkson drove that far in an SLR in the Oslo Race," Laine noted.

"How did your butt feel when you arrived in London in the Camaro?" Kara asked.

"It was fine," Laine replied, her head down as she idly kicked a divot in the dirt with the toe of her right sneaker.

"Uh huh...That was 1000 kilometers," Kara reported and she saw Laine wince.

"Budapest is about right in the mid-point of the journey," Allison stated. "So we could drive there, spend the night, and then proceed to the Transfăgărășan in the morning and then head back that evening. It would be a cakewalk for us cyborgs."

"And what about Brian and Clayland in the camera and support vehicles? They don't have our stamina, remember," Kara stated.

"Ooohh..." Allison said, remembering her and Laine's handlers.

"Is there an airport nearby? We could fly Michele's plane there," Laine suggested back in Kara's room after breakfast.

Kara shook her head. "I still don't have my multi-engine rating so I can't fly it on my own."

She went to the Wikipedia page for Sibiu, Romania, which was the northern terminus of the Transfăgărășan.

"I'll be damned. There is scheduled air service there from Milan!" Kara noted.

"Then we're good," Laine noted. "We can ship the cars on ahead by truck and then fly to Sibiu to meet up with them. So we can perform the shoot in a single day."

"Okay. So what do we take?" Allison asked. "With all those corners, I want something driftable, so I think I am going to take my AE86 Corolla."

"Well my Camaro is useless around corners, so I'll need to find

something better. Can you hook me up with something like a Corvette ZR1?" Laine asked Kara.

"Probably," Kara replied.

"I'm joking, Kara," Laine grinned.

"I'm not. I want something different than the SLR. I'm sure Claes will demand the Gallardo so I need to find something else. Michele has a relationship with a local exotic car rental place so I'm sure we can get you a ZR1 along with whatever I end up with."

"We're also going to need to get some drifting cars for the 'Cheap Car Challenge'," Allison noted. She pulled a thick copy of "Auto Trader Rome" from her messenger bag and started thumbing through it.

Over the weekend they filmed the Power Lap of the SLR along with the "studio segments" in the hangar where Michele stored his P.180. They took delivery of Kara's and Laine's rentals and everything was packed up onto a closed car transporter and sent east to Romania, following along via airplane a few days later to shoot the rest of the segment.

Once they had that done it was time to perform the editing. They borrowed Michele's Power Mac and dumped the raw HDV footage into Final Cut Pro, made their edits, and sent it back to tape.

"Okay, let's see how it turned out," Allison noted. All four girls huddled around the 30" Cinema Display.

[Black screen splits into three horizontal video streams stacked atop each other as the Top Gear theme song, "Jessica", starts.]

The top frame is a panning shot of a black Aston Martin DB9, a yellow first generation Chevrolet Camaro Z28 and a Lancia Delta HF Integrale Evoluzione II crossing a low, stone bridge lined with trees. The middle frame is a look-down helicopter shot of a white Lamborghini Gallardo LP 560-4 Spyder with the top down driving along a cliff road. The bottom frame is a close-up of the wheel of a Ferrari Daytona.

The top and bottom frame slide off to screen-left, while the middle frame slides screen-right. Three light blue frames slide in from screen left, with the outline of a woman's boot pressing down on a gas pedal, followed by three successive jump cuts of black outlines of three girls superimposed over three video frames:

Kara Michelle Deleroux



Fleda Claes Johansson



Laine Penny Brussard



[Voice over from Kara]

"Tonight, we go around corners...sideways..."

[A silver Alfa 75 and black Jaguar XJ-S H.E. drift into a corner, tires smoking.]

"We drive the world's greatest road..."

[A fifth-generation Toyota Corolla GT-S and a Corvette ZR1 both tear down the Transfăgărășan in Romania]

"And I test the most powerful convertible.....in the world."

[A blue Mercedes McLaren SLR Roadster drives down a long straight at triple-digit speeds]

[As the music builds to a crescendo, the Top Gear logo, in two horizontal parts, slides in from the right, pauses, and then slides off to the left, replaced by a four-part screen with the Gallardo, the Corolla, the Camaro and the DB9 which then jumps to the spinning gear shrinking and "Top Gear Italy" sliding into place as a crowd applauds.]



[Jump cut to an airfield at dawn, the limb of the sun just coming over the horizon. The sky above it is a mixture of intense yellows, oranges

and reds, fading to a steel blue-grey overhead, the undersides of some wispy cirrus clouds tinged in bright pink. The opening riffs to the movie Top Gun play softly in the background as the camera pans across Panavia Tornados and Aeritalia G.222s.]



[The camera zooms in on a Eurofighter Typhoon lining up on the end of the runway, twin gouts of flame leaving the exhausts as the pilot light's the afterburners. The plane roars down the runway and lifts into the sky. The camera follows it for a moment and then pans down to a blue Mercedes SLR McLaren Roadster sitting on the tarmac with the roof down and the doors flipped open. The light is better, so it's clearly later in the day.]



