

La Comédiathèque

Bed and Breakfast

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Translation by the author

Seeking to escape the stress of Parisian life, Adam and Eve moved to an old farmhouse where they set up a bed and breakfast, to break the isolation and make ends meet. But their first couple of guests arrive, and they will soon discover that in this little corner of paradise, hell is other people...

Characters

Adam

Eve

Jack

Bernadette

Afternoon

A terrace serving in a restored mountain farm offering bed and breakfast accommodations. Adam and Eve are sitting side by side on lounge chairs.

Eve – What tranquility... In the morning, it's the birdsong that wakes me up, instead of the ringtone of my mobile phone... It's been almost three months since we've been here, and I still can't believe it... I feel like I'm in paradise.

Adam – The calm before the storm...

Eve – It's truly heaven on earth. But we still have to earn a living through the sweat of our brow. For you, of course, you can paint anywhere – I'm your model...

Adam – My muse...

Eve – As for me, what else could I do here, besides running a bed and breakfast and selling goat's cheese?

Adam – Mmm...

Eve (*thoughtful*) – Our first guests...

Adam – The baptism by fire.

Eve – We'll have to live up to the challenge. I'm counting on you. Your natural friendliness... Your sense of hospitality...

Adam – And what about them? Do you think they'll live up to the challenge? (*Pause*) Can you imagine? We left Paris to escape all these idiots, and now we'll have them sleeping over at our place every weekend...

Eve – And having dinner...

Adam – Oh no... Don't tell me they've also booked the guesthouse dining?

Eve – Maybe they're very nice! You can just think of them as friends that I invited...

Adam – I don't charge my friends.

Eve – No. Besides, you never invite them...

Adam – Maybe you're right. At least with these guests, if they're idiots, when they will pay us before leaving, we'll know why we wasted our day cooking for them and our evening making conversation with them.

Eve – Well, it depends on where you draw the line between idiots and the rest of humanity. Maybe we're idiots too. What do you think constitutes an idiotic couple?

Adam – I don't know... Stupidity can't be defined. It can only be observed. You know the saying – there's no love, only proof of love. Well, it's the same with stupidity...

Eve – Mmm...

Adam – We haven't been away from them for that long, remember. You can even recognize an idiotic couple in the dark! (*Eve gives him a distracted look.*) Like when they arrive late to the cinema, for example! Instead of sitting at the end of the row, they step over ten people to sit in the middle. On your hat. Then they check the bright screen of their mobile phones for ten minutes to make sure the world can still turn without them for the remainder of the film.

Eve – When Madame doesn't leave the theatre fifteen minutes later to answer an urgent call. Just to avoid disturbing anyone.

Adam – Well, you can be sure you're dealing with an internationally renowned idiotic couple in that case.

Eve – We won't have that kind of problem here anymore. The nearest cinema is fifty kilometres away.

Adam – Oh, really...? Unfortunately, idiots are very mobile, you know.

Eve – Even in the countryside?

Adam – Why do you think they have a four-wheel drive and a GPS? The idiot travels! Even to the unpaved paths leading to the little corners of paradise whose addresses have been imprudently posted on Booking.com website... (*The sound of an engine is heard, and the bleating of goats disturbed by the vehicle.*) Well, here they come...

Eve – Already? Do you think so? Oh my God! I haven't even finished cleaning their room yet...

The sound of an engine fades away.

Adam – Oh no. Those are just passing through. They must be migrating south. It's the season.

Adam conscientiously starts rolling a joint.

Eve – What if I go pick some wild strawberries? They smell so good. I could make them a pie. It's not every day they get to eat wild strawberries in Paris. Will you come with me?

Adam – Where to?

Eve – Well, to the woods!

Adam – Wait, wild strawberries are tiny as hell. You'll need a good thousand of them to make a pie!

Eve – Even a small one?

Adam – Just thinking about it, my back already hurts...

Eve – I'll pick them myself then. You can keep me company. Hey, you could even take the opportunity to do some sketches, it would help you relax a bit...

Adam – Landscapes? It's the impressionists who painted outdoors. I'm an indoor painter. And it looks like the weather is about to turn cloudy, isn't it?

Eve – What was the point of moving to the mountains if you're still painting nudes in your studio... So, are you coming with me?

Adam – No, honestly, I couldn't bear to see you exhausting yourself for people we don't even know. And who probably wouldn't even be able to tell the difference between your tiny wild strawberries and a Spanish strawberry as big as a melon, delivered straight to your plate by airplane from its plastic greenhouse with automatic watering.

Eve – I admit that the advantage is that you only need three or four of them to make a pie. I might have some left in the freezer...

Adam – Sometimes I wonder what we're doing here.

Eve – It was my idea to leave, but it was you who chose this place...

Adam – That's true. (*Ecstatic*) It's paradise... (*Regaining composure*) But in paradise, there was only Adam and Eve... They didn't have the crazy idea of opening a bed and breakfast. Yeah... We thoroughly enjoyed paradise for three months, but now you will see... As Sartre says, hell is other people... I would even say: hell is the guests.

Eve (*sarcastic*) – You've outdone yourself with that one...

Adam – This one's done. (*Sigh*) Well, fortunately it's a room for two people only. At least we're spared the children. I can't stand other people's children.

Eve – As we don't have any...

Adam – Yeah, well if we had some, I think I would have tolerated them more easily than the ones from others... (*He lights his joint and offers it to Eve.*) Want some?

Eve – No, thanks...

Adam – It's organic... Homegrown...

Eve – I need to stay clear-headed to welcome our guests... (*Getting up*) Okay, you're right, we'll save the wild strawberries for later. I'll start by making their bed, it's more urgent. And what about you? What's your plan for the rest of the day?

Adam – I think I'll take a nap. So I can be at my best tonight, like a Club Med entertainer...

Eve – Not too energetic though... (*Eve is about to enter the house.*) Well, I'd rather they don't find you smoking a joint when they arrive...

Adam – There it is. Goodbye freedom. I'll have to hide to smoke now... But no, don't worry. I'll hear them coming with their noisy diesel SUV...

Eve disappears. Left alone, Adam takes a few puffs from his joint, then closes his eyes and begins to doze off. A woman appears on the terrace. She is dressed in hiking gear, possibly with a cross around her neck, and carries a backpack. In short, she has a boy-scout look, including a beret. Not initially noticing Adam, she advances silently, taking in the surroundings, and searching for a way to announce herself. Alerted by her footsteps, Adam comes out of his stupor but keeps his eyes closed.

Adam – I imagined you dusting their room, wearing your little white apron and wielding your feather duster.

Bernadette spots Adam and, surprised, doesn't know what to say.

Adam (*opening his eyes*) – So you changed your mind? Don't you want to take a nap together after all?

Adam, in turn, sees Bernadette and realizes his mistake. Like a child caught in the act, he hastily extinguishes his joint and tries to dissipate the smoke. She is even more embarrassed than he is.

Bernadette – Hello... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to wake you.

Adam – No, no, I wasn't really sleeping... Are you collecting donations for the Scouts? I thought by coming here to hide out, I'd be safe from that crap.

Bernadette (*smiling*) – I'm Bernadette... I'm the one who called you... About the reservation...

Adam (*spotting the backpack*) – Ah, I see... But you know, you didn't need to bring a sleeping bag. My wife is preparing your room. Now, if you prefer to pitch your tent in the garden...

Bernadette – No, no... These are just our travel belongings...

Adam – Don't tell me you walked here from Paris...

Bernadette – Just from the train station. We'll start walking tomorrow. We're doing the Camino de Santiago. A little bit each year...

Adam – In bed and breakfasts...?

Bernadette – Don't worry, we're not fundamentalists.

Adam – Ah, but I wasn't worried. We have nothing against religion...

Bernadette – Actually, we're barely believers...

Adam (*impressed*) – In my life, I've seen many unbelievable things, but it's the first time I've met pilgrims who are barely believers... At least we'll have something to talk about tonight...

