

La Comédiathèque



ALL'S WELL THAT STARTS BADLY

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Translation by the author

Charlie and Alex have been waiting for years to adopt a baby. Finally, the big day has arrived. The social worker from the Child Welfare agency is expected any minute for a final visit to assess the stability of their relationship, their motivation to adopt, and the child's future living conditions. But disaster strikes as Alex isn't home which risks jeopardising everything. Charlie must find a way to handle this delicate situation, made worse by a sudden plumbing emergency. Unless the arrival of the plumber provides part of the solution ...

Characters

Charlie
Alex
Chris
Janis
Wendy

This version has been written for one man and four women but by changing a few lines and the names of some characters, it can be adapted to fit a variety of genders.

Other possible castings for this play include:

5 women
2 men and 3 women
3 men and 2 women.

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A bourgeois-bohemian living room. A few modern paintings on the floor. Charlie, a painter, frantically tidies up this carefully messy interior. She looks at her watch and curses. With a disgusted expression, she mops the floor with a mop before tossing it into a bucket. Her phone rings, and she answers.

Charlie – Alex? Where the hell are you? I left you at least three messages! Traffic? The ring road? But why are you on the ring road...? And do you really think it was the right day for an audition on the other side of London during rush hour? The Child Welfare inspector is arriving in half an hour! You absolutely need to be here! It took us months to get this appointment! Adoption is already complicated, and if one of the adoptive parents isn't present, they won't even look at our file... Well, I don't know, take the tube! Yes, well, figure it out! But I'm warning you, if you stand me up for this appointment, it's over between us! *(The doorbell rings)* Oh no... Is it already her? *(She goes to the intercom to open the front door of the building, still holding the phone)* Oh, no, it's the plumber. The plumber! Yes, because on top of everything, there's a leak in the living room, you see! Well, I'll let you go, I have to go and open the door for her. Right, do your best...

She puts away her phone and briefly goes out to open the door, then returns, followed by the plumber. The plumber is a woman, wearing overalls and carrying a toolbox.

Charlie – I didn't expect you so early...

Chris – People usually complain that we're late... *(She looks slightly surprised at the room)* Is this your house?

Charlie – Well, yes, it's my house... Whose house do you think it is?

Chris – Okay... Where is it?

Charlie points to the back wall, downwards.

Charlie – It's there, right in the middle of the living room. A real flood! I turned off the water, but it's still leaking. I put a basin underneath for now...

Chris looks on.

Chris – Oh yes, that's normal...

Charlie – Normal? My living room has turned into a swimming pool, and you think that's normal?

Chris – It's normal for it to keep leaking after shutting off the water. It's the central heating circuit.

Charlie – Excuse me, but I studied Fine Arts, not plumbing. So I don't understand a word you're saying...

Chris glances at the paintings.

Chris – You're an artist painter...

Charlie – Well, I'm a painter, at least... Being an artist doesn't seem to have unanimous approval... So, what about my leak?

Chris – It's the water from the radiators. It's not the regular water supply circuit.

Charlie – In other words?

Chris – As long as there's water in the circuit, it will keep leaking.

Charlie – And approximately how many litres are in there?

Chris – It depends on how many radiators you have... But it could be around a hundred litres...

Charlie – Alright... But can you fix it?

Chris – I'll try...

Charlie – Try...? Excuse me, but... are you really a plumber? I mean, is it your profession... Do you have a diploma?

Chris – Are you saying that because I'm a woman?

Charlie – Oh, not at all...

Chris – Don't worry, I'm used to it.

A pause.

Charlie – Sorry, I'm a bit on edge... I have an important appointment and...

Chris – Initially, I did a hairdressing diploma, but I decided to change my orientation...

Charlie – You mean sexual orientation...?

Chris – I mean professional orientation!

Charlie – Of course...

Chris – I learned plumbing on the job, but I know my trade...

Charlie – Oh yes, that makes me feel a lot more secure... How long will this take?

Chris – Let's take a look... (*She examines the pipe, with Charlie watching attentively*) It's the joint...

Charlie – The joint?

Chris – You don't know what a joint is either...

Charlie – It depends on what kind of joint we're talking about.

Chris – How can I explain... It's...

Charlie – No, but I don't care... What I want to know is... Is it serious?

Chris – Normally, no... But your plumbing isn't exactly up to scratch.

Charlie – So what?

Chris – With old installations like this... everything is rusty. You never know if the bolt's going to break too. Or the pipe...

Charlie – And if that happens, what should I do?

Chris – You'll have to drain the entire circuit before changing the pipe.

Charlie – Drain it?

Chris – Empty it, if you prefer.

Charlie – Oh no, but I don't have the time for that! I told you, I have a very important appointment... Besides, you weren't supposed to come for another two hours.

Chris – A client canceled an appointment. And since the traffic was smooth on the ring road...

Charlie – The traffic was smooth on the ring road?

Chris – It's school holidays...

Charlie – Of course...

Chris – I can come back tomorrow if you prefer...

Charlie – No, no, go ahead... If you say it won't take long... Because with this basin in the middle of the living room... (*Chris takes out her tools and bends down to work on the pipe*) Excuse me for a minute... (*Charlie takes out her phone and dials a number*) Alex? Are you kidding me? The plumber just told me the traffic was smooth on the ring road... Oh, it just cleared up? Of course... Well, if you hurry, you can still be home in half an hour. I'll try to keep the inspector waiting in the meantime... That's it, do the impossible... (*Charlie approaches to see what Chris is doing, which visibly annoys her*) So? How does it look?

Chris – Your radiator has already broken its water... I'm going to try to extract the joint naturally, avoiding a cesarean section...

Charlie leans in closer.

Charlie – Oh yes, that's not a pretty sight...

Chris – Don't get too close. There's a power outlet right next to it, and everything is wet... I wouldn't want you to get electrocuted...

Charlie – Electrocuted...?