[Kara walks in from scene right, dressed in a Prada tank top of black ribbed silk with knot detail tucked into a Prada wrap miniskirt of black cotton burette secured with two metal and tortoise shell lockets, matched with black patent leather riding boots from Yves Saint Laurent.]

"This is the Mercedes SLR McLaren Roadster."

[Jump cut to a view of the engine bay.]

"Like the coupe, it is powered by a five-and-a-half liter supercharged V8 making 626 brake horsepower and 580 torques..."

[Jump cut back to Kara.]

"With that amount of power, launching this car from a stoplight feels much like what that Typhoon pilot just experienced."

[Kara moves to sit down in the car. Because of the butterfly doors, you can see almost even with the seat bottom. Therefore, to prevent a "Strike Witches Moment" on television, Kara sits down perpendicular to the seat with her legs tightly held together and the soles of her boots flat to the ground. She then lifts both legs, still together, and rotates her body ninety degrees to the right, lifting her legs over the sill of the

car, scissoring her boots against her thighs to keep her legs tightly together until she is properly seated. She reaches up and pulls down the door. Jump cut to the interior and Kara flips up the cover over the top of the transmission lever, pushing the Start button. The V8 rumbles to life and Kara revs the engine a few times.

"The SLR does not have a complicated launch control procedure to ensure optimal starts. I just bury my right boot into the carpet and hold on for dear life."

[Kara promptly does just that and with a brief snap of wheelspin, the SLR launches itself down the runway. Close-up of the speedometer and tachometer needles climbing steadily as the staccato beat of the V8 plays out like a tribal soundtrack. Switch to an inside shot of Kara.]

"Zero to 100 kilometers an hour passes in 3.8 seconds!"

[She up-shifts using the flappy-paddle gearbox levers.]

"8 seconds after that, I'm crossing the quarter mile mark at 125 miles an hour!"

[Shot of the SLR approaching the camera at a high rate of speed, followed by a switch to watching it leave the camera behind.]

"And with enough asphalt, the car is claimed to be able to reach 207 miles per hour!"

[Kara tears down the 2500m runway, the speedometer needle passing 300km/h. Kara lifts off the throttle, let's the car slow to 200km/h and then hits the binders, the airbrake deploying and the nose of the car diving as the front ceramic rotors glow cherry-red. Jump cut to inside the car as Kara shifts forward violently against the harness, her hair covering her face, and then slams back into the seat.]

"Now I know how John Hurt's character felt when they tried to pull that facehugger off him in [u]Alien[/u]."

[Kara executes a sweeping turn off the main runway and on to the adjacent one.]

"With the top down, the cabin is quite civilized. I'm doing 100 miles per hour and I don't have to raise my voice for you to hear me. As with any convertible, removing the roof requires additional structural

reinforcement which adds weight. However, thanks to the extensive use of carbon fiber, they were able to reinforce the tub with just a few extra sheets, negating the need for ugly cross-braces and heavy reinforcement tubes."

[Kara slows and turns off the runway, heading for a large aircraft parking apron. She pulls off into a corner and stops the car. She kills the engine and steps out of the car. The camera closes in and does a slow 360-degree view of the car.]

"Styling-wise, it's not the most handsome of cars, but it does not lack for presence. The long bonnet and the grills in the wings certainly give it character, as do the butterfly doors. The nose, said to be inspired by the McLaren-Mercedes Formula One cars, looks purposeful, as do the gaping vents below designed to suck in massive amounts of air to feed and cool the engine, as well as the brakes. Pull up in front of a trendy restaurant or night club in this, and you will attract an admiring crowd."

[Fade cut to the interior.]



"And the interior certainly looks like a comfortable place to spend the day, though you will never mistake it for the interior of an Aston Martin – or even a Jaguar, for that matter. The leather is soft to the

touch, but where Aston and Jaguar use aluminum or wood as trim pieces, the SLR gets plastic that would not be out of place on an entry-level Opel. And the plastic radio cover emblazoned with the letters 'S-L-R' is just obnoxious."

[Fade back to Kara and the car.]

"The roadster costs £350,000 - £50,000 more than the coupe and £100,000 more than the SL65 AMG. As opposed to the fully-automatic folding metal roof of the SL65, the SLR must make do with a semi-automatic cloth one, though Mercedes PR people assured me it's of a "newly developed material" that is both light and strong. I am guessing it's spun unobtanium, but it still looks and feels like cloth. And I say semi-automatic because you must manually latch and unlatch the roof, which then retracts within 10 seconds.

[Some more establishing shots of the car.]

"My two other main complaints are with the steering and brake feel. The tires don't appear to speak the same language as the steering wheel and something is lost in the translation between them and you find yourself constantly making minor corrections in long bends to keep the car on track.

[Close-up of the massive 8-piston front brake caliper and 15" rotor.]

"The SLR uses Mercedes' Sensotronic brake-by-wire system. Unfortunately, the system is binary in nature and therefore only offers two modes of pedal feel – totally off and totally on. Modulating the brakes requires extensive practice and it's easy to get the force wrong. Fortunately, if you do cock it up, just press down hard and you'll come to a stop in a matter of meters. Just hope the person tailgating you is paying attention."

