

La Comédiathèque

Euro Star

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Translation by the author

A well-known film director and an ambitious actress happen to meet on the Eurostar, seated opposite each other. Both are headed to London for an audition. She is willing to do anything to land the role that will make her a star. He is drawn to her charm but is unsure about taking it further... Suddenly, the train stops in the middle of the Channel Tunnel. The breakdown trick? But in this game of trickery, he is not who she thinks he is. Nor is she who he thought she was...

Characters

Arthur

Marilyn

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Act 1

Two seats facing each other on an Eurostar train. A suitcase is placed on one of them. The "fourth wall" facing the public will serve as a window, through which the two characters will occasionally look out of the train. Arthur arrives carrying a travel bag. He is in his thirties or forties, but he could also be older. His appearance is relaxed, and he can seem a bit "basic". As he passes the seats, he seems to recognize the suitcase and settles in. His phone rings. He answers, a bit rushed.

Arthur – Yes? Hello, Fred... No, I'm on the train right now... I promised my wife to take her to London for our wedding anniversary... To be honest, I hate those anniversary nonsense, and on top of that, I detest England. But you know how it is... When you're married, you have to know how to compromise! It's in London that I met Karen... I booked a room in the Bed and Breakfast where we spent our first night together... Isn't that romantic? Lucky that I didn't meet her at the Hilton in Bora-Bora... Two train tickets to London, even in business class, it's still cheaper than Polynesia... Anyway, thank goodness we allowed for some extra time... You know I'm claustrophobic, so I'm a little anxious about taking the tunnel under the Channel... But since I'm even more afraid of flying... And then I thought it would be faster than the ferry... But you can't imagine the boarding procedures, it's mind-boggling! It took us three quarters of an hour to go through security! I would have been better off swimming. I had forgotten that England is no longer in Europe. I feel like I'm heading to Baghdad! I even got a body search. I ran into a little tough guy, like a sergeant. I thought he was going to stick a finger up my ass to see if I had any weapons of mass destruction hidden in there, before sending me straight to Guantanamo... He stressed me out so much, for a moment, I forgot to put my pants and shoes back on... Can you imagine me arriving at Waterloo barefoot and in my underwear? Luckily we're not leaving from Austerlitz, otherwise you can see the symbol... I mean, for a wedding anniversary... Oh, now it's Saint-Pancras? Anyway, now I am board, trying to relax a little... Karen? No, I don't know what the hell my wife is doing... I had to go to the exchange office to buy British pounds, and we agreed to meet directly on the train, but I don't see her anywhere... However, her suitcase is here. I don't understand anything... Sorry, that's actually her calling... Okay, I'll call you back... See you soon, Fred.

He presses a button on his cellphone.

Arthur – Karen? Where the hell are you?... At the kiosk? Don't you realize that the train is about to leave? Yeah, well, listen, if they don't have *Marie Claire*, you take *Vogue* or *Cosmopolitan*. It's the same thing, right... (*Lowering his voice*) Yes, yes, I have the pounds. A thousand should be enough for a few days in London. It stresses me out a bit to carry that much cash, but... It seems worth it to exchange before we get to England... Uh, could you get me *Tennis Magazine*, while you're at it? No, not *Bicycling Magazine*, *Tennis Magazine*! No, it's not the same, believe me... Well, you'll eventually find it... Otherwise, check the newsstand next door... But hurry up, for god's sake! OK, see you later. (*More tenderly*) I love you too...

He puts away his phone.

Arthur – Oh, damn, this trip is off to a great start... (*He puts his bag on the seat next to him, settles in, and stares ahead for a moment.*) Forty kilometres under the sea, when I'm already scared of taking the subway. What a nightmare! (*He takes a swig from his flask.*) Good thing I brought a little pick-me-up, it'll help me relax...

Marilyn arrives, pulling a small roller suitcase. She's between 25 and 30 years old. She's not a spectacular woman, but she dresses provocatively. As she passes by Arthur, she looks at him and keeps walking. She seems to recognize him. Arthur doesn't pay attention to her. He prepares to take another sip just as Marilyn turns back around.

Marilyn – Excuse me, but I think your suitcase is sitting in my seat...

Arthur, surprised, hastily puts his alcohol flask in his pocket without closing it.

Arthur – Oh... Sorry... I thought... No problem... I'll move it right away.

He stands up and moves the suitcase to free the seat. Turning her back for a moment to put her own suitcase away, she offers him an advantageous view of her anatomy. He tries to chase away bad thoughts. Marilyn sits in front of him and looks at him with a silly smile. Arthur, embarrassed, does his best to keep his composure. Silence is broken by a service announcement.

Voice – The Eurostar train number 3212 to London St Pancras is about to depart. Please mind the closing doors...

Arthur (*to himself*) – Oh no... This can't be happening...

He looks out the window anxiously at the platform. Marilyn does the same, watching the platform disappear.

Marilyn (*smiling*) – I just made it in time!

He smiles politely before nervously dialing his wife's number again. It's clear she's not answering.

Arthur – This is a nightmare...

Marilyn, on her part, keeps looking at him. He realizes it, although he tries to hide it. Embarrassed and slightly flattered, he ends up facing her gaze.

Marilyn – I'm sorry for staring at you like that, but... I recognized you right away...

Completely caught off guard, he is left speechless with his eyes wide open.

Marilyn – I'm really sorry... I swear I didn't do anything to, uh... It's completely by chance... (*Jokingly*) Or maybe it's fate...

Arthur – Fate...?