Chris – Your electrical installation is also outdated. It's not up to standard anymore. It can be dangerous, you know...

Charlie – If you could avoid saying that in front of the inspector...

Chris – Are you expecting a police visit?

Charlie – It's a Child Welfare inspection. It's about an adoption...

Chris – Ah, yes... An adoption...

Charlie – And my husband is still not here...

Chris – Your husband...?

Charlie – Yes, my husband... Alex...

Chris – Ah, yes, I see...

Charlie – We've been waiting three years for this appointment...

Chris – All the more reason for you not to get electrocuted today. And for that poor child to remain an orphan even before being adopted...

Charlie – Thank you for your concern... Can I do something to help?

Chris – If you could empty this overflowing basin and bring me a dry mop...

Charlie exits. Chris immediately dials a number on her mobile phone.

Chris – Alex? It's Chris... Chris, remember? Yes, the plumber... Listen, you're going to laugh... A client calls me for a leak, I show up, and it turns out to be your house... You didn't tell me you were married... let alone that you wanted to adopt a child. Yes, it's the same leaking radiator, but that's not really the issue, don't you think... Listen, I have to go because she's coming back... I just wanted to give you a heads up... So you're not surprised when you come home and find your wife with your mistress... Right, I'm sure you'll find a way to get out of it... *(She puts away her phone)* It's still what you do best...

Charlie comes back with the empty basin and a dry mop.

Charlie – Here you go...

Chris – Thank you.

Charlie – Can I do something else to speed things up?

Chris – No... *(Charlie leans in again to look at the pipe)* Well, actually... If you could avoid watching me work, it annoys me.

Charlie – Seriously?

Chris – You don't like to be watched while you paint, do you?

Charlie – No.

Chris – Well, it's the same for me...

Charlie – Yes, well, there's a difference between painting a picture and fixing a pipe...

Chris – Of course...

Charlie – I'm sorry, it's completely silly of me. You must think it's a snobby remark from someone who thinks she is better than a mere plumber...

Chris – Yes, that's exactly what I thought.

Charlie – Even though basic courtesy would require you to say the opposite...

Chris – But as a mere plumber without any education, I don't know the rules of basic etiquette...

A pause.

Charlie – I think we got off on the wrong foot, both of us... It's my fault... I have a few reasons to be a little stressed today. I suggest we start all over again.

Chris – Okay...

Charlie – What would make a woman want to become a plumber?

Chris – I don't know... Maybe the voyeuristic side...

Charlie (*amused*) – No kidding?

Chris – We show up unannounced at a stranger's house, like today. We intrude into her privacy...

Charlie – Seen from that perspective, obviously... It sounds quite steamy...

Chris – I'm joking... Plumbers can have a sense of humour, you know...

Charlie – Of course... (*Charlie's phone rings*) Excuse me...

Chris – Please, go ahead.

Charlie steps away a bit and takes the call.

Charlie – Alex? What now? An accident? No? But you're not injured? And the scooter rider? In a coma? That's awful! Did you call for help...? Of course, you can't leave him like that on the side of the road. At the same time, you're not a paramedic either. You're not the one who's going to revive this kid. Of course, it's not your fault. But I told you not to schedule anything today! Oh, well, I

know, go ahead... You never wanted this child... That's right, let's talk about it later... (Charlie *hangs up, furious*) I'm not even sure if this accident story is true...

Chris – To make up a story about hitting a poor kid on a scooter and live him in a coma... What kind of monster would invent such a story just to escape responsibility...?

Charlie – Or maybe he did it on purpose...

Chris – On purpose...? To run over that kid, you mean?

Charlie – Well, how much longer is this going to take?

Chris – I told you. The thread is completely stuck. If I force it, it might break, and then... I applied a product to loosen it up, but it takes time for it to take effect...

Charlie – And it had to happen today, of course.

Chris – It's not your day, it seems...

Charlie – No... Do you have any children?

Chris – Yes, I have three...

Charlie – Three! And... you don't want to get rid of the youngest one?

Chris – Well, you see... I would have to discuss it with my husband. We're divorced...

Charlie – No, I'm just kidding...

Chris – So am I, of course...

The intercom buzzes. Charlie looks panicked.

Charlie – This time, it's her... (She goes to the intercom, off) Yes, hello! It's on the fifth floor. The lift is just to the right in the entrance... (She returns, agitated) It's a disaster! The inspector is downstairs, and my husband isn't here!

Chris – He might not be far away...

Charlie – You don't understand! There are so few children available for adoption... Especially for couples in our situation...

Chris – In your situation, you mean...

Charlie – An actor who mostly does extras... An artist who has never sold a painting except to her own mother... I'm not even sure they would let us adopt a dog...

Chris – Maybe a goldfish...

Charlie – In any case, if I'm alone at this appointment, it's all over... (*She seems to have an idea*) Would you do me a huge favour?

Chris – Of course, I'll leave. I can come back tomorrow, it's not a problem...

She starts to get up.

Charlie – No, on the contrary, stay!

Chris – Alright, but... how can I help you?

Charlie takes Chris by the shoulders and gives her an intense look.

Charlie – Would you like to be my wife?

Chris – Pardon?

Charlie – The inspector has never seen my partner. And my husband's called Alex. Alex can be a diminutive of Alexandra, right? And she won't ask to see your papers, will she?

Chris – If you say so...

Charlie – Same-sex couples have the right to adopt too, after all. If she checks the gender of my partner in the file, we'll just say it's a typo.

Chris – No, but you're joking... What am I supposed to tell this inspector?

Charlie – Nothing! You say you're my wife, and that's it!

Chris – Your wife? But I'm not...

Charlie – Homosexual? Me neither!

Chris – I'm not an actor either... You're asking me to play the role of your partner. I'll never be able to do that. If this inspector isn't stupid, she'll immediately realise that...

Charlie – It's not a very complicated role either. You can improvise. It's just for an hour or two.