[Fade cut to Kara driving the car along the SS601 coastal road between Practica di Mare and Lido di Ostia. The sun is high and the waters of the Mediterranean to the west are blue. Voiceover by Kara.]

"The SLR has always been a different kind of hypercar. Unlike the Lamborghini Murciélago or Pagani Zonda, the SLR tilts firmly towards the grand tourer side of the equation. Like the Aston Martin DBS or Ferrari 599GTB, it effortlessly consumes kilometers, even if the ride is a bit harsher than either of those cars."

[Jump cut inside the car, looking at Kara from the passenger dash, the sea over her shoulder.]

"This is where the car is best. Cruising along a coastal road at motorway speeds with the top down, the salty tang of the sea in your nose and the wind in your hair. Also a cute boy in the passenger seat, admiring your taste in clothes and cars."

[Kara opens the throttle and the SLR moves past the camera. Jump cut back to the interior camera.]

"So, would I buy one? (pause) No. I can't help but feel it's just a big Mercedes with a big engine over the front wheels. The car accelerates and decelerates savagely and it can hustle around corners when pressed, which is impressive when you consider it tips the scales just north of 1800 kilograms. If I wanted to waft around in a big Mercedes roadster, I'd buy the SL55 - the £200,000 I save would comfortably cover the costs of a Ferrari Challenge Stradale for when I didn't..."

[Fade to Black as canned applause starts. Boom shot of the SLR in a hangar with a Piaggio P.180 Avanti II with the registration I-WOLF in the background. Only the car and plane are lit – the rest of the hangar is in shadow to "hide" the audience. Kara standing next to the SLR, still dressed in her Prada outfit and Yves St. Laurent boots.]

"We must now see how fast it goes around our track. I don't look good in baggy Nomex, so instead we shall call upon the talents of our pet racing driver. Some say she likes to dab a bit of 10W-30 behind each ear before a date...and that if she'd been the pilot of the two-woman bobsleigh team at the 2006 Winter Games, we'd have won the Gold instead of the Bronze. All we know is...she's not The Stig, but she is The Stig's little sister!"

[Jump cut to the SLR on the starting line at the ACI Vallelunga track. At the wheel is a small-statured person in a white Nomex racing suit and white Bell helmet with a pink bow attached to the back with always-stick Gaffer tape. The Stigette hammers the throttle and the car launches forward. Voiceover by Kara.]

"And she's off! As I noted, there is no launch control in the SLR and The Stigette wouldn't need it anyway! There she goes through the Curva Grande, The Stigette sawing at the wheel due to the vagueness of the steering...now decelerating hard for the first Cimini and then ease the power in for the second...not quite kissing the apex, but quite

well, nonetheless...and now hard on the throttle down the straight towards the chicane..."

[Jump cut inside showing The Stigette working hard as "Canned Heat" by Jamiroquai plays in the background.]

"I prefer Mami Kawada when I'm driving fast, but w'ever. Now it's time for the twisty section. Will the SLR end up dancing as abstractly as Jon Heder?"

[Cut to the SLR going through two successive 180° hairpins connected by a short straight. The SLR takes the wider first one easy, but The Stigette struggles manhandling it through the much tighter second, kicking a tire out onto the grass. She flies through the large esse and powers down the back straight to the final hairpin.]

"Just the Parabolica to go. Nice and clean through Roma and now off the exit and full-throttle down the main straight aaaannnddd across the line!"

[Cut back to Kara standing next to the SLR. The camera pans right with her as she moves to a tall metal sheet with "POWER LAP TIMES" on the top]

"I have the time here. It did it in 1 minute, 53 point 7 seconds! That makes it the fastest car around our track!"

[More canned applause as Kara reaches up on her toes to slap the magnetic strip on the board. The camera zooms in to see the name and time – neatly printed – and then a jump cut to a low wooden platform with the back seat of an Alfa 155 on the left side and the front seat of an Alfa 155 to the right, both in black leather and turned into a couch and chair. In front of them is an engine block with a sheet of strengthened glass atop it.

On the far left of the couch sits Claes, dressed in a tan Dolce & Gabbana turtleneck & black pleated skirt with metallic stripes and black Sergio Rossi Classic slouchy leather boots. Petrushka has styled Claes' hair into the side-knot she wore at Lake Maggiore mission as well as applied some makeup so she looks like she's in her late teens. To her left (camera right) sits Laine, dressed in worn jeans, white Puma Ferrari sneakers, turquoise tube top and jacket in brown distressed leather.]

"You do realize that it's the only car around our track."

"Details details. Now...drifting!"

[Kara rises off her chair and steps down off the stage, walking towards the back of the P.180, the camera zooming in for a close-up.]

"Evidently the Japanese started this twenty-five years ago, but recently it's become popular in the United States and Australia and now it has made its way across the Pond and is now invading the Continent."

[Camera pan to Laine, standing in front of the stage.]