She reaches out her hand and introduces herself.

Marilyn – Marilyn Mileur... I'm an actress...

Surprised, he shakes her hand.

Marilyn – I'm going to London for the casting of your new movie. But I never thought I would be sitting in front of you on the train...

Arthur – Neither did I...

Marilyn – Anyway, I really love the script... And I'm not just saying that to flatter you, you know? Even though I would be willing to kill all my competitors to get this leading role...

Arthur – Really...?

Arthur's phone starts ringing, but he is slow to answer.

Marilyn – I don't want to bother you... I think I'd better go to the bar to calm down a bit. Anyway, we're on this trip together... Can I get you a coffee...?

Arthur – Why not...

Marilyn – I'm so excited... I'm not sure that a coffee is exactly what I need to calm down, but hey... Do you want it with sugar?

Arthur – What was that?

Marilyn – Your coffee... With or without sugar?

Arthur – Uh... Without, thank you...

Marilyn – I would have bet on that... No added sugar... Cash! Like your movies...

He smiles without responding. She starts to walk away. He calls out to her one last time.

Arthur (*gaining confidence*) – Uh... Can I have a glass of water with my coffee...?

She looks at him and smiles. He follows her with his eyes. His phone keeps ringing. Arthur snaps back to reality and answers.

Arthur – Karen? Where are you, damn it? Oh no, it can't be true...! But I told you to hurry up!... But I didn't care, whether it was *Tennis Magazine* or *Tennishead*! It was just to have something to read on the train... And now what do we do...? Try to catch the next train and I'll wait for you in London...? Well... What do you want me to say? Do we have another option? Yeah... OK, call me back...

He puts away his phone.

Arthur – I didn't have a good feeling about this pilgrimage to London...

His phone rings again.

Arthur (*to himself*) – Already... (*He takes the call.*) Ah, it's you, Fred... No, no, it's... It's Karen. You won't believe it, but she just missed the train! No, I'm not joking, unfortunately... Yeah, well... If she manages to get a ticket. We booked ours three months in advance... No, but can you imagine? Here I am, off to London alone to celebrate our wedding anniversary... Well, when I say alone... (*Changing his tone, more playful*) You won't believe it either, but something absolutely amazing happened to me... A crazy woman sat right in front of me on the Eurostar, in Karen's seat, actually... And she thinks I'm a film director! Which one? I don't know... Apparently, a really famous one, anyway... Well, I didn't even have time to tell her it wasn't me, you know. She didn't let me get a word in! And now she's gone to get me coffee and croissants... I swear to you! She's completely ecstatic about me, I tell you! So now, I'm thinking of taking advantage of the situation... Three hours alone on the Eurostar is a long time... Not to mention my phobia of tunnels... At least I'll be thinking about something else... Actress, yeah... Listen, not bad, but... Very motivated, in any case! I vaguely feel like I've seen her face somewhere before... In a commercial, maybe... Stop it, I remind you that I'm married... Yeah, well, OK, but I'm sober now... And I don't know how long I'll be able to keep up the illusion, because, you know, me and the movies... I go twice a year, and that's it... Well, I'll let you go, she's coming back... OK, I'll tell you about it... Bye...

He puts away the phone. Marilyn approaches with the coffee.

Marilyn (*with a big smile*) – And here we are... I was so excited... I got wet...

He looks at her, surprised.

Marilyn (*to clear up the misunderstanding*) – With the train shaking... I spilled your glass of water on myself on the way here. Sorry... Do you want me to go back and get you another one?

He shakes his head no with a gracious smile.

Marilyn (*handing him the coffee*) – Luckily, I was able to save the coffee... I left half of it on the gentleman's suit over there, but well... I think there's still a little bit left in the bottom of the cup...

Arthur – Thank you...

He takes a sip of coffee and they exchange some embarrassed smiles.

Arthur – So, you're an actress...?

Marilyn – Yes, I know... You'd probably prefer a more famous face for the leading role in your film... But you'll see, I'll surprise you in London... (*He seems not to understand*) At the casting!

Arthur – Oh yes, of course...

Marilyn – You're Arthur Monerot, the film director, right?

Arthur – If you say so...

Marilyn (*delighted*) – I can't believe it!

He just gives her a mysterious smile.

Marilyn – And how do you imagine that bitch should be? (*He looks at her surprised*) Your heroine! In the script! She's quite a bitch, isn't she? Doing that to that poor guy who didn't do anything to her... But excuse me, I shouldn't have asked you that question... I promised not to be nosy... And it wouldn't be fair to the other candidates... (*Having a hard time staying still*) But I'm just so nervous... Arthur Monerot! Sitting right in front of me for three hours! I have to take advantage of this unique opportunity... (*He smiles*) Do you mind if I ask you something?

Arthur – Go ahead...

Marilyn – Do you really sleep with all the heroines in your films?

Arthur – Thankfully, you promised not to be indiscreet...

Marilyn – Oh no, but that's not about the casting, it doesn't count.

Arthur (*playing along*) – What do you want to know? If you necessarily have to sleep with the director to succeed in a casting? No, of course not. Even though sometimes, it can help...

Marilyn – Ah, you see!

Arthur – No, but the actress must have talent first, of course.

Marilyn – Men are hypocrites. All celebrities date top models, but when asked why, they say it's for their inner beauty... By the way, which hotel are you staying at in London?

Arthur – At the Hilton, I think. It's my assistant who takes care of those things... She was supposed to meet me here, on the train, but she managed to miss it...