Bernadette – We used to spend our vacations in Provence, but it's become so overrated... And especially too expensive!

Adam – Have you tried Albania? It's supposed to be less expensive...

Bernadette – We did... But now, if you only knew... It's become completely unaffordable too.

Adam – So, you've opted for a pilgrimage. But please, put down your backpack. Would you like something to drink?

Bernadette puts down her backpack.

Bernadette – I'll have a glass of water, please. (*Adam pours her a glass of water.*) For us, this pilgrimage is also... a very personal spiritual journey.

Adam – You're absolutely right, without breaking the bank.

Bernadette – It's also an opportunity to get some exercise, lose a few kilos, and discover France in a different way.

Adam – I understand perfectly. I myself walk to midnight mass every year. And it's mostly for the atmosphere...

Bernadette – It's also a chance for us to spend some time together, you know... with my husband.

Adam – Ah, yes... And where is he...?

Bernadette (*slightly worried*) – I'm starting to wonder if I haven't already lost him... He insisted on taking a shortcut... (*with a knowing look*) You know how men are... We had a little argument about which way the hiking trail goes... Nothing serious...

Bernadette takes a sip from her glass.

Adam – And how many kilometres do you hike in a year, like this?

Bernadette – It depends on the years. But we calculated that at this rate, we still have ten more years to go.

Adam – Maybe by then you'll have found your faith again.

Bernadette – Your house is really beautiful. Even more beautiful than on the website. Are you originally from this region?

Adam – No... We're also Parisian bobos in search of spirituality. But we chose the sedentary option. We bought this place six months ago from a couple of farmers drowning in debt. They couldn't afford to pay the loan for their cows anymore.

Bernadette – Ah, yes, with the crisis in the dairy industry.

Adam – So we bought the farm from the widow for a song...

Bernadette – The widow...

Adam (*with a solemn look*) – Her husband hanged himself. See, on the beam in your room, actually. But we've renovated everything since then, of course. I did everything myself, including the painting. I'm a bit handy that way. Keeping the rustic style, of course. You'll see, it's very cozy...

Bernadette looks a bit perplexed. Eve returns, intrigued by the sound of conversation.

Eve – Hello...

Bernadette (*getting up to greet her*) – You must be Eve?

Eve – Hello Bernadette. Have you met Adam?

Bernadette – Adam and Eve... It's funny.

Eve – Yes...

Bernadette – In any case, you live in a heavenly place... But Adam was telling me the story of the house... The tragedy that took place here... All that... (*Eve looks suspiciously at Adam.*) And the renovations, were they not too difficult...?

Eve – Oh, not at all. We didn't do anything. Neither of us is handy at all. That's actually why we chose this house. Adam must have told you. It used to belong to an English couple. But with the fall of the pound... (*Bernadette give a glance to Adam, who feigns innocence.*) Isn't your husband with you?

Bernadette – He should be arriving any moment now...

Adam – This gentleman and this lady are walking the Camino de Santiago. As a couple...

Eve – Did my husband offer you something to drink?

Bernadette – Yes, thank you. But I don't want to bother you...

Eve – You know, we don't see many people here. So for us, it's more of a distraction. But maybe I should show you to your room?

Bernadette – Yes, I'll go put down my bag and freshen up a bit, if you don't mind...

Eve – Please, follow me. You can see the house on the way.

Bernadette – Thank you.

They enter the house.

Eve – We have to go up a few steps... The room is under the eaves, but there's a nice high ceiling. With exposed beams...

Adam smiles and is about to doze off again when he sees a man approaching from a distance. He gets up from his lounge chair.

Adam – Well, I guess that's the end of my nap.

He raises his voice to address the man.

Adam – Hello! Please stay in the central aisle, we've placed anti-personnel mines on the sides to prevent children from trampling the lawn.

Jack arrives, a little out of breath, wearing a scout-like outfit and carrying a backpack.

Jack – You can rest assured on that front. We left our daughter in Paris. But you're not worried about yours...?

Adam – I didn't want any kids and my wife is unable to have children. Or maybe it's the other way around, I don't remember. Life works in mysterious ways. So instead of saving money to pay for their education until they're thirty, we bought a villa with a pool.

Jack – Well, it's truly magnificent... All this greenery... (*A goat bleats*) Has Bernadette arrived...?

Adam – My wife is showing her around the house. (*Affirmative*) You're not thirsty.

Jack (*politely*) – No, not too much...

Adam – That's good.

Jack – I won't bother you then...

Adam – You're not bothering me. I was trying to take a nap. I don't know why I keep trying to take a nap, actually. I've never been able to fall asleep in the afternoon in my entire life. But you know how it is with prejudices. You tell yourself, now that I live in the countryside, I should still try to take a nap. Do you take naps?

Jack – Occasionally, when on vacation... (*Wiping his forehead*) It's hot, huh? I got a little lost. And it's quite uphill to get to your place...

Adam – Come on, let me pour you a glass of cold water anyway, otherwise my wife will scold me. You don't have to drink it, huh? It's just to cover my bases...

Jack – In that case... (*Adam pours him a glass of water*) Thank you.

Jack, parched, drinks the glass in one gulp.

Adam – Your wife told me you're walking the Camino de Santiago. I didn't know it passed through the Alps. It's not the most direct route from Paris, is it...?

Jack – Let's say it's a variation... We wanted to visit the region...

Adam – You reassure me. I was a little afraid we'd be invaded by pilgrims. They may not all be as funny as you.

Jack – I tried calling Bernadette on her mobile earlier, but there was no network coverage...

Adam – The charms of the countryside... It's one of the last places in France that still doesn't have coverage. Even for internet, we have to climb up the mountain over there. Like Moses downloading the Tablets of the Law. He too must have done some climbing to access the network.

Jack – Ah, yes, it's... It's very tranquil.

Adam – We're in a sort of black hole of communication technologies. In fact, it's one of the reasons why I chose this house. No network coverage means no troublemakers. In theory...

Bernadette returns and spots her husband.

Bernadette – Oh, there you are. We were starting to wonder if you hadn't gotten lost.

Jack – No, no... I was just chatting with Adam...

Bernadette – I told you to turn left. (*Turning to Adam for confirmation*) But he didn't listen to me, as usual. Well, are you coming? Let me show you the room. You'll see, it's magnificent...

Jack (*to Adam*) – Well, see you later then...

Adam – Take your time, huh? We're not in a rush...

They both enter the house. Eve comes back from another side, looking worried.

Eve – Has her husband arrived?

Adam – They're in the room... Didn't you run into them?

Eve – I was in the kitchen...

Adam – It's okay, there's no need to get worked up like that, it's not that serious... I even offered him a drink, you see.

Eve – She has a gun.

Adam – Pardon?

Eve – Bernadette... She has a gun... I went back to the room to give them towels. I knocked, but she didn't hear. She was in the bathroom. Her backpack was on a chair. I accidentally knocked it over, and I clearly saw a revolver sticking out...

Adam – And then?

Eve – And then? I put the bag back on the chair, and I left.

Adam – This is getting interesting... But are you sure it was a revolver?

Eve – I wasn't going to search through her bag, of course. But I've seen a revolver before.

Adam – Oh, really? Where?

Eve – I don't know... On TV...

Adam – Maybe it wasn't real...?

Eve – What do you mean?

Adam – It could have been a toy...

Eve – But what would pilgrims do with a toy gun in their backpack?

Adam – I don't know... The Camino de Santiago is long. Maybe they play cowboys and Indians along the way to pass the time. We should check his bag too, to see if he has a bow and arrows...

Eve – I'm being serious, Adam.

Adam – Maybe it's a souvenir they bought for their daughter!

Eve – Do you think so?

Adam – I don't know... Girls don't really play with that kind of gun, unless they have very disturbed parents... And a revolver, even as a toy... Those are pretty rare, as souvenir items in monastery gift shops...

Eve – Listen, Adam, they're staying the night at our place... Maybe we should notify the police...

Adam – Unless they are the police...