"The producers decided we should learn to drift, so they gave us £1,500 – [i]of our own money[/i] – to buy a car and have The Stigette teach us how to properly drift it."

[Camera pan back to Kara with an extreme close-up zoom.]

"Here's how it went..."

[Panning establishment shot of an empty airport tarmac. Voice over by Laine.]

"We were told meet at an airport outside Rome. Kara was first to arrive..."

[A silver Alfa 75 approaches, gleaming in the sun. It looks quite nice until it stops and the camera performs a close-up, at which point you can see the paint is oxidized and the black trim pieces are more a dirty grey. Kara steps out in an Emilio Pucci sky blue silk super-mini dress with a multicolored zigzag print matched to Emilio Pucci cream leather thigh-high boots with metallic 10cm heels.]



"This is what I've bought. It's a 1990 Alfa Romeo 75 and while it is not the best-looking car in the world, it does have near perfect weight distribution, a plucky turbo motor putting out 165 brake horsepower and a limited slip differential, which Wikipedia tells me is important in a drift car. And it cost me only 900 of my Pounds...

"Next to arrive was Laine..."

[A British Racing Green Jaguar coupe pulls up next to the Alfa and Laine exits wearing a gingham blouse tied into a half-shirt that exposes her midriff, a pale pair of denim jeans tucked into red leather cowgirl boots, and a straw cowboy hat on her head. The secret American had finally shown her colors.]



"Behold the magnificence of British Leyland engineering! A 1983 Jaguar XJ-S H.E. with a 5.3 liter V12 belting out 295 brake horsepower. And all for £1100!"

"And just how do you plan to wrestle that beast sideways around a track?"

"Easy! The majority of the weight is over the front wheels, so when I brake hard, that should lock up the fronts and let the back end swing around like a pendulum!"

[Laine walks over and looks inside Kara's Alfa, noting the multi-colored herringbone cloth covering.]



"Is this that new pixilated camouflage I hear the US Armed Forces are adopting?"

[Before Kara can reply, a rumble is heard as Michele's new white Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder appears. It pulls up next to the other two and Claes steps out, wearing the same Dolce & Gabbana turtleneck & pleated skirt and Sergio Rossi leather boots from the

"studio segment".



[Kara and Laine simultaneously pinch their noses between their fingers.]

"Uh, Claes. The budget was £1,500, not £150,000."

"This is the only car I know how to drive," Claes responds. "And besides, it didn't cost me anything. I borrowed it from my boyfriend."

"He is not your boyfriend!"

[Claes smiles sweetly at Kara in response.]

"Free or not, you're still over the limit."

"Why?"

"You just are. So let's crack open the [u]Auto Trader[/u] and see what we can find."

[A black screen appears with the words "Some time later". Screen fades back to the paddock area later in the day and Claes is now standing next to a red 1995 Nissan 200SX.]



[Voice over by Kara.]

"All right, now that we have selected our cars, it's time for our first challenge."

[Rico appears dressed in a white lab coat and hands Claes a golden envelope. She then turns and stands there, smiling at the camera. An arm appears, grabs her by the shoulder, and yanks her out of scene. Claes opens the envelope and reads the contents.]

"Your first challenge is a top-speed run—"

[Claes stops reading and her hand drops to her side. She looks at Kara.]

"Top speed run? I thought this was a drifting challenge."

"It is. However, it's important to know who's car is the fastest."

"Why?"

"It just is. Keep reading."

[Claes sighs and returns to reading.]

"The target speed is 200 km/h. You will receive one point for every kilometer per hour you exceed this speed or lose a point for every kilometer per hour you fall short."

[The Alfa lines up at one end of the 1900m main runway. Inside shot of Kara moving the transmission lever into First followed by her flooring the throttle. There is a slight jerk as the rear wheels hook up and the Alfa shoots off down the runway.]

"Come on Alfa! Show your Italian pride!"

[Kara keeps her foot down until she passes a radar gun at the second to last taxiway, which indicates a speed of 210 kilometers an hour. She lifts off and hits the brakes, the Alfa's rotors glowing as they haul the car down.]

"Next up was the Jaaaggg..."

[Laine shoves her foot down hard and the V12 engine snarls as the Jaguar smartly steps off and roars down the runway, triggering the speed trap at 238 km/h.]

"And finally it was the turn of the Datsun."

[Claes holds on for dear life as she presses the throttle to the floor. The Nissan launches hardest and reaches a speed of 231 km/h.]

"With that challenge done, it was time to learn how to drift our cars, something none of us had any experience with. Fortunately, The Stigette is an ace drifter so she agreed to give us some pointers."

[Jump cut to a Toyota Corolla AE86 with The Stigette behind the wheel. She launches the car hard, the tires spinning madly before they hook-up and the vehicle rockets off. You can clearly hear what sounds like a succession of "sneezes" as the wastegate/blow-off valve cycles.]

"And she's off in her 'Hay Fever Hatchback'!"