Marilyn – That allows us to travel together...

Arthur – Yes, that's true... And you?

Marilyn – Me...?

Arthur – Which hotel are you staying at?

Marilyn – I can't afford to stay at the Hilton... But I have a friend in London... Well... He's just a friend... He's a model, by the way...

Arthur – Ah... I see...

Marilyn – I mean, uh... I'm not dating him...

Arthur – Oh really...

Marilyn – Besides, he's gay.

Arthur – Oh good... Well, I mean...

Marilyn – And are you staying in London for several days? After the casting...

Arthur – Uh... no...

Marilyn – No, I'm just saying that because of the size of your suitcase...

Arthur – Oh yes... No, but... There are all the candidates' files in there... For the casting... It weighs a ton...

Marilyn – I hope mine is in there too...

Arthur – Definitely! But there are so many... Many are called, but few are chosen...
(*Arthur undresses her with his eyes*) Have they asked you to undress too?

Marilyn – Excuse me?

Arthur – I mean at customs, before boarding...

Marilyn – Well... no...

Arthur – Okay.

Silence.

Marilyn – And for the casting, do we have to get naked?

Arthur is on the verge of collapse.

Arthur – The truth is... I don't know... Why not? (*Jokingly*) I guess that depends on the candidates...

Marilyn – Since the script is quite... I know there are actresses who refuse nude scenes... I just wanted you to know that... for me, it's not a problem..

Arthur – Okay... I'll remember that...

Marilyn – Do you want to take a look...?

Arthur – Here, on the train?

Marilyn – I mean... take a look at my book...

Arthur – Your book...

Marilyn – My photo album.

Arthur – Of course...

She takes her book out of her suitcase and shows it to him. Arthur looks at it.

Arthur (*impressed*) – Yes... of course... You can tell you have a lot of talent...

Marilyn – I think it's time for you to talk to me about my inner beauty...

They are interrupted by a call on Arthur's phone, which he answers mechanically, while still looking at Marilyn's photos, most likely half naked.

Arthur (*distracted*) – Yes...? Hello Karen... Yes, I'm sorry, but with the noise of the train, I didn't recognize your voice... (*Visibly disconcerted, he places a hand on the speaker to address Marilyn*) Sorry... It's my assistant... (*He gets up hastily and starts to move away to continue the conversation*). Yes, Karen, have you been able to solve it...? No, I'm not taking this lightly, but... we're not going to make a big deal out of it either... No... It's not true? There's no ticket until a month from now? That can't be!

While Marilyn is alone, she takes the opportunity to check her makeup, looking at herself in an imaginary window towards the audience. When she sees Arthur coming back, she puts her makeup bag in her purse and pretends to look at the scenery outside the window..

Arthur – Okay, I'll call you as soon as I arrive... But I can't promise anything... I don't think it's going to be easy to find a ticket to go back to Paris... No, I'm not at all happy about this... Can you imagine if I had to spend the whole weekend alone in London? You have some big news to tell me? You're scaring me! (*Approaching the area where Marilyn is*) Well... Listen, I have to leave you because we're going into the tunnel... Why am I talking in plural? Because I'm not alone in this train. I'm traveling in business class, not in a private compartment of the Orient Express... And it's going to be my fault again... It's still you who managed to miss this train, right...? (*He puts away his phone and goes back to Marilyn, smiling*) Sorry... I just had a small problem to solve...Now, I'm all yours...

She answers with a promising smile.

Marilyn – Me too...

Blackout.

Act 2

Arthur and Marilyn are still sitting face to face. She is looking out the window.

Marilyn (*excitedly*) – We're in the tunnel now!

Arthur – Oh, really...?

Marilyn – It's my first time on this trip, and to be honest, it's a bit creepy... Don't you think so?

Arthur – No, not really... I travel on the Eurostar at least once a month, so you know...

She continues to look out the window, very excited.

Marilyn – Can you believe it, we're at the depths of the English Channel!

Arthur (*forcing himself to show interest*) – Yes...

Marilyn (*disappointed*) – But we can't see anything, after all...

Arthur – What did you expect to see? Fish?

She smiles. Arthur's phone rings again, but he doesn't react.

Marilyn – Aren't you going to answer that?

Arthur – If I answered everyone who called me, I'd never get any peace.

She sits back down in front of him.

Marilyn – I have to confess something to you, Arthur. Do you mind if I call you Arthur?

Arthur – Not at all...

Marilyn – It's not entirely by chance that I'm sitting here, in front of you...

Arthur – Really...?

Marilyn – I walked past you earlier. I recognized you and... since the seat was free... Actually, mine is in the next carriage. In second class...

Arthur – I had a feeling that was the case... It should have been Karen sitting there... I mean, my... my assistant... The one who missed the train...

Marilyn – I can go back to my seat if you want...

Arthur (*magnanimous*) – It takes nerve to succeed in this business... You can stay here...

Marilyn – Thank you! I know I have a lot to learn, but I'm sure that one day I'll also stay at the best hotel in Cannes and climb the Festival's stairs wearing a 200,000 euro dress.

He smiled indulgently.

Marilyn – Tell me about Cannes, please?

Arthur – Oh, you know, when you have to go there every year... it quickly becomes a chore...

Marilyn – Still...

Arthur – In the end, what is Cannes? A big fair... Have you ever been to a farm fair?

Marilyn (*surprised*) – Once, with my father... A very long time ago...

Arthur – Well, Cannes is the same thing. Except instead of cows, there are famous people waiting to win the palm...