Chris – But why would I do that, anyway?

Charlie – For money! I'll pay you. Ten times what you would have charged me for the leak.

Chris – You don't even know what I would have asked for the leak!

Charlie – It doesn't matter, I trust you.

Chris – If I have one piece of advice for you... Never trust a plumber.

Charlie – So?

Chris – I don't even know what your name is!

The doorbell rings.

Charlie – I'm Charlie. And you?

Chris – Chris...

Charlie – Well, now you're Alex.

She goes to open the door.

Chris – Wait a minute!

Charlie – Good Morning, Madam...

Wendy – Call me Wendy, please.

Charlie – Come in, come in... We've been waiting for you...

Wendy enters, followed by Charlie. The inspector is dressed quite eccentrically, in a bohemian style, with a crucifix around her neck. She quickly glances at the plumber, in overalls and a tool still in hand, before scanning the room.

Wendy (to Chris) – Good morning, Sir...

Chris – Madam, if you don't mind...

Wendy – Sorry, excuse me. Good morning, Madam.

Charlie – Let me introduce you to Alex, my partner...

Wendy – Sorry, I mistook you for a plumber or something.

Chris – Yes, I know, it happens to me often...

Charlie – Alex is trying to fix a plumbing issue.

Wendy – Are you doing some renovations?

Alex – It's just a small leak.

Wendy – You should turn the water off.

Charlie – That's what we did... but since it's a leak in the heating system. You know there are over a hundred litres in there?

Wendy – That's interesting.

Charlie – Anyway, we called the plumber, but you know how it is... They're never around when you need them. So, my wife decided to take matters into her own hands, right, honey?

Chris – Uh... yes...

Charlie – She bought overalls, a wrench, and voila!

Wendy – Having a partner who knows how to do DIY is every woman's dream, isn't it?

Chris – So, I gather that your husband isn't handy, am I right?

Wendy – I'm single.

Chris – Ah, yes...

Wendy – Unfortunately, at my age, finding a husband is even more complicated than finding a plumber.

Chris – In that case, you might as well marry a plumber directly...

Wendy – Well, even so... The last plumber who came to my place charged me a fortune, and I still have a leak.

Charlie – A leak...?

Wendy – It was a woman, actually. It's strange, she looked a bit like you.

Chris – Oh really...

Wendy – But you, you're not a plumber, are you?

Charlie – Of course not... My wife isn't a professional... She does it for fun... Well, only when she has to, of course...

Wendy – Female plumbers aren't that common yet. By the way, how do you say it for a woman?

Charlie – Sorry?

Wendy – How do you say female plumber?

Chris – Plumberess, I imagine...

Wendy – Plumberess... Sounds a bit strange...

Charlie – It's true, now that you mention it.

Wendy – With this obsession we have now with feminizing everything... Between you and me... We've already taken everything from the men.

Chris – Even their wives, sometimes.

Wendy – We might as well let them have plumbing!

Charlie – Indeed... But please, have a seat!

Wendy – Thank you.

Wendy sits down. Chris remains standing, unsure of what to do.

Charlie – Put your tools aside for a moment. Come and sit with us, darling...

Chris – Uh... Yes...

Charlie – What can I offer you? Some tea? Some coffee? Fruit juice?

Wendy – Well... I wouldn't mind a neat whisky if you have one...

Charlie – Alright, I see you also have a sense of humour. (*Awkward pause, Wendy doesn't laugh at all*) Whisky is fine... And you, darling?

Chris – I'll join the lady then... I could do with a little pick-me-up...

Charlie – My wife is joking, of course... (*To Chris*) Fruit juice, like me...?

Charlie exits. Awkward silence. Chris doesn't know what to do or say.

Wendy – So, are you ready to embark on this great adventure?

Chris – What adventure...?

Wendy – Adoption!

Chris – Ah, yes, of course...

Wendy – You've never adopted before, I believe...

Chris – No... Except for a cat, a few years ago...

Wendy – And how is he?

Chris – He's dead.

Wendy – Dead?

Chris – Well, no... I mean, he didn't suffer any mistreatment or anything like that... He died of old age, you know... It was a long time ago... When we got him, he was already a few years old. And you know, cats don't live as long as...

Wendy – Children...

Charlie returns with three glasses and a bottle of whisky on a tray.

Charlie – And here we go... Whisky for you... Neat, as you requested.

Wendy – You might think I'm an alcoholic...

Charlie – But no, not at all... I too enjoy a little whisky from time to time... When I'm feeling down... And a fruit juice for you, darling. It's organic...

Chris – Thank you...

Charlie – So, have you gotten to know each other a bit?

Wendy – Yes, Alex told me about that poor cat you adopted.

Charlie – A cat...?

Chris – Oh, that was... before we met.

Charlie – It's strange, you've never mentioned this cat to me.

Chris – It's a rather painful memory...

Wendy (*with a sympathetic look*) – The little cat is dead...

Charlie – My goodness, that's awful!

Chris – Well, we all eventually die someday, don't we... Even children... I mean... Older children...

Charlie – Well then, to your health!

Wendy – And to your generous project!

Wendy finishes her whisky in one gulp, while the other two barely sip from their glasses. Forced smiles and awkward silence.

Chris – This grapefruit juice is very good, but it has a strange taste, doesn't it...? It must be because it's organic...

Charlie – It's pineapple juice...

Chris – Ah yes, it must be why.

Charlie – Since Alex got the COVID, she's completely lost her sense of taste.

Wendy – Is that so?

Charlie – Just look at the way she's dressed... Well, Alex, you don't dress like that to receive a guest...

Chris – Because right now I'm in work clothes, otherwise...

Charlie – Ah yes, that's right, the leak...

Wendy – No, no, but... The overalls suit you very well...

Chris – Thank you...

Wendy – So, when you're not... a plumber, what do you do for a living, Alex?

Chris – Well, um... (*Turning to Charlie*) What do I do?