Eve gives him a puzzled look.

Adam – Have you seen their outfits? There's nothing that looks more like a scout than an undercover cop. They're staking out here. They're monitoring terrorists. And the bed and breakfast pilgrimage, it's just a cover. Not very credible, by the way, if you ask me... Do you have their contact information in Paris?

Eve – I have a mobile number and an address. But it could be fake... What terrorists? (*Anxiously*) Al Qaeda...?

Adam – I was thinking more of the Basques.

Eve – Why the Basques?

Adam – Well, the Camino de Santiago passes through the Basque Country, doesn't it...?

Eve – We're right in the middle of the Alps!

Adam – Or maybe they are the terrorists...

Eve (*terrified*) – Arabs or Basques?

Adam – How do you tell a Basque apart from an Arab with a beret on his head...?

Bernadette returns.

Bernadette – Thanks for the towels. Am I interrupting?

Eve – Not at all.

Adam – We were actually talking about you. That's why we stopped when you arrived. My wife was worried about your blanket.

Bernadette – It'll be fine, thank you. We're not sensitive to the cold. And besides, it's July...

Adam – Ah, the nights can still be chilly around here, you know. We're in the mountains. We've seen freezing nights in the middle of July. And we even had snow on August 15th ten years ago.

Eve – Well, we weren't here yet, but that's what the local farmers told us.

Adam – At the same time, you know how locals are, even when they're sober, they tell a lot of nonsense. So when they're drunk...

Eve gives him an annoyed look.

Bernadette – Such tranquility... You don't hear a sound... It's almost painful to the ears coming from Paris. But we'll get used to it...

Adam – Yes... For us, it's the opposite. We had just gotten used to the silence...

Eve – The nearest neighbour who speaks anything other than onomatopoeia is five kilometres away from here. And even then, he's only here during school holidays.

Adam – Do you know the origin of the term "Moron of the Alps"?

Bernadette – No.

Adam – It's because the air here is very low in iodine. A substance absolutely necessary for proper brain function. People always talk about the fresh mountain air... In reality, it's better not to stay here for too long. We've only been here for three months ourselves, and we already feel like we're getting a little soft in the head. Right, darling?

Eve gives him an angry look.

Bernadette – It's true that you're quite isolated here...

Adam – It can be a bit creepy sometimes. Especially at night. Knowing what happened in this house... Thankfully, you're here to keep us company, otherwise we'd only have the livestock...

Bernadette looks towards the spectators to see the view from the terrace.

Bernadette – Ah, yes, the sheep... That's quite a change from Paris...

Adam – Although... The more I observe the sheep, the more similarities I find with Parisians. They live in herds. We shear the wool off their backs, and with the little oats we give them in return, they can't even afford a synthetic coat during the sales...

Bernadette – They get oats, the sheep?

Adam – It was just to continue the metaphor of the wool...

Eve – Actually, those are not sheep, but goats.

Bernadette smiles politely.

Bernadette – And all that green... What are those plantations over there?

Adam – Ah, that? That's our personal cannabis plantation. Isolation does have some advantages. And believe me, it's good stuff. If you're interested...

Eve glares at him.

Eve – You'll be dining with us, won't you? That's what you said when you made the reservation. But there's no obligation, of course. If you prefer to rest...

Bernadette – No, no, we'd be delighted. That's also why we travel in bed and breakfasts... To exchange with the locals...

Eve – Unfortunately, you picked the wrong locals with us. We're not really locals.

Adam – We're a bit like the bears in the Pyrenees. We were reintroduced into the area to avoid extinction of the species... We eat a sheep from time to time. And we're not even capable of reproducing ourselves. I hope we won't end up getting shot by a hunter too...

Eve – I have Bayonne ham planned for appetizers. But if you don't eat pork...

Bernadette – I love Bayonne ham.

Eve – Well... So at least you're not Muslims...

Adam – Well, I don't think there are many Muslims doing the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, right?

Eve – Maybe Basques?

Bernadette – Neither... Why...?

Eve – No, just like that... Since you like Bayonne ham...

Awkward silence.

Bernadette (to Adam) – You're the artist who made the paintings I saw inside.

Adam – Yes.

Bernadette – You're really talented.

Eve – Yes... He's a genius who deserves recognition...

Adam – It's not easy to believe in oneself without taking oneself too seriously. Most of the time, people just don't take you seriously.

Bernadette – And you?

Eve – Me?

Bernadette – I imagine running these guest rooms must take a lot of energy. Do you have time to do anything else?

Eve – I don't know yet. You're our first guests...

Bernadette – Really? We'll have to live up to it then.

Adam – Yes, that's what I was telling my wife this morning, actually.

Eve – What we were saying is that we have to live up to it...

Bernadette – And what were you doing before you came here to settle down?

Eve – I was a French teacher. But teaching, nowadays... It's become too tough. I felt like I wasn't speaking the same language with my students anymore... No, until we translate Chateaubriand and Proust into text language... So two years ago, we bought this house to try and change our lives. We'll see... And what about you? What do you do?

Jack returns.

Jack – Hello...

Eve – Hello.

Bernadette – I don't think you've met my husband yet... Jack, Eve, and Adam.

Jack – Adam and Eve... How amusing...

Eve – Yes... Would you like something to drink?

Jack – Adam already offered me a glass of water.

Eve – Well, then we can move on to an aperitif, how about it?

Jack – Why not?

Eve – My husband will bring you a blanket for the bed. You'll see if you need it or not. Right, darling?

Adam – Do you really think it's necessary?

Eve (*firmly*) – You told us it could freeze tonight, didn't you?

Adam finally gets up from his lounge chair reluctantly.

Adam – Alright, I'll go then...

Eve – I'll fetch the bottles.

Bernadette – Do you want my husband to help you?

Eve – No, no, thank you, we'll manage just fine.

Adam and Eve leave together.

Eve (*aside to Adam*) – Take the opportunity while they're both here to search their bags... She has a revolver, I tell you... (*Loudly*) Are you getting a blanket from the closet by the entrance, honey?

Jack and Bernadette are now alone. They exchange a concerned glance.

Bernadette – They're a bit peculiar, aren't they?

Jack (*distractedly*) – Oh, yes?

Bernadette – Have you seen his paintings inside?

Jack (*appreciatively*) – Oh, yes!

Bernadette – What a horror...

Jack – They're a bit spicy... But well...

Bernadette – A bit? He's a real pervert, yes...

Jack (*dreamily*) – Do you think she's his model?

Bernadette (*dryly*) – Why...?

Jack – Just wondering... She's quite a beautiful woman, after all...

Bernadette – Yes, well...

Jack – Well, she is.

Bernadette – Alright, that's enough! Come on, seriously! Can you imagine yourself painting me naked and hanging the painting above the fireplace in our dining room...

Jack (*looking at her*) – No...

Silence.

Bernadette – And what about the room, do you think it's worth three stars?

Jack – It's not very big, and the ceiling is a bit low, but it has character. With those exposed beams...

Bernadette – The guy who hanged himself in that broom closet must have been a contortionist...

Jack – We'll see what they serve us for dinner.

Bernadette looks towards the goats (i.e., the audience).

Bernadette – Those goats are strange, aren't they?

Jack – Oh, really...?

Bernadette – Don't you see it?

Jack also looks.

Bernadette – They're looking at us, and it seems like they're laughing...

Jack – Oh, maybe...

Bernadette – Anyway, you have to admit that the landscape is splendid. Hey, I feel like taking a photo. For our report... (Jack *doesn't move*.) Well, go and fetch the camera!

Jack – Yes, yes, I'm going...

He leaves. Eve returns with a cart loaded with bottles.

Eve – Here... What can I get you? Did you lose your husband again?

Bernadette – He went to get the camera from the room.

Eve – Oh, damn...

Bernadette (*surprised*) – Excuse me...?

Eve – No, no, I spilled the peanuts, but it's nothing... What would you like?

Bernadette – Is there a local specialty?

Eve – Daisy wine?