[The Stigette performs a feint cornering maneuver to shift the weight of the car and swing the tail out. The nose dives towards the apex of the turn and The Stigette continuously presses the clutch to keep the

revs up and the tires smoking furiously. She straightens out on the taxiway for a moment before performing the same maneuver out onto the runway. Cut to an inside shot of The Stigette working the wheel while Kara is in the passenger seat, a look somewhere between terror and exhilaration on her face. Voice over by Laine.]

"And then with The Stigette in the passenger seat, it was our turn."

[Inside shot of Laine working the wheel, The Stigette merely making motions with her hands since she cannot speak.]

"Before...before the corner? Turn before the corner? Ok!"

[Inside shot looking out the windscreen as Laine turns the wheel hard. Jump to outside shot of the Jaguar making a somewhat ragged 412° turn.]

"Well that hasn't gone well."

[More shots of The Stigette using hand signals, Laine trying to interpret them, and the Jaguar pirouetting. More shots of the same with Kara behind the wheel of the Alfa and Claes behind the wheel of the 200SX. Voice over by Laine.]

"Eventually, we began to get the hang of it."

[Long panning shots of all three cars drifting across the tarmac, laying down tire smoke, then righting themselves to shoot down a taxiway and perform another drift onto the runway. The scene changes to the three girls standing in a group in front of their cars. This time it is Henrietta in the lab coat who hands Claes an envelope.]

"Having proven you and your cars are both capable of drifting, you may now use the money you have remaining to tune your cars to make them better drifters."

[Scene change to the "Top Gear Italy Technology Center" – a basic garage like in the "Cheap Alfa Romeo Challenge" in Series 11, Episode 03. The Jaguar is up on a lift while the Alfa and 200SX remain on the ground.]

Kara walks in still wearing her Emilio Pucci outfit from earlier, however she's now added a brilliant white lab coat. Laine and Claes, both having donned mechanic's overalls which fit loosely over their clothes,

stare at her. Kara stares back.]

"What?"

[Fade cut to Kara now also dressed in mechanic's overalls and her black Puma Ferrari sneakers.]

"Supposedly drift cars do not need powerful engines, but that's ridiculous. It also violates Clarkson's First Law. Therefore, I am replacing the stock turbocharger and intercooler units with larger ones from an Alfa 155 GTAZ which should give me close to 200 brake horsepower."

[Laine stands next to her Jaguar.]

"My car doesn't lack for power. I have therefore decided to work on the handling side since Jaguar's were tuned for comfort, and not sport. This is doubly so with the XJ-S H.E. series where the boffo boffins at BL decided to remove the rear anti-roll bar to improve the front handling. The first thing I am going to do is install a polyurethane bushing set. This is said to dramatically improve the handling without changing the ride comfort or requiring any changes to the suspension geometry."

[Camera shifts to Claes, who is sitting on a plastic chair next to her 200SX reading a book. She looks up at the camera.]

"I'm quite satisfied with how my car works, thank you."

[Claes returns to reading as the camera pans to show Kara looking down at her engine bay, holding the new turbo in one hand, her face one of confusion. Camera then pans to Laine, who is using an air gun to remove the tires and then start unbolting the suspension so she can install the new bushings. In the corner stands The Stigette, her arms crossed. While you cannot see her face, from her stance you cannot help but imagine she must be thinking "what a bunch of pikers".

A black screen appears with the words "a considerable time later". Screen fades back to the aircraft tarmac where three shapes under oversized car covers were parked in a neat row. All three girls, now back in their outfits at the start of the drifting segment, walk into shot from camera right. Kara goes first.]

"I spent £900 on my Alfa, which gave me £600 to spend on

improvements. The new turbocharger was £350 and I spent another £150 on an...[i]advisor[/i], yeah that's it, an advisor, to help me with the installation. With the remaining £100 I had the car detailed."

[She pulls the cover off to show a cleaner, but otherwise visually unchanged, Alfa 75. Laine walks forward to her car and removes the cover. Like Kara's 75, the Jaguar looks unchanged.]

"I spent £1100 on my Jaguar and another £100 on new suspension bushings. Unlike Kara, I didn't need an *advisor* to help me install them, which left me another £300 to install a nitrous oxide kit for the engine."

[Claes walks over to her car, yanks off the cover to reveal the exact same car she'd started with, and walks back to the group.]

"I spent £1400 on my 200SX and I used the extra £100 to buy some books on Amazon.co.uk and a nice lunch."

[Voiceover by Laine.]

"With our modifications complete, it was time to see if we were any better."

[The three girls get in their vehicles, start the engines, and roar off. They proceed to start drifting again, with varying levels of effectiveness. Soon, large billowing clouds of steam start to appear from under Kara's Alfa.]

"While my new turbocharger produced plenty of boost and horsepower, it also produced plenty of heat – well beyond what my Alfa's stock cooling system could handle, evidently."

[Kara pulls into the "pit area" and you can see steam billowing out from under the hood and a torrent of water flowing out from under the car, forming a pool.]

Allison appears, dressed in mechanic's overalls. She pops the hood and carefully removes the radiator cap, jumping back to avoid receiving a face full of steam. Jump cut to her carefully pouring water into the radiator fill spout.]