Marilyn – You're saying that because you're jaded.

Arthur – I confess that I'm happy when none of my movies are presented and I can stay home. Also, since everyone is in Cannes, the phone stops ringing for a week and I can work quietly without anyone bothering me.

Just then, Arthur's phone rings again.

Marilyn – It must be one of those stars bothering you to get the leading role...

Arthur – I thought the phone wouldn't work in the tunnel, but it does... Even under the Channel, there's no way to get some peace...

Marilyn – I'll leave you alone for five minutes. I don't want to be indiscreet... If it's one of your many conquests...

He's about to answer. Before she disappears, she turns back to him.

Marilyn – I'm willing to do anything to get this role, you know?

Clearly troubled, he remains stunned. The insistent ringing of his cell phone brings him back to reality. He finally answers.

Arthur – Yes, Karen... No, it's just that... I couldn't find my phone... So...? Oh, maybe you can find a ticket...? But of course, I'm happy, what are you talking about...? It's our anniversary, after all! OK... Alright... And what was that news you had to tell me? Listen, I can hardly hear you now... We're in the tunnel... It's a miracle the communication has been so good between us up to now... (*A braking noise is heard.*) Hello...? Hello...?

Marilyn returns.

Arthur – We got cut off... (*Concerned*) But what's going on?

Marilyn – I don't know... It's like the train has stopped.

A voice is heard over the loudspeakers.

Voice – Ladies and gentlemen, the Eurostar has temporarily stopped after a passenger activated the alarm. We are trying to identify the cause of this incident as quickly as possible. Thank you for your understanding.

Arthur – I never should have taken this tunnel, I knew it...

Marilyn – It's just a little stop... We'll probably start again soon...

Arthur – I should have taken the boat.

Marilyn – Boats can sink, you know... Remember the Titanic... 1,500 dead. But 20 million tickets sold. It's something that makes me dream.

Arthur – I've already sunk half my savings into Eurotunnel stocks, and now I'm the one who's going to be sunk at the bottom of the Channel... Do you think they'll keep us informed?

Marilyn (*getting up*) – I'm going to see what's happening.

Arthur – Please don't leave me alone!

Marilyn – I'll be back in a couple of minutes...don't worry.

She gets up and walks away. He's left there, completely anxious.

Arthur – I can already feel the water seeping against my leg... I didn't piss myself, did I...? (*He puts his hand in his jacket pocket and takes out the flask of alcohol.*) Shit, I didn't close it. (*He tries to drink from the neck but nothing comes out.*) Nothing left to drink... (*He takes out his phone and dials a number.*) And no more network... This is the beginning of the end... I won't even be able to leave a farewell message to my wife to tell her I love her before the water starts flooding the carriage... Like those poor people in New York before the towers collapsed on them... (*Pause*) And that bitch who managed to miss this fucking train. Maybe that's what is going to save her life. That must be it, female intuition. It's like she knew it, the slut...

Marilyn comes back.

Arthur (*anxiously*) – So...?

Marilyn – They told me about a passenger incident, but you know what that means... In the subway, it means suicide, so in the Eurostar, who knows what it could be... We have several kilometres of water above our heads, so you can imagine... They're saying it to prevent panic...

Arthur – Like on planes just before a crash... Oh my God! What if it's a terrorist attack?

Marilyn – Unfortunately, that's not impossible... If it is, at least I'll have had the pleasure of meeting you before being burned or drowned to death.

Arthur – It's a divine punishment, I assure you... Do you remember that tower talked about in the Bible?

Marilyn – Are you talking about the Twin Towers in the Bible?

Arthur – The Tower of Babel! We should never have dug that tunnel! It's against nature. England should remain an island.

Marilyn – Can you smell that? It's like raki or kerosene...

Arthur – Does the Eurostar run on kerosene?

Marilyn – Or rubbing alcohol...

Arthur – No, it's not that... It smells like whisky... I didn't close the flask and it spilled into my jacket pocket...*(He shakes the flask to check that it's empty)* I won't be able to tell her one last time that I love her.

Marilyn – Who?

Arthur – Karen!

Marilyn – Are you in love with your assistant?

Arthur *(looking at the empty bottle)* – What if I slip a farewell message to her in this bottle... At least she might have a chance to make it back to the surface... Do you have a pencil and paper?

Voice – Ladies and gentlemen, due to the presence of a suspicious suitcase, we have had to stop the train for a few minutes while our security services check whether it's a bomb... I don't need to tell you the catastrophic consequences if it explodes, given the depth we're at... Thank you for remaining seated! Don't panic! We will of course keep you informed of the situation...

Arthur – Oh no, this can't be happening... Why aren't they hurrying to get us out of this tunnel, this bunch of lunatics! Instead of leaving us stranded here waiting for it to blow up...

Marilyn – Maybe they're afraid that the movement of the train could set off the bomb... Like in "The Wages of Fear". Do you remember? They transported nitroglycerin in a truck... What a masterpiece, again! A great classic, isn't it?

Arthur – We're going to die, I'm sure of it...!

Marilyn – We will die without having achieved our dreams. You won't direct the movie that could have been the peak of your career, and I'll never walk up the steps of Cannes Festival with you as the star of your film.

Arthur – Oh, damn it... Just shut up... You're going to jinx us...

Marilyn – Can you tell me what you would do if you knew for sure that you only had ten minutes to live?

Arthur – Well...I would...pack my bags...?

Marilyn – Think about what I'm saying...only ten minutes before certain death...what would you do?