Charlie – My wife is an actress.

Wendy – Really? But that's an exciting profession.

Chris – Yes, well... It's just a job like any other, you know...

Wendy – That's why your face looked familiar to me... I must have seen you on TV... Didn't you play in that stupid soap opera that airs every night on TV just before the news?

Charlie – You must be mistaken... My wife mostly does theatre... Avant-garde theatre.

Chris – The kind of theatre that no one goes to see...

Charlie – Apart from the actors' friends when they're invited.

Wendy – Ah, theatre... I rarely go there... The last time I went, I fell asleep...

Chris – You're right, so did I... I mean, well, once, I was performing in such a boring play... I fell asleep on stage in the middle of Act Two... And since I tend to snore... One of my partners had to slap me to wake me up.

Wendy – Oh really...?

Charlie – Shall I pour you another whisky?

Wendy – It wouldn't be reasonable... but yes, I'd love one.

Charlie refills Wendy's glass, which she quickly finishes again.

Wendy – And you, dear Madam? What do you do for a living?

Charlie – I'm a painter.

Wendy looks around.

Wendy – Ah yes? It's... It's modern art.

Chris – Each in our own field... we are both avant-garde artists.

Wendy – Very well, very well... And... does it sell?

Charlie – Well... It's never easy to establish something new, you know.

Chris – Van Gogh never sold a painting when he was alive, and now his paintings are worth millions.

Wendy – Yes... but he died in poverty.

Chris – Fortunately, he didn't have any children...

Charlie – Well, I feel like things are starting to take off... By the way, excuse the mess... I'm preparing a very important exhibition. I don't have any time to take care of my house.

Wendy – But you think you'll have time to take care of a child...

Charlie pauses.

Charlie – You're right... I may have to slow down a bit...

Chris – That's what I keep telling her.

Charlie – At the same time, I won't be on my own! We're both going to adopt this child, aren't we? You'll be there too...

Chris – Of course.

Wendy – Well, I don't want to give you too much hope... Hopes that might be disappointed... The process is just beginning... You'll have to be patient.

Charlie – We know, don't worry.

Chris – Absolutely... If it happens, great... And if it doesn't, then it wasn't meant to be...

Wendy silently observes them for a moment.

Wendy – Just between us, I'm going to tell you something in confidence... I've got over twenty years' experience, and my instincts are rarely wrong. I have the impression that I'm looking at a very close couple.

Chris – Really?

Wendy – You're both very different and very complementary. And it's easy to see that behind the bickering that's part and parcel of any couple, there's a great deal of complicity. Am I right?

Charlie – I think you've hit the nail on the head. Isn't that right, darling?

She leans towards Chris, surprised, and kisses her on the lips.

Wendy – A very solid couple and very well-balanced parents are the basis for a harmonious and supportive family. Especially when it comes to adoption.

Charlie – We're on the same page.

Chris – Absolutely...

Wendy – Adoption, for a family, is a bit like an organ transplant for a patient.

Charlie – I wouldn't have put it that way, but that's also how I feel. Don't you, darling?

Chris – Yes... I hadn't thought of it as a last-chance operation, but well...

Wendy – In any case... for the transplant to succeed, for the graft not to be rejected, the adopting family must be in perfect health. It's my role to ensure that...

Chris – So, you think we seem like a strong couple?

Wendy – A very united couple, yes... Now, the question is whether this couple is capable of becoming parents. The arrival of a child, whether conceived by the parents or adopted, changes everything. Going from two to three is not just a simple arithmetic question...

Charlie – We're fully aware of that.

She seeks Chris' approval, who is currently looking at the screen of her phone.

Chris – Absolutely.

Wendy – Now, you know, there aren't that many children to adopt.

Chris – Well, yes... It's a bit like organ donations, I suppose. First, someone has to die... and the organ they leave us has to be in fairly good condition.

Wendy – And you might not be at the top of the list.

Charlie – I understand...

Wendy – So, we shouldn't be too demanding.

Charlie – Of course...

Silence.

Chris – But when you say not too demanding...?

Wendy – If you're looking for a blond-haired, blue-eyed baby...

Charlie – Oh no, we're not racist!

Chris – We don't care about the colour. As long as the child is in good condition. I mean, in good health.

Wendy – And what about age?

Chris – Age...?

Wendy – If it's not quite a baby anymore...

Chris – An old baby, you mean?

Charlie – Okay, no problem.

Chris – If the child is already potty-trained, it would save us from changing diapers...

Charlie – But when you say "not a baby anymore," how old are we talking about, approximately?

Wendy – It could be five years old...

Charlie – Five years old is fine.

Wendy – It could go up to ten or twelve years old...

Chris – Oh, that's quite a range...

Charlie – No, but it's not a problem at all.

Chris – Well, it still needs to be a child. We're not going to adopt an elderly person, right, darling?

Awkward silence. The doorbell rings. Charlie doesn't react.

Wendy – Aren't you going to answer?

Charlie – Did someone ring?

The doorbell rings again.

Chris – Oh yes, it seems like it.

Charlie – I wasn't expecting anyone. I don't know who it could be...

Wendy – You said you were expecting a plumber, right?

Chris – Oh yes, that's right... The plumber...

Wendy – Anyway, it's someone who has the access code to the main door...

Chris – Well, go and see, darling!

Charlie – Excuse me for a moment...

She leaves.

Janis (off) – Hello, hello! You look upset...

Charlie (off) – Mum? What are you doing here? Is there a problem?

Charlie returns with Janis, who is wearing sunglasses and moves towards the front of the stage without seeing the other two.

Janis – No, nothing, I was just passing by... I have an appointment with the eye doctor... I've been waiting for this appointment for a year, can you believe it? I can't afford to miss it.

Charlie – Why are you wearing sunglasses?