Bernadette – Oh, really?

Eve – I don't know if it's really a local specialty. Anyway, that's what the farmer next door told us. We get it from him. I'll warn you, it's a bit bizarre. Actually, the farmer is a bit bizarre too...

Bernadette – Oh, you're not going to poison me...

Eve – Ah... Poison is a woman's weapon... More than a revolver, I mean...

Bernadette seems a bit taken aback, but quickly recovers.

Bernadette – It doesn't matter, I'll take the risk.

Adam returns.

Adam – Did you manage to pawn off your daisy wine on them?

Eve – What will you have?

Adam – Not that, for sure. The only time I drank it, I almost died...

Eve – My husband is joking...

Adam – I'll have an absinthe instead.

Eve – Absinthe? I thought it was forbidden in France.

Adam serves himself.

Adam – I get my supply from Switzerland, the border is just nearby. It's true that since I started drinking it, I've been losing my hair, I've had hallucinations, and I sometimes have murder cravings. But if I want to paint like Van Gogh... Absinthe drove him mad, and he ended up committing suicide, it is true. But what talent!

Jack returns.

Eve – And what about you, Jack? What would you like to drink?

Jack – Oh... I'll have a port, if you have any...

Eve – Ah, I forgot the port.

Bernadette – Don't worry, my husband will have something else! Right, Jack? You'll have an absinthe, with Adam...

Jack – Of course... An absinthe will be fine.

Eve – No, no, I'll handle it. Adam, can you bring the ice cubes? Excuse us for a moment...

Eve and Adam leave. Bernadette notices that Jack looks a bit disturbed.

Bernadette – You look like you've seen a ghost. Don't tell me it's the one from the guy who hanged himself in our room...

Jack – When I came to pick up the camera, he was rummaging through your bag...

Bernadette – No...?

Jack – We'll have to check before we leave if they stole anything from us...

Bernadette – I'm telling you, they seem weird... What if we come up with an excuse to leave?

Jack – An excuse?

Bernadette – I don't know. We can always find something. A major event. The death of a close relative... A gas leak...

Jack – We have a diesel boiler.

Bernadette – That's why I mentioned an excuse...

Jack – Are you sure...?

Bernadette – I have a bad feeling about it... (*with a worried look*) And you know how it usually ends when I have a bad feeling...

Eve returns with the bottle of port and serves Jack.

Eve (to Jack) – And this is port that comes directly from Portugal. Our cleaning lady brought it back for us from there when she came back from vacation.

Bernadette – Do you really believe that the port we buy in France doesn't necessarily come from Portugal?

Eve looks a bit puzzled.

Jack – My wife is joking...

Eve (to *Bernadette*) – I'll join you for the daisy wine, if it can reassure you. I promise, I'll drink first. If I don't die immediately in agonizing convulsions, you can drink too.

Adam returns.

Adam – And here are the ice cubes. (To *Bernadette*) Nice and cold, it goes down smoother, you'll see. You can hardly taste the daisies... (*Everyone raises their glass.*) Here is today, which won't be tomorrow anymore! (*Bernadette cautiously takes a sip.*) I don't mean to be indiscreet, but you pique my curiosity... I still haven't understood the concept of the secular pilgrimage...

Bernadette – Do you believe in miracles?

Adam – You mean... when there's an earthquake that kills two hundred thousand people, and after weeks of searching, volunteer rescuers happen to find one or two survivors under the rubble at the risk of their own lives, and then all the credit is given to God, thanking him for his blessings?

Bernadette – Well, we too are miracle survivors... I would even say polymiracle survivors.

Jack – My wife means that we have escaped death several times already.

Eve – Really...?

Jack – For example, that Concorde that crashed into a hotel at Roissy Airport in 2000, do you remember?

Eve – Ah, yes, of course.

Bernadette – My husband was supposed to be on it. He was already in the boarding lounge. But he broke his tailbone while sliding down the stairs after slipping on a Mars bar. So he couldn't leave...

Jack – Can you imagine? My suitcases were already checked in. In fact, I never saw them again...

Adam – That's strange... I had never heard of this story with the suitcases... (*With a knowing look at Eve*) And we never really knew how that plane could have exploded in midair...

Eve (to *Bernadette*) – And you weren't with your husband...?

Bernadette – I had just come to accompany him... We had spent the night in an airport hotel. When I went back to pay the bill, it was just a blazing inferno.

Jack – The Concorde that I was supposed to take crashed into it.

Bernadette – If it had been five minutes later, I would have been on it too... Let's just say I never saw my luggage again...

Jack – That's when we decided to make the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela.

Adam – So that he could bring back your luggage?

Bernadette – To give thanks... let's say to Providence.

Awkward silence.

Jack (*in a serious tone*) – Do you believe in the afterlife, Eve?

Eve is caught off guard.

Eve (*jokingly to lighten the mood*) – You mean... the Twilight Zone, that kind of stuff...?

Adam – I tend to think that heaven and hell are right here on earth, and you can switch between the two in the same day... That's what I was telling my wife just this morning, right dear?

Silence.

Bernadette – In any case, the view is magnificent... All this green... (*To Jack*) You didn't bring the camera, Jack?

Jack – Oops, with all this, I forgot it...

Adam – The advantage of not having a memory anymore is that you're never bored. My mother had Alzheimer's. When I used to visit her, every time she looked away for a second, she thought I had just arrived. She was always happy to see me...

Jack – I'm going back to get the camera.

Bernadette – I'll come with you to fetch a shawl. It's true that it's getting a bit cooler, isn't it...?

Jack and Bernadette exit.

Eve – So...?

Adam – Well... I didn't have much time to search, the husband caught me red-handed...

Eve – But it was on top! A gun with a black handle and a silver barrel.

Adam – The only black and silver thing I saw in that bag was a hair dryer... (*He gives her a suspicious look*) Tell me, you couldn't possibly confuse a hair dryer with a gun, could you...?

Eve doesn't seem very sure of herself.

Adam – Tell me, the guns you've seen on TV, weren't they in Star Trek or in Star Wars...? Like a disintegrator laser gun... that could also double as a travel hair dryer?

Bernadette returns with a shawl, accompanied by Jack, who has a camera in hand.

Jack – There, that way we can at least have an eternal souvenir of this wonderful view. Just in case things suddenly go downhill...

Eve (*worried*) – Do you have reason to believe that things could suddenly go downhill...?

Bernadette – Nowhere is safe from a meteorite falling...

Jack – Or from an ice block breaking off from the toilet bowl of an Airbus...

Adam and Eve exchange a concerned look. Jack takes a photo of the auditorium while Bernadette puts on a solemn expression.

Bernadette – Actually, I'm really sorry, but we won't be able to stay.

Eve – Oh, really...?

Adam – What a shame...

Bernadette – I just received a call on my cell phone. My mother just passed away...

Jack, seeming surprised, gives her a puzzled look.

Adam – Well, isn't that funny... (*Surprise from the other three*) No, I mean... Not about your mother... But usually, we have no signal here. That's what I was explaining to your husband earlier. It must be another miracle.

Eve gives him a offended look.

Eve – We're truly sorry for your loss. Please accept our condolences...

Bernadette – Of course, we will settle the bill for the night...

Eve – But that's out of the question, really...

Adam – Unless you insist, of course...

Eve – Please, have a seat for a moment.

Jack – And what did she pass away from?

Bernadette gives her husband an annoyed look.

Bernadette (*to everyone*) – Oh, you know, she was already very ill... But even when you're expecting it, it still hits you...

Jack – And to think that at her age, she was still riding her bike.

Eve – I had to bury my hamster six months ago. It had tumours all over and couldn't even pedal in its cage anymore. It was already a shock for me. So a mother, I can't imagine...

Getting caught up in the moment, Bernadette starts crying. Eve hands her a tissue.

Eve – Here...

Bernadette – Thank you... It means a lot to me...

Adam (to Eve) – But before the hamster, there was your father... He passed away a few weeks ago...