Arthur – I don't know... maybe rob a bank...?

Marilyn – In only ten minutes, you wouldn't have time to spend the stolen money.

Arthur – On the other hand, if I get caught, I'm sure not to spend more than ten minutes in jail...

Marilyn – As for me, the prospect of death excites me... You know... Eros and Thanatos...

Arthur – Eros and what...?

Marilyn – Ten minutes, Arthur. Maybe even less. To fulfill one last fantasy. Satisfy one last desire. (*Provocative*) Have you ever made love in the Eurostar toilets?

He looks at her like a rabbit caught in headlights.

Arthur – Ten minutes...?

Marilyn (*taking his hand*) – Believe me, Arthur... we're not here in this tunnel by chance...it's destiny...

She drags him towards the end of the carriage...

Blackout.

Act 3

Arthur and Marilyn are once again sitting face to face on the Eurostar, which still hasn't moved. Arthur, in a daze, leans towards the window.

Arthur – I think I see a light at the end of the tunnel... Do you think we're already dead?

Marilyn (*sighing*) – It's been ten minutes and the big blaze hasn't happened yet...

Arthur – I'm sorry... But the prospect of dying first burned and then drowned at the bottom of the Channel doesn't excite me at all.

Marilyn – I was talking about the bomb... The ten minutes have passed, and our Eurostar hasn't exploded yet. Maybe it was a false alarm... (*In a worrying tone*) The truth is that each one of us will have to take responsibility for our actions...

Arthur (*continuing his thought*) – And then this idea of filming our last frolics with my phone, it didn't really help me much either...

Marilyn – You don't like being filmed, Arthur...? It's true that for a filmmaker... it's a bit like the hunter becoming the hunted...

Arthur – By the way, I'd like to get my phone back now...

Marilyn – What?

Arthur – My phone...

They are interrupted by an announcement on the loudspeakers.

Voice – Ladies and gentlemen, we have just identified the owner of the luggage abandoned in carriage number 8. According to the tag, it belongs to Mrs. Fernandez, 9 Jules Ferry Street in Paris. If Mrs. Fernandez is on board, we kindly ask her to immediately contact the onboard personnel to retrieve her suitcase. Otherwise, the border police bomb squad will be forced to remove this luggage for destruction so that we can continue our journey...

Arthur – Damn! Karen's suitcase...!

Marilyn – What?

Arthur – It's my suitcase! Well, I mean, my assistant's... She must have left it in the wrong carriage before getting off to buy magazines.

Marilyn – And missed the train... I wonder if it wouldn't be more practical to change your assistant...

Arthur – I have to get her suitcase back now...! Of course... she wasn't carrying it when I left her on the platform at the Gare du Nord in Paris! She'll kill me if I let the Eurostar Robocops disintegrate her wardrobe...

He jumps up to leave when Marilyn's gaze lands on the suitcase placed on the seat next to them.

Marilyn – So whose suitcase is this one then?

Arthur freezes.

Arthur – Shit, you're right...

Marilyn – It might be the one with the bomb... We don't know who might have left it on that seat... *(Dramatically)* I suggest you sit down slowly and avoid sneezing...

Arthur – Oh my God... We have to notify the police...!

Marilyn – You can do that, but it would mean staying underwater for another hour... Remember we have a casting to attend... *(She stands up)* Well, never mind... We'll have to take the risk.

Marilyn firmly grabs the suitcase.

Arthur – Are you crazy? What are you doing?

Marilyn – You told me that to succeed in this business, you need a pair of balls, right?

Arthur – Did I say that?

She abruptly opens the suitcase, under Arthur's terrified gaze.

Arthur – No!

There is no explosion.

Marilyn – See, there's nothing to fear...

Arthur – I wasn't that worried either... *(Intrigued)* What's in there?

Marilyn examines the contents of the suitcase. She takes out a hair dryer and aims it at Arthur like a gun, making him scared again.

Marilyn – Well, that doesn't look like a bomb to me...

Arthur is still not very convinced. Marilyn keeps searching and pulls out a bound document from the suitcase.

Marilyn – Look at this! *(She flips through it)* It's the script for your movie!

Arthur – What movie are you talking about?

Marilyn – Your movie. What else could it be? Because this suitcase is yours... Or rather, your assistant's.

Arthur *(confused)* – Oh, really...?

Marilyn continues to search and pulls out some sexy lingerie from the suitcase.

Marilyn – Look at this! It seems like you don't get bored with your assistant during your business trips to London...

Arthur is stunned but doesn't have time to answer. They hear a muffled explosion.

Arthur (*terrified*) – That's it! It's the end! Did you hear the explosion?

Marilyn – That's nothing... It's probably Mrs. Fernandez's suitcase that the police just blew up.

Arthur jumps up in terror.

Arthur – No!

Marilyn – Don't worry. It's not yours... Well, I mean it's not your assistant's. (*Urging him to sit*) Everything's fine... Calm down... (*Pointing to the suitcase on the seat*) Your suitcase is here. (*Looking out the window*) Look... It seems like we're moving...!

Desperate, he tries to react. She looks at him smiling.

Marilyn – In just an hour, we'll be in London. Relax...!

Arthur – You're right... It's just a suitcase after all... Air France also loses luggage sometimes...

Marilyn – Of course!

Arthur (*to himself*) – I'll have to tell Karen...

Marilyn – Do you want to watch the video?

Arthur (*pretending to be ignorant*) – I didn't know they played movies on the Eurostar. Just like on planes... Who knows, maybe even some sirens will bring us a meal tray...