Janis – I could barely see anything before, but then I broke my glasses last night. In the meantime, I'm wearing these sunglasses, but they're no longer suitable for my vision. If this keeps up, I'm going to need a white cane and a guide dog...

Charlie – You should have called me first, because this is bad timing...

Janis – I was early, so I thought... *(She turns around and sees the other two)* Oh, sorry, you're not alone...

Charlie – Wendy, this is my mother.

Wendy – Dear Madam...

Janis – I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you...

Wendy – No, no... You're not disturbing us. I'm delighted to meet the future grandmother...

Janis – The future grandmother...? Are you pregnant?

Charlie – No, Mum... The lady is... a social worker from the Child Welfare Services... Alex and I have decided to start an adoption process.

Janis – An adoption? You never told me about this...

Chris – We were waiting for it to be certain.

Charlie – I'm so sorry... My mother doesn't usually turn up at my house unannounced...

Wendy – No, no, on the contrary... It's great that I also get to meet your mother... *(To Chris)* And yours too, by the way.

Chris – Mine is dead, thankfully... Well, I mean... You won't have the pleasure of meeting her...

Janis – And who is this one?

Charlie – Come on, Mum, it's Alex!

Janis – Alex...?

Charlie – It's the overalls. She's not used to it...

Janis – Alex? Is it really you?

Chris – Of course it is, Mama! I've changed my hair too. That must be it...

Janis – Mama? When did you start calling me that? I don't recognise you at all!

Charlie – Oh yes, it's about time you had your eyes checked. *(To Wendy)* She's as blind as a bat.

Janis – And I don't recognize the voice either.

Charlie *(to Wendy)* – Excuse her, she has these moments sometimes.

Wendy – I know what it's like. My mother also has early signs of...

Janis – But I'm not losing my mind, after all...

Charlie – Sit down, Mum. Since you're here...

Janis sits down, a little disoriented.

Chris – Here, let's get you some whisky...

Janis – Whisky? I'm not an alcoholic! You know I never drink alcohol...

Charlie – A pineapple juice, then...

Charlie serves her mother.

Chris – So you were saying that we shouldn't be too demanding and that we might not have all the options because you were out of stock...

Wendy – What we have a lot of right now are children returning from Syria.

Charlie – From Syria?

Wendy – Children who have grown up in prison camps and whose parents have died.

Janis – How terrible...

Wendy takes out a photo and shows it to them.

Wendy – Here, I have one who just arrived. He's around ten years old...

Charlie – He looks twice that age.

Chris – He already has a bit of a beard, hasn't he...?

Wendy – Who knows... Most of the time, we don't know their exact date of birth.

Janis – And so... they're Muslims, of course.

Wendy – Oh yes, they're Muslims... With the parents they've had...

Janis – You're not going to adopt a Muslim, are you?

Charlie – Why not? Mum, for us, religion doesn't matter at all.

Chris – Besides, we don't believe in God, so whether they're Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox, or Buddhist... It's all the same to us, right, darling?

Janis looks at the photo again.

Janis – But do they speak French, at least?

Wendy – Well, that... I would have to check... But at that age, they learn quickly...

Chris – Of course... Well, it depends on what age we're talking about, obviously.

Wendy – So, would it interest you?

Charlie – Well... If you don't have anything else...

Chris – We'll see...

The doorbell rings again.

Charlie – We can't have a moment of peace...

Chris – This time, it must be the plumber.

Charlie – The plumber? I don't think so... He called me to say he had a little accident with his car.

Wendy – Is it serious?

Charlie – No... He hit a kid on a scooter... I mean, the plumber is fine... and the kid didn't die.

Chris – He's just in a coma...

The doorbell rings again.

Janis – Someone should go and see who it is...

Charlie – I'll go...

Charlie leaves.

Janis – With all this, I mustn't forget my appointment either.

Chris – Don't hesitate, Mama, if you need to go...

Janis looks at her watch.

Janis – Oh no, I still have some time...

Charlie (off) – Is that you?

Alex (off) – Well, yes, who else would it be?

Charlie (off) – But I wasn't expecting you anymore... You said...

Alex (off) – I'm not too late, I hope...

Alex enters, followed by Charlie.

Janis – And who is this one then?

Charlie – This is the plumber, Mum...

Alex – Sorry?

Janis – The plumber, are you sure? He looks like Alex...

Charlie – Maybe you should go to your appointment instead?

Janis – My appointment? It's in an hour!

Charlie – And how's the kid? Will he be okay?

Alex – They took him to the hospital for tests...

Chris – So, this accident story was true?

Alex – Of course it was!

Chris – You know how tradesmen are. They'd be ready to make up anything to leave you hanging... And you didn't bring your tools?

Alex – My tools...?

Charlie – I see... They were in your van that got into an accident.

Chris – It's not a problem, don't worry. We have what we need at home... Take my tools, don't hesitate.

Charlie – It's this way...

Charlie signals for Alex to play along. He clumsily takes the tools given by Chris.

Alex – Thank you...

Alex pretends to inspect the leak.

Chris (to Alex) – Do as if we're not here...

Charlie – But if you need anything...

Chris – So, if I understand correctly, you're suggesting that we adopt a jihadist...

Alex shows surprise.

Wendy – He's still a child, after all.

Chris – With a beard.

Wendy – I warned you not to be too picky...

Wendy's phone rings, and she answers.

Wendy – Hello, yes? Yes, it's me... (To the others) Excuse me for a moment...

She's going out.

Alex – But what's going on here?

Charlie – I'll explain later, now truly isn't the time. She'll be back any minute now...

Alex (referring to Chris) – And... you've decided to adopt with her now?

Charlie – What do you want? You weren't here, Chris took your place, that's it!

Chris – First come, first served, as they say...

Janis – I don't understand... She's the plumber, and you're on a first-name basis with her?

Charlie – With my old pipes, I often have leaks, so she's become a friend...

Alex – Well... And now what am I supposed to do?