Eve – I know, but... It may sound monstrous, but it didn't affect me the same way as my hamster...

Bernadette – I understand... When you've never had a child...

Bernadette wipes her tears and blows her nose loudly. She seems to regain her composure a bit, and takes a sip from her glass.

Bernadette – This daisy wine is really delicious. Very light. And with an unusual taste... What is it?

Eve – Probably the daisies...

Bernadette – Ah, yes... You can really taste it... It's very delicate...

Eve – They say it's made with the daisy roots.

Adam – That's really what they call pushing up daisies.

Eve – Have some peanuts... (*Bernadette helps herself*) And what about you, Jack, do you still have your parents?

Jack – Well... I was raised in foster care... My mother died during childbirth, and my father had a car accident while going to register me at the town hall...

Adam – Maybe you have a pet, then...?

Suddenly, Bernadette gets up from her seat and starts choking in an impressive way.

Jack – What's happening, darling?

Eve – Must be the emotion...

Jack – Or the daisies...

Adam – I think it's more likely the peanuts... She must have swallowed one the wrong way...

Adam gets up, stands behind Bernadette, puts his arms around her chest, and gives her a strong squeeze from behind, in a somewhat ambiguous gesture. Jack watches in amazement, but Bernadette soon coughs up the peanut and gradually resumes her breathing, with difficulty.

Adam – It's the Heimlich technique. I saw it done in a TV series, back when we still had TV...

Bernadette – I don't know how to thank you... I thought I was going to suffocate...

Adam – Oh yes, you can die from it, you know! It's called choking. Instead of going directly into the oesophagus, the peanut decides to take a pilgrimage down the windpipe... It happens often with strong emotions...

Bernadette – So you saved my life...!

Adam looks at her, a little embarrassed.

Adam – I hope I won't regret it.

Bernadette steps towards Adam and embraces him warmly with a somewhat ambiguous fervour.

Bernadette – Thank you... (*She breaks away and addresses Jack.*) And you, you were just standing there! You would have let me choke! Thank goodness Adam was here...

Jack doesn't say anything.

Adam – But tell me, you've had your share of misfortunes. A death in the family. Now choking on peanuts. It's no longer a pilgrimage, it's a Via Dolorosa. Are you sure you'll make it to Santiago de Compostela...?

Eve – You'll still stay for dinner with us, right? Adam will drive you to the train station afterwards. The next train to Paris is in three hours...

Bernadette – Why not... Thank you for your hospitality, really...

Eve – We'll leave you to catch your breath for a moment...

Adam – The fresh air of the Alps...

Eve – Anyway, we need to finish preparing dinner. There's not much left to do. You can rest a bit.

Adam – And start grieving...

Jack – I'll at least help you set the table...

Eve – No, really, it's not necessary... Come on, Adam...

Eve and Adam leave.

Bernadette – They're really sweet...

Jack – Earlier, you found them strange...

Bernadette – What she said about the death of my mother... It touched me a lot...

Jack – But... your mother isn't dead, right?

Bernadette – Maybe not, but she's not supposed to know... And besides, he already saved my life! I've only known him for an hour, and he's already saved my life! Have you ever saved my life? In all the years we've been married!

Jack – So we're not leaving anymore?

Bernadette – We're fine here, right?

Jack – But you were the one who said...

Bernadette – Okay, only fools never change their minds... Well, I have to give you credit for one thing at least, and that is your consistency in your opinions...

Goat bleating.

Jack – It's true, those goats bleat in a funny way... You're right, it's like they're laughing at us...

Adam returns.

Adam – Excuse me, I'm just passing through... I'm going to the farm next door to get milk for breakfast. Straight from the cow's udder...

Jack – I used to do that when I was a kid.

Bernadette – Your parents lived in Montmartre!

Jack – During vacations at my aunt's in Normandy.

Adam – It's part of the local folklore for passing guests...

Jack – Cow's milk is definitely different from supermarket milk.

Bernadette – Yes, well, it's like port wine. I think supermarket milk also comes from cows, right? It's just pasteurized...

Adam – It's true, you have to boil that one well. Because if you've only ever drunk long-life milk, you can quickly catch typhoid...

Jack – Supermarket milk... They take out the butter and cream, sell them separately, and charge you twenty times more for what's left, which they pay the farmers peanuts.

Bernadette – Oh, no, I don't digest full-fat milk well...

Jack – My wife drinks lactose-free skim milk. I've always wondered what's left in the milk when you remove the cream and lactose. Might as well drink mineral water directly, right?

Adam – You know, they sell us mineral water at the price of milk... Well, it's not that I'm bored, but I have to go. If I don't want to miss the milking...

Bernadette – Can I come with you? It'll take my mind off things...

Adam – Okay...

Bernadette – You don't mind me leaving you alone, honey?

Jack – No, no, go ahead... (*Sarcastic*) If it can soften your grief a bit...

Adam (*to Bernadette*) – I've always found a lot of comfort in cows during difficult times...

Adam and Bernadette leave. Jack sighs. Eve comes back with something in a basket.

Eve – Do you want to peel the onions with me? It will distract you...

Jack – Of course... (*They start peeling the onions in silence.*) It might sound horrible, but... There have been times when I wanted to kill her...

Eve – Your mother-in-law? Oh, everyone feels that way sometimes, you know. Don't feel guilty about it, it's perfectly normal. And you're not responsible for her death, correct?

Jack – My mother-in-law...? Oh, no, I... I was talking about my wife...

Eve – Ah... Well, you know, I've had thoughts of killing my husband too. (*Suddenly worried*) But we're only talking about a fleeting intention quickly repressed, right? Not the beginning of an acting out? I mean, we're not talking about a hidden firearm in a backpack or anything like that...

Jack – Earlier, when she choked, it's true, I didn't move. Who knows...? Maybe for a moment, I thought...

Eve – And if this peanut was the solution to all my problems...? But no... I assure you. Don't worry about it. You know what they say? Love, hate... These are sometimes very close feelings to each other. Come on, Jack! All the psychoanalysts will tell you. Hate is the cement of a couple!

Jack looks at her wondering if she's serious. Then he sighs and looks at the landscape.

Jack – I think you're right... Maybe we should come and settle in the countryside too. To find some serenity. Some harmony in our relationship... Do you know if there are any farms for sale around here? We could be neighbours...

Eve gives him a worried look.

Eve – Well... I don't know... And besides, you see, we're really isolated here. You have to be wealthy. Or have a job that you can do anywhere. We don't even have internet...

Jack puts his hand on Eve's hand and looks at her with a languid expression.

Jack – Anyway, thank you for listening to me, Eve. It touched me a lot, really. I almost have tears in my eyes...

Eve (*taken aback*) – Must be the onions...

Eve removes her hand and tries to change the subject.

Eve – And what about you, Jack? What do you do for a living?

Jack – Well, I... I do the same job as my wife.

Eve – That way, at least, we have something to talk about in the evenings. I mean... We can always talk about work... But what does your wife do for work...?

Adam and Bernadette come back.

Eve – You are already back!

Adam – We couldn't get any milk, the cow was out of order.

Bernadette – Unbelievable! We witnessed the birth of a calf... You can't imagine what it did to me...

Eve – Oh, yes, yes, I understand... The death of a mother... The birth of a calf... All in the same day... It's a lot of emotions...

Bernadette – These are things we're not used to seeing in Paris anymore.

Adam – Although... Did you attend the birth of your wife, Jack?

Jack doesn't have time to answer, as Bernadette interrupts him.

Bernadette – Nature is really something powerful... When it hits you in the face like that... *(She breaks down)* Oh, my God. The cow was standing, and there were the two cloven hooves sticking out of... It was truly atrocious. The peasants had tied a rope to the calf's hooves, and there were three of them pulling on it..."

Adam – I confirm. Three morons from the Alps.

Bernadette *(bursting into tears)* – And to think that I also gave birth to a calf...

The other three look at each other perplexed, not knowing if it's a slip of the tongue.