Marilyn takes Arthur's phone and puts it in front of his face.

Marilyn (*with a mischievous tone*) -I'm talking about the movie I shot earlier with your phone... (*Acting coy*) You haven't already forgotten, have you...

Arthur – I don't know how it could have happened... I'm so sorry... It's the first time something like this has happened to me.

Marilyn – All men say that... But it's okay, don't worry... A little malfunction happens...

Arthur – Oh no, I didn't mean that...It's just not like me to jump on a stranger in the train restroom.

Marilyn (*amused*) – Stranger...?

Arthur – You convinced me that I was going to die in ten minutes, otherwise, you know... I would never have thought of having sex with you...

Marilyn – I don't know how to take your words...

Arthur – I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you...

Marilyn – Well, at least we've rehearsed a part of the role together. (*She looks at the video on her phone screen.*) It's an amateur film, of course, but not bad... The image is pretty clear. You're easily recognizable...

Arthur is upset.

Marilyn – It'll be a nice souvenir of our journey together on the Eurostar...

Arthur makes a move to take his phone back.

Arthur – I think we should...

She moves away to keep the phone out of Arthur's reach.

Marilyn – Do you think your assistant would like it? I could just press the recall button and send her my first short film... I feel like it's the beginning of a great career...

He looks at her more and more worriedly, then he stands up and makes a gesture to grab the phone from her.

Arthur – Give me the phone!

Marilyn – If you don't sit down right now, I'll start screaming, tearing my clothes, and accusing you of raping me in the restroom...

Arthur – But...

Marilyn – Some filmmakers have been sued for less than that. And their careers came to a sudden halt.

Arthur – My career as a filmmaker, sure... But it's true that... I'd rather my assistant not find out about this little slip-up.

Marilyn – A little slip-up...? Believe me, you'll regret that this train didn't explode at the bottom of the Channel after all...

Arthur (*shocked*) – But... who are you exactly?

Transfigured, she shoots him a withering look.

Marilyn – Your worst nightmare...

Totally thrown off balance, he remains speechless for a moment.

Arthur – Okay, I'm not Arthur Monerot...

Marilyn (*ironically*) – No way? And you'll laugh, but I'm not Marilyn Mileur...

Arthur – Is that so?

Marilyn – That's right, make fun of me, on top of everything...

Arthur – But I'm not making fun of you, I swear. Alright, I messed up a bit... I'm not...

Marilyn (*cutting him off*) – I know exactly who you are: a bastard!

Arthur – But what do you want, anyway?

Marilyn – I want that role!

Arthur – What role?

Marilyn – The leading role in your new film! The casting in London! It will be me and no one else!

Arthur – I'm afraid that's not going to be possible...

Marilyn – Okay... (*She is about to tap on her phone.*) I'll send the video to... your assistant.

Arthur – No, please, don't do that...

Marilyn – So you see, you really are Arthur Monerot!

Arthur – I mean...

She gives him a contemptuous look.

Marilyn – You really don't remember me?

Arthur – Should I...?

Marilyn – It was at Cannes, actually. You know? (*Mocking him*) It's like a farm fair... I guess you mistook me for a turkey!

Arthur – You must be mistaken, I assure you...

Marilyn – I had come hoping to meet a director, like many young and naive actresses like me. I saw you after a screening at a very private club where I had managed to get in because I knew the bouncer.

Arthur – Honestly, a girl like you... I would remember...

Marilyn – I quickly realized that if I wanted to get a role, I had to pay a visit to Martinez fist.

Arthur – Martinez? Wasn't I supposed to be called Monerot?

Marilyn – The Martinez Hotel in Cannes! I'm talking about the suite where you stayed that year.

Arthur – Ah yes, of course... The Martinez Hotel...

Marilyn – But instead of a palace, you dragged me to some cheap Ibis hotel at five in the morning... You were ashamed of me, weren't you?

Arthur – But how could I be ashamed of you? Besides, the Ibis hotels aren't that bad... I often take my wife... I mean, my assistant there...

Marilyn – Oh, I wasn't that naive. It's known that in this profession, as you said earlier, you must be willing to do anything if you want to succeed...

Arthur – Some men also sell themselves to get what they want, you know...

Marilyn – What I can't forgive you for is not calling me back after the Festival, as you promised. Not offering me any role as compensation for my sacrifice.

Arthur – Sacrifice... It wasn't me who jumped on you earlier...

Marilyn – But what do you imagine... That was just the second round.

Marilyn – That was precisely a second attempt.

Arthur – What do you mean by attempt?

Marilyn (*holding up her phone*) – A trap! To have a bargaining chip, this time. Besides, you didn't do much to me, my dear. The first time, you were more valiant...

Arthur – But I swear to you...

Marilyn – I can't believe that you didn't even recognize me earlier when I approached you...

Arthur – Because I'm telling you that I... (*She gives him a disapproving look*) I'm telling you, I'm not Arthur Monerot. I'm not a director and I don't even like movies. I never go to the cinema, I only watch a movie on TV when there's no football.

Marilyn – Honestly, you disappoint me... I expected something more convincing. You don't think I believe all these stories, do you?

Arthur – But I...

Marilyn – It's time for me to get my revenge on you, Arthur and, by getting my revenge, I will avenge all the victims of your lies... It will be the role of my life.

Arthur – Okay. I lied to you and I'm willing to pay for it.

Marilyn – Well, we're making progress.