Charlie – For now... you're just an extra! It's your profession, after all! Because as an actor, between you and me...

Alex – If that's how it is, then...

Janis – But then who is the plumber?

Charlie – Are you still here? I thought you had an important appointment too!

Alex – There's no need to take it out on your mother either...

Charlie – If you had arrived on time, we wouldn't be in this mess.

Alex – I had an accident! I nearly killed someone!

Janis – Did he kill someone?

Wendy returns, looking concerned.

Charlie – Is there a problem?

Wendy – It's about the child I was telling you about.

Charlie – Yes...?

Wendy – While waiting for his adoption, he was staying at an orphanage not far from London. An orphanage run by nuns...

Alex – So what?

Wendy is surprised that the presumed plumber is the one asking the question.

Wendy – He just ran away.

Charlie – Oh my God...

Wendy – We'll find him, don't worry... We always manage to find them...

Chris – A runaway... Sounds good...

Wendy – You know, these are fragile children, often very disturbed. That's precisely why they need a stable home like yours...

Alex – A stable home, you say...

Charlie – Well, we didn't ask for your opinion. Focus on fixing the leak instead.

Alex gives him a fiery look before pretending to inspect the pipe.

Chris – From what I saw, the gasket needs to be replaced. But you're the professional...

Charlie – A ten-year-old child... He couldn't have gone far.

Wendy – I don't know... He stole a scooter...

Alex – A scooter? At ten years old?

Wendy – I told you, he looks much older... (*Her phone rings again*) Excuse me, I have another call...

She goes out.

Alex – What on earth is going on? You want us to adopt a delinquent who might already be an adult... and whose parents were probably terrorists? Don't I still have a say in this?

Janis – You're going to adopt a child with the plumber?

Alex – Yeah... You seem to have replaced me pretty quickly.

Charlie – You weren't here, I improvised...

Alex – And... the plumber? Doesn't she mind playing this comedy?

Chris – Hey, calm down! I did it to help, you know? So if that's the way it is, I'll be off.

She makes a move to leave, but Charlie stops her, with a tremor in his voice.

Charlie – Please, stay a little longer...

Chris – If it's just to get scolded...

Alex – If you prefer, should I leave instead? And I'll leave you with your family... .

The inspector returns.

Wendy – We've just found him...

Charlie – And then?

Wendy – He's in the emergency room at the hospital. He was hit by a hit-and-run driver.

Alex (*worried*) – And you say he was on a scooter...?

Janis – But is he alive?

Wendy – Yes... but we don't know yet if he'll have any lasting effects.

Chris – Oh, well... that's starting to be a lot.

Charlie – And... do you have any other children to propose to us?

Wendy – I'm sorry... For now, that's all I have in my catalog...

Silence.

Janis – I'm telling you, I'm not in a hurry to become a grandmother.

All eyes turn to her.

Wendy – Really?

Janis – Since my daughter couldn't have children, I thought at least I would be spared the burden of having grandchildren.

Chris – You console yourselves however you can...

Charlie – You never told me that.

Janis – I already have a complicated relationship with motherhood.

Charlie – Yes, I noticed...

Janis – So being a grandmother... Especially if my grandson is an adopted child... and a social case.

Charlie – Thanks for your support, Mum. I'm sure it'll help us a lot.

Janis – And I want to enjoy my retirement, you know...

Wendy – That's quite normal.

Janis – In any case, don't count on me to be your nanny...

Chris – At least you won't have that problem... If it's a teenager with a beard already.

Charlie (*to Wendy*) – I'll show you his room...

Chris – In that case, maybe we need to reconsider the size of the bed...

Charlie – Are you coming, Mum?

Charlie leaves followed by Wendy and Janis.

Alex – What are you still doing here?

Chris – I'm a plumber, remember? I get called, I come... That's how we met, right? You called me about a leak.

Alex – Yes... On the same pipe, actually... And it's still leaking...

Chris – Your plumbing is as old as the building itself... Were you expecting a ten-year warranty?

Alex – So it's just a coincidence...? I mean... it's not a setup?

Chris – I recognised the building when I arrived, but I didn't know I was coming to your place. It was only when I entered that I recognised the paintings... You told me they were yours...

Alex – But you didn't tell her that we knew each other, did you?

Chris – No, don't worry...

Alex – Well, I guess I should thank you then.

Chris – For not telling your wife that you were sleeping with the plumber?

Alex – Yes, that too... And for playing along with that Child Welfare inspector.

Chris – It's true that the situation is quite amusing... Being replaced by your mistress with your wife...

Alex – That being said... I think if I missed this appointment, it wasn't entirely by chance.

Chris – Is that so?

Alex – I'm not ready to become a father... Especially if it means adopting a teenager raised by Islamists.

Chris – So what are you going to do? Run away, as usual?

Alex – I don't know...

Chris – Well, in any case, don't leave her for me. I've never asked you to... And now that I know your wife... I find her quite funny... in her own way. Funnier than you, that's for sure...

Alex – If you want to take over, feel free... Apparently, you two get along very well... And the inspector has already adopted you...

Chris – Well, how are you managing with this leak?

Alex – That's hilarious!...

Chris give two turns of the wrench.

Chris – There you go... I didn't even have to change the gasket. It was just a slightly loose bolt...

Alex – So I guess you can go now... Anyway, it seems like this adoption isn't going well...

Chris – Go? Are you kidding? I'm just starting to have a bit of fun.

Alex – Then come here, I have an idea... Since it's all over anyway, we might as well have a blast...

They leave. Wendy returns with Janis.

Janis – You have a strange profession, indeed.

Wendy – Yes... Even with experience, one never gets used to human misery. Orphans are just like any other children, you know.

Janis – Yes, indeed... Every child is a potential orphan.

Wendy – You could even say that every child is destined to become an orphan someday.

Janis – It's curious, actually... At what exact age do we stop considering someone without parents as an orphan?