Eve – Well, we should probably sit down to eat. If you don't want to miss your train...

Adam – What have you made for us, darling?

Eve – Veal...

Jack – We'll help you set the table.

Bernadette – Is that all you have to say?

Jack remains perplexed. Eve exits followed by Jack. Bernadette and Adam are about to follow suit.

Bernadette *(aside to Adam)* – I can't stand him anymore... Sometimes I think to myself: if only he had taken that Concorde instead of breaking his tailbone.

Adam looks somewhat disconcerted.

Fade to black.

Evening

Adam, Eve, Jack, and Bernadette finish dinner. Adam and Eve have made an effort to dress up. Jack and Bernadette are still dressed in scout uniforms.

Bernadette – That was really delicious! Right, Jack?

Jack – Oh, yes! For the lodging, I don't know, but for the guesthouse dining, I think you deserve your third star.

Adam and Eve exchange an intrigued look.

Bernadette – You'll have to give the recipe to my husband, Eve.

Jack – When you have good ingredients...

Eve – Oh, yes, it's really from producer to consumer. We get the veal from the farm next door...

Bernadette looks uncomfortable.

Adam – But it's not the calf you saw being born earlier, right! Well, I think this one probably came into the world in a similar way, but still...

Eve – I buy a whole one every two months. They cut it into pieces for me, and they deliver it to me frozen in plastic bags.

Bernadette – Oh, yes, that's convenient.

Eve – Unfortunately, I'm not sure if the farmer will be able to continue. Now that his wife is no longer here...

Jack – Did she hang herself too?

Eve – She's in prison...

Adam – They found half a dozen babies in her freezer, actually...

Eve – I hope the bags were well labeled...

Awkward silence. Eve prefers to change the subject.

Eve – In any case, we're glad that your mother didn't die after all. It allows us to spend the evening together...

Adam – But what exactly happened?

Bernadette – Well...

Bernadette looks at her husband for help.

Jack – A tragic mistake... A burglar had just stolen all her documents.

Bernadette – A Pole, from what we were told.

Jack – An undocumented immigrant, precisely.

Bernadette – Completely drunk.

Jack – You know how the Poles are.

Bernadette – So now that they don't even need a passport to come to France.

Jack – Anyway, as he was leaving my mother-in-law's house, bam! The guy gets hit by a police car.

Bernadette – Killed on the spot.

Jack – It was a real bloodbath.

Bernadette – You know how they drive like maniacs.

Jack – When they turn on their siren.

Bernadette – Most often, they go to the bookmaker to place bets.

Jack – So, since the thief had my mother-in-law's documents on him, the police thought it was her who had died.

Bernadette – And they notified us.

Jack – Meanwhile, luckily, my daughter went to the morgue to identify the body.

Bernadette – And she clearly saw that it wasn't her grandmother...

Jack – Well, yeah, a Polish guy...

Bernadette – Completely drunk.

Jack – And dead, to top it off.

Adam and Eve are a bit stunned by this convoluted story.

Eve – It just goes to show that reality often surpasses fiction.

Adam – Oh, yes... If someone told us this in a TV soap opera, we'd say they're exaggerating...

Jack – And besides, it wasn't the right time to hit the road tonight anyway. You were right, you know. Have you seen, it's snowing?

Bernadette – Are you sure?

Jack – Oh, yeah, it's strange... The snowflakes are pink...

Adam (*glancing outside*) – Oh, no, that's the cherry blossom petals from the tree right above the house.

Eve – The flowering season is almost over. Whenever there's a gust of wind...

Jack – Oh, but that's true. There's quite a wind blowing...

Bernadette – It reminds me of our last trip to the Landes... Do you remember, Jack? It started like this in '99, in Biscarrosse. Just before the storm that blew the roof off our hotel and flattened 250,000 hectares of forest.

Sound of thunder. Adam and Eve exchange worried glances.

Eve – Have some more cheese. I make it myself, with the milk from the goats you see grazing in front of you. Well, now it's getting dark, can't see them very well...

Bernadette – But we can hear them.

Goats bleating.

Jack – And they seem to be having a good time...

Jack and Bernadette exchange glances and burst into laughter, quickly stopped.

Eve – I sell the surplus at the local markets. The customers seem quite pleased. They always have a smile...

Jack – Alright, I'll have some more of the cheese that makes you laugh...

Bernadette also helps herself.

Bernadette – Oh, yes... It's delicious...

Jack – Mmm... It has a little aftertaste... I don't know what it is...

Bernadette – Yes... You can taste it's organic...

Eve gets up.

Eve – I'll go get the dessert... (*Whispering to Adam as she leaves*) Did you get them high or something?

Adam – No, I swear... And they hardly drank anything...

Eve – Must be their natural state...

Adam – Or maybe it's the daisy wine, combined with this iodine-poor air...

Eve goes out.

Adam – But tell me, we still don't know what you do for a living? That makes me curious.

Jack – Ah... Do we tell them, Bernadette?

Bernadette – Go ahead... Anyway, now... The die is cast...

Jack – We are mystery shoppers...

Adam – Ah, yes, that... It answers my question perfectly...

Eve returns with a Spanish strawberry tart.

Jack – The mystery shoppers! You don't know what that is?

Adam – No.

Bernadette – Well, for example, a hotel chain hires us to stay incognito in one of their palaces...

Jack – Or one of their budget hotels, it depends.

Bernadette – All expenses paid, of course...

Jack – And after our stay, we provide a detailed report on the quality of service.

Bernadette – Following which, of course, incompetent employees are immediately fired without compensation...

Jack – Chefs who let their standards slip lose their third Michelin star...

Bernadette – And bed and breakfasts where you have to kneel to hang yourself lose also their third star.

Eve seems shocked.

Eve – And you get paid for that?

Jack – It's a job...

Adam – Are you also mystery pilgrims for the Camino de Santiago?

Eve – Or is that just a cover?

Jack – Last year, the Vatican sent us to Lourdes.

Bernadette – They were wondering if Bernadette's reputation was a bit overrated.

Jack – It's true, it's been a while since she performed a miracle...

A slight discomfort.

Bernadette – And what about trying this pie?

Jack – Let's see if it deserves its third star too!

Eve (*defensively*) – It's a wild strawberry pie...

Jack – But tell me, they're huge around here.

Adam – And you haven't even seen the truffles. The biggest one found in the region needed a bulldozer to dig it up.

Eve serves the pie.

Eve – It's pretty cool, as a job, ain't it?

Adam – Getting paid to snitch, when there are so many people who would gladly do it for free... Look at what happened during the last war in France...

Eve – So do you spend your time on vacation or shopping?

Bernadette – Oh, you see, in the long run... It's tiring. Even dangerous sometimes. They told you about the Concorde...

Eve – Oh, because you were on a mission there too?

Jack – You know how it is, sometimes the service on planes leaves something to be desired...

Bernadette – And in hotels too... And don't even get me started on homestays. Nowadays, anyone can turn their windowless attic into a charming bed and breakfast... I'm not saying this about you, of course...

Jack – Still... I wonder if we haven't been cursed, sometimes...

Eve – It's strange, I'm starting to get that impression too...

Jack – It seems like wherever we pass, grass never grows again.

Adam – The grass?

Jack – We were on a mission in Thailand just before the tsunami. And we were supposed to go to Haiti just before the earthquake...

Adam and Eve exchange a dismayed glance.

Dominique – I hope we're not jinxing you too...

Bernadette (*observing to the pie*) – I've never seen strawberries so big... Are you sure they're strawberries? They look like two halves of a melon...

Jack – By the way, Eve, I can't resist asking you the question. Are you the model for Adam's paintings?

Eve – Don't tell me they're sending mystery shoppers to painters' workshops too...?

Jack – Not yet... It's just pure curiosity on my part...

Eve – In that case... I have to keep my share of mystery too...

Jack – And your painting... do you make a living from it?

Adam – Nudes don't sell well these days. When I was a kid, I used to go to the Louvre just to see naked women. But now, with the internet... You know how it is.