"With my radiator topped off, I went out and did a few more drifts...at which point I needed to come back into the pits and top off again."

[Both hands carrying 5 gallon buckets filled with water, Laine sets them down with a splash next to Kara.]

"That outta keep you topped up for the next few laps."

[Kara gives Laine a withering expression and flicks a bottle of water at her. Another jump cut to Claes, her face a mixture of both annoyance and boredom as she robotically steers the S14 into one drift after another. Laine hops inside of her Jaguar and takes off onto the track. With a flick of the wrist the large car sweeps around a turn, back end kicking out in a wide arc as she hammers the throttle out of the drift.]

"The 295 brake horsepower this 5.3 liter V12 is currently pumping out is nothing to scoff about, but I like even numbers."

[Laine grins a bit at the camera, then drifts around another corner. Despite an upgraded suspension, the car still leans heavily with each maneuver.]

"That's why I installed the nitrous kit."

[Laine points to a set of large pressurized bottles sitting behind the passenger seat. They are attached to gauges, which are in turn attached to hoses that sneak into the cars infrastructure.]

"Let me explain a bit how nitrous works."

[Arriving at the largest straight on the track, Laine straightens out and indicates at a button set into the dash.]

"I hit this button, my engine makes 500 horsepower instead of 295, and I go a lot faster."

[On cue, she taps the button, pushes her boot to the floor, and the inside camera lurches as the pressurized gas enters the engine. A rear view of the Jaguar shows a bit of fire spit out of the exhaust with a loud bang. Laine gives a concerned look for a split second, but quickly fades.]

"This is probably a good time to mention that I've actually never used a nitrous system before..."

[She takes one hand off the wheel to tug on her safety harness.]

"I'm sure it'll be fine."

[Kara watches from her car's watering hole as Laine storms past, V12 engine screeching like a banshee. She cringes as the Jaguar approaches the Nissan from a blind spot. Cut to Laine inside the cabin.]

"Out of the way Claes!"

[The Jaguar sprints by the 200SX in a cloud of dust, dirt, and the roar of the engine. The Jag misses the next corner and spins into the grass. Cut to Laine looking comically calm inside the interior as the world spins around outside the cabin.]

"What did Jeremy Clarkson say? Oh, yes - always power out of a spin."

[Laine hits the nitrous button again and floors the throttle. Two rooster tails of dirt are ejected out the back as the Jaguar shakes like a bone in a bulldog's mouth.]

"Hmm...that's not gone well."

[Laine modulates the throttle and the tires finally hook up, digging deep and long furrows in the grass as the car shimmies it's way back to the asphalt. The mad cat flies across the runway, right in front of Claes, who stands on the brake pedal with both feet. The tires stutter as the 200SX's ABS kicks in and the Jaguar pirouettes in a huge cloud of tire smoke.]

"Watch where you're going!"

[Claes unclenches her hands from the wheel. She'd gripped it so tight she'd actually pressed her fingers through the leather wrapping the steering wheel and into the plastic. As the cloud of dust and tire smoke dissipates inside the Jaguar's cabin, Laine smiles meekly and waves her hands in apology towards Claes.]

"Oops."

[The three cars are now lined up at the opposite end of the runway in the paved overshoot area. Voiceover by Kara.]

"Time for the next challenge."

[Laine accepts the envelope from Rico, who again needs to be pulled out of camera view.]

"Your cars will now perform a lap of the test track in the hands of an Independent Adjudicator. The target time is one minute, 30 seconds. As before, you will score a point for every second over and lose a point for every second under."

[The Stigette appears, wearing a "Vote for Pedro" t-shirt over her racing suit. She jumps into the Alfa and roars off. The Alfa generally holds it's own, the crappy fabric doing a good job of holding The Stigette in the seat. She crosses the finish line, prodigious amounts of steam venting from under the hood, and Claes reads off the time of.]

"One minute, nineteen seconds!"

[Next up is the Jaguar. It's a screamer down the runway and the two intermediate straights, but it wallows in the corners and dives under braking. Coupled with the leather seats and lack of bolstering, The Stigette flops around the cabin, hurting the time.]

"One minute, twenty-six seconds!"

[Finally, the Nissan takes to the track. It's fast. It's grippy. It has good brakes.]

"One minute, seventeen seconds!"

[Camera fades to black. Applause starts as the "hangar studio" returns. The girl's outfits are the same as the original "studio segment". Claes has her arms crossed and is tapping the toe of her right boot in agitation.]

"You idiot. You almost killed me!"

[Laine tries to look apologetic, but she's not doing a very good job.]

"I said I was sorry. Besides, now you know your brakes work."

*[Claes opens her mouth to argue some more, but Kara cuts in front of both of them and the camera focuses on her as she walks to a board titled "Cheap Drift Car Challenge". There are four boxes across the top, titled: **Top Speed**, **Lap of the Track**, **Reliability** and **Fuel***

Economy.]

"Okay. Top Speed. My little Alfa reached a perfectly respectable 210 kilometers per hour, which gives me 10 points.