Wendy – Sounds like a topic for a philosophy exam.

Janis – I'm a retired teacher, you know.

Wendy – I'm sure your students miss you a lot.

Janis – Well, I don't miss them, believe me.

Wendy – Come on... I'm sure deep down you love children and would be delighted to have grandchildren.

Janis – You know, for a teacher, having children is like bringing work home.

Wendy – Well, for me, this will be my last mission.

Janis – Are you retiring too?

Wendy – Yes, you could say that. I've decided to retreat to a convent.

Janis – A convent? Does that still exist?

Wendy – The Convent of Santa María-Juana. It's in Spain. On the Costa Brava

Janis – Santa Marijuana?

Wendy – I won't take my vows, but the sisters will welcome me for this spiritual retreat. And I'll take care of the monastic products. They make a highly regarded elixir from local herbs.

Janis – I can't believe it! On the Costa Brava...

Wendy – But before that, I really want to see this last adoption through.

Janis – So you can feel a sense of accomplishment...

Wendy – When I've done that, I can finally withdraw from the world to atone for my sins...

Janis – Your sins?

Wendy – It's a sad story that I've only shared with my confessor for now...

Janis – I wish I had the solace of faith too... Alas, I'm not religious.

Wendy – Unfortunately, no one wants this child. It's not his fault that his parents made bad choices. People imagine that he'll come to their homes with an explosive belt...

Janis – On the other hand, it does make you think...

Wendy – Can you tell me where I can find something strong to lift my spirits?

Janis – The kitchen is at the end of the hall... I believe there's a bottle of rum in the cupboards above the sink...

Wendy – Thank you.

Janis – I said above, not below, alright? Don't confuse it with bleach or drain cleaner...

Charlie returns.

Charlie – Where is she?

Janis – She went to make herself a mojito...

Charlie – She's a heavy drinker, no doubt.

Janis – Are you bothered by portraying your mother as crazy?

Charlie – Sorry... I didn't have time to explain to you... But it's not looking good for our adoption... Did you talk to her?

Janis – She's a woman with a heavy secret...

Charlie – Is that so?

Silence.

Janis – And so am I...

Charlie – What?

Janis – I've wanted to talk to you about it for a long time.

Charlie – And you think this is the right moment.

Janis – That's why I came to see you unexpectedly. To relieve myself of the burden I've carried in my heart all these years.

Charlie – You need to stop watching afternoon soap operas on TV, Mum. You talk like the heroines in those cheesy dramas...

Janis – It's just not easy to say...

Charlie – Well, go ahead and try, but I'm asking you to be quick...

Janis – I've always told you that I didn't know who your father was because you were the result of a one-night stand...

Charlie – Yes... And so?

Janis – That's not quite true...

Charlie – I see... So, in truth, my father is an alien who promised to come back one day to take me to his planet in his flying saucer. Is that it?

Janis – I'm afraid it's much worse than that...

Charlie – Worse?

Janis – You're also an adopted child.

Charlie – Excuse me?

Janis – I didn't have the courage to tell you until now.

Charlie – If this is a joke, it's not funny, and it's really not the right time.

Janis – Do you think we can joke about these things?

Charlie – But why? Why didn't you ever tell me?

Janis – I wanted you to have a normal life.

Charlie – Well, you succeeded... So, who are my real parents?

Janis – That's partly why I never told you...

Charlie – At this point, I can handle anything you tell me.

Janis – I found you abandoned on a bench in a train station.

Charlie – In a train station?

Janis – Yes, I know, usually people forget luggage in train stations...

Charlie – And they call the bomb squad. They don't just walk away with the suitcase.

Janis – I couldn't have children, so I took the baby with me.

Charlie – But the mother would have realised She probably came back to find her baby!

Janis – Yes, maybe.

Charlie – And you didn't go to the police?

Janis – No.

Charlie – It sounds a lot like kidnapping, doesn't it?

Janis – That's exactly why I never told you... I acted as if you were my own child, and I registered you as my daughter at the city hall. Father unknown...

Charlie – Well, at least you didn't lie about that...

Wendy returns, completely drunk.

Wendy – I took the opportunity to explore the house. It seems perfect to welcome a child... and even a teenager. But you all look worried. Is everything alright?

Charlie – Yes, yes, everything's fine.

Alex and Chris return. Alex is now wearing overalls, and Chris is wearing Alex's clothes.

Chris – The leak is fixed.

Charlie, Janis, and Wendy look at them in confusion.

Charlie – Uh... Thank you! How much do I owe you?

Chris – Nothing for the repair. We'll figure out the rest later...

Charlie – Allow me to at least offer you another drink...

Chris – I'll leave you to your family...

Alex – Yes, you probably have other clients waiting for you.

Chris – Oh, well, I'm not in a hurry anyway.

Charlie – But no alcohol, alright? We wouldn't want you crashing into another child...

Chris – Oh yeah, that's right. The accident...

Charlie serves him a glass of pineapple juice. Wendy, disturbed, looks at Alex and Chris alternately.

Wendy – I'm like your mother, I have vision problems... I can't remember who's who... I should make an appointment with the eye doctor too...

Charlie hands the glass to Chris.

Charlie – Here, it's organic.

Chris – Thank you.

Charlie – It is I who thank you. For everything you've done for us.

Alex – Wendy, can we get you something else?

Wendy – A pineapple juice, then... I need to stop drinking... You're going to laugh, but I had the impression earlier that it was the lady who was wearing the overalls, and you...

Alex serves Wendy a pineapple juice, and she drinks it in one gulp.

Janis – Are you feeling better?

Wendy – Much better... And I don't know, I just feel so good with all of you... I feel like I'm part of the family...

Charlie – By the way, Wendy, I forgot to ask you. Do you have any children?

Wendy – No...

Alex – I gather it's a painful subject...

Chris – That's probably why you chose this profession. To enable people who can't have children to adopt them.

Wendy – Yes...