Bernadette (*to Adam*) – Have you tried goats?

Adam – Pardon?

Bernadette – Instead of your wife... Have you tried painting goats? It is pretty too, a goat.

Jack – And it's very cheerful. Listen to them laugh...

Bernadette – And they also make cheese!

Eve – Would you like some more?

Jack – Come on, we won't leave it for so little...

Jack finishes the cheese with a silly smile.

Eve – Can I ask you an indiscreet question too?

Bernadette – Go ahead...

Eve – How did you and your husband meet?

Jack – You'll never guess...

Adam – At the Scouts?

Bernadette – How did you guess?

Adam – It just came to me.

Bernadette – Life in the tent creates bonds.

Jack – They weren't mixed tents, obviously, but still...

Bernadette – Ours were carried away by a storm during the night when we were camping in the Fontainebleau forest.

Jack – We all ended up outside at three in the morning in our underwear.

Bernadette – And nature took its course... And how did you two meet?

Adam – At a swingers club.

Jack – Ah, yes...?

Adam – Actually, it was a vacation club. But it's kind of the same thing. I came with a friend. And we each went home with the other's wife...

Jack (*philosophically*) – In the end, the whole world is one big orgy.

Bernadette looks at him a little perplexed.

Bernadette – How about playing Trivial Pursuit to end the evening on a high note?

Eve – Oh, sorry, but we don't have a game...

Bernadette – Bad point for your third star... Board games are a must-have in a bed and breakfast. Luckily, we always have ours with us. (*Adam and Eve look dismayed*) Are you going to get it, dear? It's in my backpack? (*Jack exits.*) Underneath the revolver... (*Adam and Eve freeze.*) I mean, under the hairdryer. You'll see, Jack and I make a formidable team.

Eve – Oh, I'm not surprised...

Jack returns with a tiny Travel Trivial Pursuit and places it on the table.

Bernadette – It's a travel size, obviously.

Eve – Oh yes, you need good eyesight to read the cards...

Bernadette starts setting up the game, then turns to Jack.

Bernadette – You forgot the dice...

Jack – I'm sorry.

He leaves again.

Bernadette – Shall we play in teams to make it faster? Which game piece do you want?

Adam – I don't know... The red one...

Adam reaches out to take the game piece, but Bernadette grabs his wrist to stop him and addresses him in a stern tone.

Bernadette – Don't touch that, asshole!

Adam and Eve freeze, surprised by her murderous tone.

Bernadette (*softening*) – The red one is our lucky game piece. Take the orange one...

Adam – Okay...

Jack returns with two huge dice, one of which later becomes apparent to have mostly 7s, and the other mostly 1s. Adam and Eve are surprised, probably wondering how their hosts managed to carry these huge dice in their backpacks.

Jack hands Eve the die with small numbers.

Jack – Your turn. To determine who goes first...

Eve rolls the die.

Eve – One.

Bernadette – Our turn...

Bernadette rolls another die.

Bernadette – Seven!

Adam and Eve look puzzled.

Jack – We go first... And off we go for our first wedge. Geography. Do you have a question for us?

Bernadette – Here, take this box.

Eve draws a Trivia card and reads.

Eve – Which of these three cities is not crossed by the Loire River – Tours, Blois, or Lille...?

Jack and Bernadette consult before giving their answer.

Bernadette – Lille...?

Adam – Well done...

Bernadette – When you walk across France, you also learn geography...

Jack – Our turn again.

Bernadette rolls the die.

Bernadette – Another seven. Yellow category. History.

Eve – Which of these three cities is not in Germany – Lisbon, Berlin, or Munich?

Jack and Bernadette consult each other again before giving their answer.

Bernadette – Lisbon?

Adam – Are you sure it was a history question...?

Bernadette – Another wedge. Do you want to roll the dice, darling?

Jack rolls the dice.

Jack – Another seven!

Bernadette – Orange category. Sport.

Eve – At what speed was Boris Becker's serve timed at Roland Garros in 1986, to the nearest two kilometres per hour?

Bernadette (*upset*) – Did you put away the Trivia cards last time, Jack?

Jack – Yes, maybe...

Bernadette – I would say... 52 kilometres per hour...?

Jack – Really? That's almost the speed of a moped...

Bernadette – Alright, let's say 48, then.

Eve – Sorry, it was 269.

Bernadette (*to Jack*) – See, you made us get it wrong... Well, that's the game. You can't win every time. Alright, it's your turn. Here, take the dice.

Adam rolls the dice.

Adam – One.

Bernadette – What is the name of the most well-known medication based on chloroquine? Be careful, there's a trap...

Eve – No idea...

Adam – Nivaquine.

Eve – Bravo...

Bernadette (*reading*) – Sangria.

Eve – Sangria...?

Bernadette (*reading again*) – It's true, it's surprising, but well... That's what's written on the card...

Jack – It's like in football! If we start contesting referee errors...

Bernadette – Sorry, it's our turn! Come on... (*Bernadette rolls the dice.*) Another seven! Well... we're lucky...

Jack – Alright then... Green, too.

Eve – How many humps does a camel have?

Jack – Ah, I always confuse it with the dromedary... (*Thinking*) I would say two anyway.

Adam – You're impressive...

Bernadette – Another wedge! Come on, a little seven... (*She rolls the dice.*) Seven! Brown category. Literature.

Eve draws a card.

Eve – In Lucky Luke, what animal is Rantanplan?

Bernadette (*to Jack*) – Now we really need to think. You know literature is not our strong point... Let me see... His horse is Jolly Jumper, I'm sure of that... (*Taking a guess*) A dog?

Adam – You warned us that you two were a formidable team, but wow...

Bernadette (*to Jack*) – Alright, it's your turn to roll the dice.

Jack rolls the dice.

Jack – Two...

Bernadette – You rolled it too hard! Well, anyway, these are the ups and downs of the game...

Eve – How long can a carrot plant live?

Bernadette (*angry at Jack*) – This time, I will be the one to put away the Trivia cards at the end of the game...

Jack – You mean, if it dies a natural death?

Bernadette – I don't know...

Jack – Less than a rabbit, right?

Bernadette – The rabbit eats the carrot...

Jack – I would say... five years?

Eve – Two.

Bernadette – Yes, oh...

Eve – It's an average.

Bernadette – Well, it's your turn...

Eve rolls the dice.

Eve – One more...

Adam – I have a feeling we won't be staying up late.

Eve – Orange question.

Bernadette – Ah, here's a chance for you to catch up. An easy question. Which was the first club to win the European Cup of Champions?

Adam is speechless.

Bernadette – Obviously, you have to be a football fan...

Adam – No idea.

Eve – Real Madrid?

Bernadette – How do you know that...?

Eve – I just said it like that.

Bernadette (*annoyed*) – Well... Then it's your turn again...

Eve rolls the dice.

Eve – Two.

Adam – Ah, we're making progress...

Bernadette – Which French region is known for its quiches...? (*She looks dismayed.*)
Oh no, we had that one not long ago...

Jack – It should be in the other pile...

Bernadette – I'll ask you another one.

Jack – We'll never know if you knew the right answer. That's the game...

Bernadette rummages through the cards to find one that suits her.

Bernadette – Ah, here we go... Orange question. Sport. Sorry, I thought I understood that football wasn't your specialty... How many goals did French footballer Just Fontaine score during the 1958 World Cup?

Adam (*to Eve*) – Go ahead...

Eve – 9...?

Bernadette – 13! Ah, you can't be lucky all the time... It's our turn now! (*To Jack*) This time, I'll roll the dice...

She rolls the dice.

Bernadette – Seven! (*To Jack*) You see, when you don't roll it too hard... So, pink question. For the last wedge...

Eve – In which museum is Napoleon's childhood skull preserved?

Bernadette (*consulting with Jack*) – He was born in Ajaccio...

Adam – Attention, you only get one answer...

Bernadette – I would still say... At the Museum of the Invalids, in Paris?