[Kara writes a "10" in her box.]

"My beautiful and fleet Jaaaggg reached 238 km/h, which I believe earns me 38 points."

[Kara writes a "38" in Laine's box.]

"And Claes, you reached a rather terrifying 231 km/h, which gives you 31 points."

[Kara writes a "31" in Kara's box.]

"Next was a lap of the track. The target was one minute-thirty. Kara, your Alfa did it in 1:19."

[Kara writes an "11" in her box.]

"Claes, your Nissan—"

"Datsun."

"—did it in 1:17 and the mighty Jag chugged it's way to a 1:26."

[Kara writes a "13" in Claes' box and a "4" in Laine's.]

"Reliability. I had one break down."

"A lap..."

"My only reliability issue was a slight overheating problem."

"Your engine was hot enough to broil a pork haunch."

"Anyway, that's a -1 for me and naught for you and Claes."

"Finally there is Fuel Economy. My Nissan averaged 18 miles to the gallon, which is three more than the target. Kara, you averaged 17 and Laine, you did..."

"8."

[Kara writes a "3" in Claes' box, a "2" in her own and a "-7" in Laine's.]

"Let's add up the scores. I received a...22. Laine, you received a...35. And Claes...47. So you win, Claes. Congratulations."

[Kara turns from the board and faces the camera.]

"Anyway, it's time now for—"

[Claes moves forward.]

"What did I win?"

"I'll tell you later. Anyway, it's time for...The Cool Wall!"

[Canned applause and cheers as the camera pans to Laine standing before a large wall covered in black felt, a number of A4-sized pictures of cars mounted on poster board in her hand. Laine flashes her most dazzling smile, with an SFX "light glint" coming off her teeth. Kara walks in from the shadows and stands off to the right of the board.]

"The function of The Cool Wall is pretty obvious. It is divided into four columns, ranked from left to right in increasing 'coolness factor' from 'Seriously Uncool', 'Uncool', 'Cool' and 'Sub-Zero'. Kara and I will have a serious, rational, emotion-free discussion about various cars and where they will fall on The Cool Wall."

[As she says the last sentence, Laine rolls her eyes and Kara exaggeratedly nods her head.]

"There is also the 'Liquid Nitrogen Lunchbox' where we store the Aston Martin DB9."

[Kara unlatches the lid and opens up the lunchbox, removing a picture of Michele's black DB9 Coupe. She kisses it and puts it back in the lunchbox.]

"Now we should note that cars we personally own are by default 'Cool' because we're cool. Therefore, the First Generation Camaro Z28 and the Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder go in the 'Cool' section."



[Laine slaps the two pictures on the wall.]

"Now...the Mercedes SLR McLaren Roadster. What do we think?"

[Laine holds up a picture of the roadster Kara drove earlier. Canned mix of hoots and boos.]



"Uncool."

"Really?"

"It's a phenomenal performer, but it just feels like an SL on steroids with a £200,000 premium."

"Normally, we think any supercar is automatically 'Cool', even if most people can't afford it. But in this case, I have to agree with Kara."

[Laine slaps the picture of the SLR Roadster under 'Uncool'. She holds up a picture of another car.]

"The Chevrolet Corvette ZR1. Clearly, this car belongs in 'Sub-Zero'."



[Laine moves towards that section, but Kara puts out her leg to stop her.]

"The words 'Corvette' and 'cool' do not belong anywhere in the same sentence."

[Kara and Laine debate the merits of the Corvette ZR1. As they do so, Laine continues to reach into her pocket and remove small magnets with sticky-tape on one side, which she arranges on the back of the picture. She then tosses it up towards the top where the magnets firmly attach it to the board, well out of Kara's reach. Canned laughter and applause as the camera zooms in. It then zooms out and pans down to Laine.]

"Now that we've settled that argument, we must now move on to our next segment – an epic drive. Now since we live in Italy, the logical choice is the Stelvio Pass or perhaps the San Bernadino Pass on the way to Lichtenstein. Well, because we live in Italy, we've done those already. We've also done the Col de Turini and even visited that Millau place."

"So we looked around the Internet and we found this--"

[A Google Map of Romania appears on screen, with the little arrow in the middle of the country.]

"There is evidently a highway called the Transfăgărășan that runs between Transylvania and Wallachia. It was built in the early 1970's by Romanian Dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu as a strategic military route to block a feared Soviet invasion. It literally just re-opened for the season yesterday, as it runs between the two tallest sections of the Carpathian Mountains and is covered in snow and ice eight months out of the year."

"Now an epic drive requires an epic car. So we all picked our steeds, put them on a trailer, and sent them east where we met up with them in the Transylvanian city of Sibiu."

Fade cut to Kara standing next to a pearlescent red convertible in a small Romanian village (Cartisoara). She's dressed in a bright red tank-top matched with a bright red knee-length skirt that has the three colors of the Italian flag running down the side seam. She is also wearing a bright red jacket with two white vertical stripes running down the left side and a large Alfa Romeo embroidered patch over her left breast and red knee-high leather boots.]