Arthur – But the only time I've ever set foot in Cannes was for a commercial motivation training. I sell men's underwear...

Marilyn – And here we go again! (*She grabs the phone again.*) This time, I'm sending the video...

Arthur – No, wait...!

She presses a button.

Marilyn – You're lucky, we're still in the tunnel. There's no network. But not for long...

Arthur – I swear I can explain everything to you...

Marilyn – Really?

Arthur – It's true, earlier, I pretended to be the director you were talking about. Just for fun...

Marilyn – You're digging yourself in deeper...

Arthur – I mean... in the hope of impressing you and seducing you... Okay, maybe also to get laid...

Marilyn – "Get laid," how nicely put... I can tell you that you're really not great in the sack.

Arthur – And I apologize... I mean for lying to you... But I'm not Arthur Monerot, I assure you... (*With a big smile*) And I can easily prove it...

Marilyn – Oh really...?

Arthur (*reaching into his pocket*) – I just have to show you my ID... (*As he rummages through his pockets, his smile disappears.*) Damn... They're in the suitcase!

Marilyn – What suitcase?

Arthur – The one that exploded!

Marilyn (*pointing to the suitcase on the seat*) – Your suitcase is right there.

Arthur – No... That's...

Marilyn – You're really pathetic...

Arthur – But I swear to you, I am telling the truth... By the way, where is that director? He must be on the train since his suitcase is here! (*He stands up.*) I'm going to find him and you'll see that it's not me.

She gives him a suspicious look.

Marilyn – Fine. You have ten minutes to do that. Anyway, you can't get off the moving train, as we're travelling at three hundred kilometres per hour underwater... (*Holding up the phone*) But in ten minutes, we'll be out of the tunnel...

Arthur – Out of the tunnel... God willing...

A train announcement can be heard again.

Voice – Ladies and gentlemen, we would like to remind you that the bar is open in carriage number 9. Our maître d'hôtel has a range of cold, hot, or lukewarm drinks at ridiculously low prices, a varied and stale assortment of delicious club sandwiches, not forgetting our famous fully duty-free homemade dessert trolley...

Marilyn watches as Arthur walks away, talking to himself, visibly disturbed. He's starting to look crazy.

Arthur – It must be my double... I'll recognize him easily...(*Turning back to Marilyn for the last time*) He might be in the bar.

Left alone, Marilyn smiles. Arthur's phone, which she holds in her hand, starts ringing. She answers the call.

Marilyn – Hello? No, this is his new assistant speaking. He's not available at the moment. Can I take a message? You're expecting his child? Alright, I'll tell him. May I ask your name, in case he wants to call you back? Karen, perfect, thank you...

She hangs up the phone. She smiles again.

Marilyn – Who said there's no signal on this train...? (*She picks up the phone again*) Let's see... Karen... Call back... (*She presses a button.*) She's going to like this video... It'll be a good anniversary gift...

Blackout.

Act 4

Marilyn is immersed in reading the script. Arthur comes back looking dejected.

Arthur – What are you doing?

Marilyn – I'm starting to learn my lines! Since I'm going to get the part. Aren't I? Unless you've found your look-alike, of course... Did you find him?

Arthur – I searched the whole train in both directions, staring at every passenger. They must have thought I was crazy. But no one who even remotely like me.

Marilyn – Lucky for them...

Arthur (*starting to lose his mind*) – I don't understand... Maybe he missed his train too... I should call Karen to see if he's with her...

Marilyn – Alright, enough joking around. I've been preparing my revenge for months. When I heard about this casting in London, I knew you'd be on this train. I've planned everything. (*She pulls out a contract and places it in front of him.*) Even my contract as an actress for the leading role in your film.

Arthur – Oh yeah...?

Marilyn – You'll see that the amount of my fee is perfectly reasonable...

Arthur – Two hundred thousand euros, though... How much is that in pounds?

Marilyn – You just have to sign at the bottom of the page.

Arthur – It would be pointless, I assure you...

Marilyn looks out the window.

Marilyn – Ah, we're out of the tunnel! I can send this video to your assistant *now*...

As she pulls Arthur's phone out of her bag, it starts ringing. They exchange a look. Then Arthur decides.

Arthur – Well, you just have to answer, after all! You'll see that it's not really my assistant calling me. And that I'm not really a film director...

Marilyn – Alright... (*She takes the call.*) Hello? Who? From whom? Sorry, there must be a mistake...

She hangs up.

Arthur – So?

Marilyn – It was a certain Mrs. Fernandez who wanted to talk to her husband...

Arthur (*triumphant*) – Ah! You see!

Marilyn – Who is this Mrs. Fernandez? Your cleaning lady...?

Arthur – My cleaning lady? Not at all! She's my wife... We were leaving to celebrate our wedding anniversary in London... That's where we met...

Marilyn – So, is it true that you're not Arthur Monerot?

Arthur (*relieved*) – That's what I've been trying to explain to you. Do you believe me now?

She looks at him coldly in the eyes.

Marilyn (*furious*) – But you're a monster!

Arthur – Why do you say that?

Marilyn – So when I met you in that nightclub in Cannes, and I mistook you for a film director...you let me believe the story so you could take advantage of me...

Arthur – But I swear I have never set foot in that nightclub! I would remember! Well, I think...

Marilyn – You're an imposter, a maniac, a loser! So you didn't even have a role to offer me... At least now I understand why you never called me back...

Arthur – Pretending to be someone else to abuse a woman? I've never done anything like that and I never will, I assure you...