Eve turns the card over and, unable to believe her eyes, reads the answer.

Eve – And it's true!

Jack and Bernadette rejoice and congratulate each other.

Jack is about to put away the game. Bernadette grabs a knife from the table and brandishes it against Jack's throat.

Bernadette (*in a deadly tone*) – This time, I'll be the one to put away the cards, alright?

Jack backs down. Bernadette puts away the game, to the dismayed looks of Adam and Eve.

Bernadette (*again in a sweet tone*) – How about a game of Monopoly now?

Adam and Eve are visibly unenthusiastic.

Jack – How about a Uno?

Eve – Cluedo?

Jack – Strip poker?

Eve – Maybe we should let you two go to bed. Tomorrow, you have a lot of walking to do...

Bernadette – Alright... Do you want my husband to do the dishes?

Eve – No, no... That's out of the question...

Jack – So, see you tomorrow for breakfast?

Eve – Tea or coffee?

Jack – Oh, don't bother.

Bernadette – Make both, we'll manage...

Adam – Good night.

Jack and Bernadette wave goodbye and disappear.

Adam and Eve are left alone, devastated.

Adam – Are you doing the dishes or am I drying...?

Eve – What if we leave all this for tomorrow and have a little herbal tea? I think I need it...

Adam – Quiet night?

Fade to black.

Night

In a dreamlike light, with music reminiscent of "Once Upon a Time in the West," Jack and Bernadette appear on opposite sides of the stage, still dressed as scouts. They are facing away from each other, each holding what appears to be a weapon. In slow motion, they turn around, and each aims what is now revealed to be a hairdryer at the other. The sound of a powerful hairdryer fills the air. In slow motion, it appears as though they are being swept away by a stormy wind...

Blackout.

The morning after

Light gradually fades up on an empty stage. Adam enters first in his pyjamas, holding a cup of coffee, and sips it while looking at the landscape. He then sits down and reads the newspaper. Eve enters next, in her nightgown, looking visibly groggy, holding a glass of milk.

Eve – Are they still not up yet...?

Adam – They're on vacation. They're sleeping in. (*Looking at the newspaper*) Did you know that the Alps are located on a seismic fault line?

Eve – No.

Adam – There was even an earthquake last night.

Eve – Oh, really...

Adam – It's in the newspaper. One degree on the Richter scale. Okay, we didn't feel anything, but it could be a precursor... Do you remember what they said?

Eve – Who?

Adam – Your hosts! Attila and his wife – wherever we pass, grass never grows again. Every time they leave a place, a disaster occurs.

Eve – They haven't left yet...

Adam – I don't know. I have a bad feeling. I feel like the Big One is coming today.

Eve is not really listening.

Eve – I hope they don't show up for breakfast at noon. (*She drinks her glass of milk and grimaces.*) I'll confess something to you – I really struggle with the neighbours milk...

Adam – Now that she's in jail...

Eve – You're right, it tastes like baby formula...

Pause.

Eve – I'll still go and discreetly see what they're doing... Maybe they've hacked each other to death with an axe after a game of Mastermind. They seemed pretty worked up last night...

Adam – Do you want me to go?

Eve – It's okay, if I see a red puddle seeping under the door, I'll call you...

Adam goes back to his newspaper and gets absorbed in reading another article.

Eve returns.

Adam – Listen to this (*reading*) – "Health authorities are still unable to explain the wave of madness that has recently swept over the inhabitants of a peaceful valley in the Alps near the Swiss border. Collective hallucinations, exhibitionism, orgies... Fondue parties in the most severe cases. One possible lead – all the affected individuals had consumed artisanal goat's cheese made in the region..."

Adam turns towards Eve.

Adam – Well, you look puzzled...

Eve – They're gone.

Adam – No...?

Eve – Their bed is not made. I don't even know if they slept there.

Adam – Or maybe they made the bed before leaving.

Eve – That's considerate of them...

Adam – Probably a good habit from their days as scouts. Did they leave a note?

Eve – Well, they didn't leave a check, that's for sure...

Adam – At least they didn't steal anything...? (*She gives him a not-so-reassuring look, and he gets the message.*) No...?

Eve – The nude painting you made of me... Only the frame remains now... Apparently, the canvas was cut with a cutter...

They digest this information.

Adam – I don't want to sound too pessimistic, but I think it's not looking good for our third star...

Silence.

Eve – Mystery guests...

Adam – I'm starting to wonder if they weren't just messing with us...

Eve – Unless we dreamed it.

Adam – A nightmare, you mean...

Eve – I'm not sure if turning this place into a bed and breakfast was such a good idea after all...

Adam – I haven't painted a single canvas since I arrived here... The greenery and goats don't inspire me...

Eve – And I've gained five kilos from the neighbour's milk and goat's cheese

Adam – Yes, I noticed...

She gives him a weary look.

Eve – So what are we going to do?

Adam – We have to face the fact that paradise is like Club Med. It's great for a week or two. But who would want a perpetual membership at Club Med...?

Eve – We could always try selling the farm to the English and go back to Paris.

Adam – I heard the British pound is going up.

They gaze at the landscape for a moment, in a trance-like state.

Eve – Did you notice that if you stretch your neck a little, the goats in the enclosure can graze on your cannabis on the other side of the fence...?

Adam – And they seem to enjoy it, too...

Goat bleats resembling laughter.

Eve – Do you think the goat's cheese from goats that have grazed on cannabis is hallucinogenic?

Adam – I don't know...

Eve – It must have the same effect as a space cake.

Adam – Can you imagine? We invented the space goat's cheese.

Eve – Yeah...

Adam – We should probably patent it...

Eve – It doesn't taste bad, anyway. Our guests helped themselves to the goat's cheese three times last night.

Adam – That would explain their strange behaviour...

Eve – Yeah... (*Thoughtfully*) We've been eating it for three months.

Another contemplative silence, possibly with a groovy Indian-inspired background music from the 70s.

Adam – Who are those idiots coming this way, trampling what's left of my cannabis plants?

Eve – Well, those are tonight's guests... (*He looks at her without understanding.*) The new guests... (*They both sit back down at the breakfast table, visibly defeated.*) I'm reminding of what you were telling me yesterday regarding cinemas.

Adam – What?

Eve – When the lights go out and the movie is about to start, why is it always in front of us that the mysterious couple of idiots who always arrive late sits down, systematically blocking our view of the subtitles?

Adam – It may sound awful, but I wonder if we're not attracting them. Look, they come to persecute us even here...

Goat bleating.

Eve – So what do we do?

Adam – We can't just let them invade us without doing anything. We have to defend our territory!

Eve – You've goat to be kidding me!

They exchange a glance. Suddenly, in unison, they flip over the breakfast table to use it as a barricade, and each grabs one of the two toy pistols that were taped underneath.

Adam – Remember the Alamo!

Blackout. Rapid gunfire is heard. More panicked bleating of goats...

Adam – I think I got one.

Eve – Me too.

The bleating of goats immediately stops.

Adam – We don't hear anything anymore.

Eve – Are you sure it wasn't the goats we just took down? We don't hear them laughing anymore...

Music

The End.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez was first a drummer for several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then began a career writing television scripts before turning to theater and writing plays. He has written close to a hundred scripts for television and as many plays, some of which have already become classics (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker*). He is one of the most produced contemporary playwrights in France and in other francophone countries. Several of his plays are also available in Spanish and English, and are regularly produced in the United States and Latin America.

Amateur and professional theater groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his website La Comédiathèque (<https://comediatheque.net/>). However, public productions are subject to SACD filing.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

A cuckoo's nest

A simple business dinner

An innocent little murder

Casket for two

Cheaters

Crisis and Punishment

Critical but stable

Four stars

Friday the 13th

Him and Her

Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall

New Year's Eve at the Morgue

Quarantine

Running on Empty

Strip Poker

The Ideal Son-in-Law

The Window across the courtyard

The Worst Village in England

Welcome aboard!

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