"As my outfit might have given away, this is the Alfa Romeo 8C Spyder. It has the same Ferrari-assembled 4.7 liter V8 as the 8C Competizione coupe pumping out 450 horsepower and 350 torques. And since it doesn't have a roof, you can truly enjoy the amazing sound it makes every time you flex your right foot."



"Like the coupe, the body is made of carbon fiber and is even more beautiful. And because it's made of carbon fiber, when they sliced the roof off they did not need to perform a great deal of structural reinforcement and maintains a nearly perfect 50-50 weight distribution. When the weather is bad, the two-layer electrically operated roof keeps you dry and warm and when it's nice, stow it and feel the wind in your hair. Now, you might be asking why I chose this car. Jeremy Clarkson was pretty cruel about the coupe's handling and practicality. And this is the convertible version, so it's probably worse in both areas...

"But as he noted in his summation, you forgive every single one of it's faults because it's not a car, it's a piece of art. A piece of art that will explore the near side of 290 km/h."

[The camera pans right as Claes, dressed again in the same D&G turtleneck and skirt with Sergio Rossi boots, stands next to Michele's white Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder.]



"This is the Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4 Spyder. The '560' stands for the horsepower generated by the 5.2 liter V10 engine and will reach a top speed 35 kilometers an hour higher than the Alfa."

[A low rumble echoes off the high walls of the canyon as a Corvette ZR1 in Jetstream Blue Metallic arrives. Laine shifts into neutral and hammers the throttle, the exhaust note ripping through the air. She then kills the engine and hops out. As opposed to the other two girls, Laine has chosen a more urban outfit - white t-shirt over baggy cargo pants and a half-length jacket in olive drab cotton with Sketchers.]



"You don't need to shop on this side of the Atlantic to get a great sports car. The Chevrolet Corvette ZR1 follows the old racer's adage of 'there is no substitute for cubic inches' by packing a 6.2 liter V8 mated to a Roots type supercharger. At 638 horsepower and 819 Newton-meters of torque, it spans both of your vehicles."

"What is it with you and the ZR1? The Americans do make other cars, you know."

"Yeah, but they all suck."

[Kara opens her mouth to protest, but then cocks her head to the side and furrows her face as if she's racking her brain. Her facial features relax.]

"Fair point. Still, good luck getting that monster around a corner."

"Oh I have no intention of taming the Transfăgărășan with finesse and precision. I'm going to use this brute to beat the roads into submission. They're going to be crying Uncle alright - Uncle Sam!"

[The three girls return to their cars and head out. Panning establishment shots of them driving and then they crest a hill with a large power transmission tower.]



[Voice over by Kara.]

"Below us stretched one of the most magnificent sights for any lover of driving."



"Laid before us was tens of kilometers of straights, hairpins, constant radius turns, and esses leading to the northern end of Lake Vidaru. We wasted no time partaking of our host's largesse."

[The next ten minutes are shots of the three cars ripping along the road, with in-car shots of Kara and Laine whopping and hollering and even Claes' face broke a large smile. In addition to static shots from various vantage points, the girls also had rented a helicopter to allow both overhead pan and tracking shots.]

Laine really hung her Corvette's tail out, drifting through the wide corners using all the tricks The Stigette had taught her. Kara travelled a more precise line, but she planted her boot every change she got to revel in the magnificent symphony coming out of the Alfa's tailpipe when she did so. Claes was more prudent, allowing the prodigious grip of the AWD system to keep the Gallardo planted, but she too couldn't resist pushing her right boot to the floor on the longer straights, the V12 cheering her on with it's bellowing note.]

"Even The Stigette came out and played with us."

[A Toyota AE86 screams by Claes and then Kara, taking up a duel with Laine's ZR1. Laine holds her off for a few corners, thanks to the ZR1's sheer power down the straight sections, but soon The Stigette drifts past in a cloud of tire smoke and it's Laine who struggles to keep up.]

"We reached Lake Vidraru and continued along the eastern shore and then on to the great Vidraru Dam where we stopped at the base and marveled at the height."



"We then continued on to Bucharest where we discussed our day over a nice dinner of sarmăluțe cu mămăligă and frigărui."

[The three girls are on the terrace of their suite of the Carol Parc Hotel in Bucharest overlooking the city and adjacent park.]

"That...was...epic..."

"Now I understand why super cars exist. They're wasted in Rome traffic and even the Autostrada doesn't do them justice. But on that road, that Lamborghini was pure magic. I honestly didn't want the road to end."

"Say what you will about American Iron, but that Corvette was awesome. That engine pulled like a freight train and the back end was more frisky than a three-month puppy with a frozen towel. I've never had more fun in a car in my life."

[Kara raised her glass in a toast.]

"Thank you, Romania. We're very glad we came."

[The camera fades to black and the credits start to roll.]

Presented by:

KARA JEPEȘ
LAINE JEPEȘ
CLAES JEPEȘ

and

THE STIGETTE

Camera Supervisor

BRIAN JEPEȘ

Transport Director

CLAYLAND JEPEȘ

Vehicle Wrangler...