Marilyn – Well, just a while ago, on this train, you pretended to be Arthur Monerot...

Arthur – What happened was that you dangled the bait, and I fell for it!

Marilyn – That's right, now it's my fault! You made a fool out of me, didn't you? You're even worse than I thought.

Arthur (*to himself*) – I'm never going to get out of this...

Marilyn – If you stopped lying to me...

Arthur – Listen. I don't know if I have been to that nightclub or not... I don't remember... Maybe I was drunk... You can't imagine how boring a business meeting of men's underwear salesmen can be. Usually, there's a lot of drinking. But what happened between us at that hotel?

Marilyn – Do you want details...?

Arthur – No, no, I believe you... But then how can I make it up to you? I am truly sorry, but one thing is for sure, I am not a film director... Even if I wanted to, and I probably would, I couldn't give you that role.

Marilyn – And you said you were going to celebrate your wedding anniversary with your wife in London.

Arthur – Yes...

Marilyn – Alright... So it's her I'm going to send the video to... So she can see who you really are... Trying to assault a stranger in the Eurostar toilets after leaving your wife on the platform of the Gare du Nord. On your wedding anniversary...! You disgust me...

Arthur – I assure you, I'm ashamed of myself... But... I'm a man...

Marilyn – So being a man doesn't mean you can't do whatever you want... Well, Mrs. Fernandez will immediately find out who she married...

She takes out his phone.

Arthur – No, please don't do it...! Especially on our anniversary... (*He searches his pockets and pulls out his wad of sterling notes.*) Here, I have a thousand pounds in cash. I'll give them to you...

Marilyn (*offended*) – Who do you take me for? Do you think you can buy me like any footballer's wife?

Arthur – I'm sorry, I was clumsy.. But with this money, you can cover your expenses in London for the casting. I'm sure you have a lot of talent and you'll get that leading role. It's the opportunity of a lifetime! With this money, you can stay at the Hilton and meet the famous director...

Marilyn – Do you think I'll have time to try my luck?

Arthur – I'm sure you're a great actress. You just proved it. And, with your looks... and your temperament.

She hesitates, but finally takes the money.

Marilyn – Alright... but with this, you're the one who comes out on top...

Arthur – I know...

Voice – The Eurostar number 3212 will be arriving in London in a few minutes... St. Pancras. All passengers, please disembark. This train is terminating here. Connection for Paris is on the opposite platform...

Arthur – I think I'll take the connection... Can you please give me my phone back now?

Marilyn – Alright... But I still want something else to make my revenge complete. And it will also serve as my guarantee that you won't immediately grab your phone and report me to the police as soon as I turn my back to reclaim your sterling pounds...

Arthur – I swear to you...

Marilyn – You'll understand that I can't trust your word completely...

Arthur – Alright... But what do you want?

Marilyn – Follow me to the toilets.

Arthur – Again?

Marilyn – Oh, and since this suitcase doesn't belong to you, I'll take it. I'll return it to Arthur Monerot. It will be an opportunity to truly get to know him... Hopefully, he won't be a scumbag like you...

Blackout.

Act 5

The same set. No one. After a few moments, Arthur returns alone, disheveled... and in his underwear.

Voice – Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for traveling with us. We hope you had a pleasant journey. Please check around your seating area for any personal items before leaving the train. We wish you an excellent stay in London, and we hope to have the pleasure of welcoming you again soon on Eurostar...

Arthur looks devastated. His phone rings, and he answers it mechanically.

Arthur (*in a monotone voice*) – Oh, Karen... So, you managed to get a ticket after all... In half an hour in London, okay... No, no, everything's fine, I assure you... Who was that woman who answered the phone earlier? No idea... Yes, yes, it was indeed my number... If you say so... Listen, I'll explain, okay...? The film? What film? Oh, the video... That damn bitch... Listen, I can explain everything, I promise... Well, I can try... And what was this big news you had to tell me? You want a divorce? We'll talk about it later, okay? (*He moves the receiver away from his ear to muffle Karen's screams.*) Listen, I have to hang up, we might get cut off... I don't have any more coins for the phone booth...

Like a zombie, he puts away his phone and collapses into his seat. The film script is still lying on the seat next to him. He picks it up and is about to open it when his phone rings again.

Arthur – Fred...? I'm in a big mess... Listen, it's a bit complicated to summarize... Tell me, do you remember going with me to Cannes to a very exclusive club after the sales team motivation seminar...? Ah, yes...? So, I was completely drunk... My goodness! Do you remember seeing me with a certain Marilyn...?

Mechanically, he takes the script again and looks at the title.

Arthur (*reading*) – Eurostar, a film by Arthur Monerot... starring Marilyn Milor... No, no, I was reading the title of the script... Arthur Monerot, yes, that's the director's name. And Marilyn Milor... Does that ring a bell for you? No, it doesn't ring a bell for me... Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe...? Yeah, that vaguely rings a bell... So you think...? No, no, it's not necessary, thanks Fred...

He puts down his phone and opens the script to the first page.

Arthur (*reading the first line*) – Marilyn: "Excuse me, but I believe your suitcase is sitting in my seat..."(*Arthur, completely devastated, drops the script*). Oh yes... I think she'll definitely have a great career...

Blackout.

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 theatre 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 theatre 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

Is there a pilot in the audience?

Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall

New Year's Eve at the Morgue

One marriage out of two

Quarantine

Running on Empty

Strip Poker

The Ideal Son-in-Law

The Window across the courtyard

The Worst Village in England

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