Charlie – Forgive me for asking, but... you could have adopted yourself, couldn't you?

Wendy – Of course, but... It's complicated...

Wendy is on the verge of tears. General embarrassment.

Janis – Why don't you tell us what's troubling you, Wendy. I'm sure it would provide some relief.

Wendy – I don't want to bother you with my personal problems.

Charlie – You said it yourself, we're almost like family.

Wendy – Well... Here it is... About thirty years ago, I gave birth to a little girl.

Alex – I understand... And she's no longer alive, I suppose...

Wendy – Well, to tell the truth, I don't know...

Charlie – But you don't know anything about it?

Wendy – I was very young at the time... I wasn't ready at all to have a child... I gave birth on my own, with the help of a friend...

Alex – That's terrible...

Janis – And then...?

Wendy – A few days later, I took the train to drop the baby off with a foster mother... With the life I was leading, I couldn't keep her with me...

Alex – Night work, I presume...

Wendy – Yes, you could say that... I was working at a strip club in London. The French Kiss...

Chris – Ah yes... I think it still exists...

Wendy – A fellow dancer in the same situation as me recommended a foster mother not far from London. In Rochester...

Janis – In Rochester?

Wendy – Yes, do you know it?

Janis – I taught there for a few years... In a catholic school.

Charlie – And then?

Wendy – When I arrived, it was raining...

Janis – Yes, I remember it very well...

Charlie – But come on, Mum, what are you talking about...?

Janis – I'm sorry...

Wendy – I left my baby unattended on a bench at the train station for a few minutes, while I tried to find a taxi.

Janis – And when you came back to get her, she was gone...

Wendy – I've never been able to get over it.

Chris – I understand that.

Janis – I'm so sorry...

Wendy – After losing my baby, I did everything I could to get out of that hell of drugs and prostitution.

Chris – Hello Dickens...

Wendy – Yes, indeed, that's why I chose this profession. To redeem myself, in a way.

Janis – That's also why I left teaching in a catholic school for a job in the public sector... To atone for my sins...

Wendy – I thought that with time, I would eventually forget... But over the years, the burden became too heavy. I decided to withdraw from the world of the living...

Chris – To commit suicide...?

Wendy – I don't have that kind of courage, unfortunately. And besides, the Church doesn't think much of it.

Chris – Oh yes... We've lost count of the pedophile bishops, but they're still the ones preaching to us about abortion or euthanasia.

Wendy – I'm going to retreat to a convent...

Alex – But come on... It's not your fault...

Chris – Well, a little bit, but still...

Wendy – May God forgive me...

She bursts into tears.

Wendy – Excuse me, I need to freshen up a bit...

She leaves.

Charlie – This can't be... She's... my mother?

Alex – Your mother? What do you mean?

Charlie – Didn't you understand? Wendy is my real mother!

Alex – What is this again? It's not just an episode I missed, it's a whole season! I don't understand a thing about this story.

Chris – We should never have played this comedy. I think we're all going crazy.

Janis – Unfortunately, she's right...

Charlie – My mother just confessed to me that she's not my real mother. She found me on a train platform!

Chris – Well, Wendy abandoned her baby on a bench. You were found on another... There's no proof it's the same bench.

Alex – Every year, heaps of abandoned babies are found on a bench at a train station...

Chris – Well, not as much as suitcases, but still...

Alex – In which train station did you find the baby?

Janis – Rochester station.

Alex – Ah yes, there... It's starting to be a lot of coincidences...

Charlie – We have to tell her, we have no choice...

Chris – Losing a child like that... It must have been traumatic.

Janis – She says she wants to spend her days in a convent... We can't let her do that...

Alex – And you, you find a baby on a bench and just take off with it?

Chris – Even with a suitcase, you bring it to the lost and found.

Janis – I was like you... I wanted a child, I couldn't have one... And you know very well that adoption is not that easy.

Charlie – She's my biological mother, I can't pretend I don't know.

Janis – I will always be your mother, sweetheart, don't worry. I'm the one who raised you, right?

Charlie – But why did you tell me all this? And today, on top of that!

Wendy returns.

Wendy – I'm sorry, I shouldn't have burdened you with this. After all, it's none of your business...

Charlie – You're mistaken... (*They all look at her*) I mean, who wouldn't feel involved in such a poignant story...?

Wendy – Thank you for your support, anyway. I've never talked about this to anyone before. But as soon as I met you, I don't know why, I felt I could trust you.

Charlie – You can, I assure you.

Wendy – Even if you tried to make me believe the plumber was your wife.

Charlie – So you figured it out...

Alex – I plead guilty...

Charlie – Me too...

Chris – And... did you realise it right away or... I'm not an actress, but I was still hoping to be able to play my part credibly for more than five minutes...

Wendy – I did at first. It was only when you swapped clothes that...

Alex – Oh yes... We were too confident...

Chris – We got carried away, and that's what got us into trouble...

Wendy – So it's actually you, the plumber who came to my house and messed up the job?

Chris – I'm sorry, I was overwhelmed, but I'll come back to fix it, I promise. And for free, of course...

Charlie – Sorry for playing this charade on you. But it at least shows that we were motivated. I would do anything to have a child.

Wendy – I understand. Me too...

Charlie – I'm truly sorry...

Wendy – My daughter would be about your age now. And I don't even know if she's still alive.

Charlie – She is, I can assure you.

Wendy – Thank you, but how can you be so sure?

A moment.

Charlie – Because it's me.

Wendy is shocked.

Wendy – You?

Janis – I needed to relieve my conscience too. I'm the one who took that child you left unattended for a moment in that station.

Wendy – But... how did...?

Janis – It was in August...

Wendy – Yes, the 23rd.

Janis – I saw that child, I couldn't have one. I didn't think, I took her. The baby was only a few days old. I registered her at the town hall as if she were mine...

Wendy – She was three days old. She was born on August 21st.

Alex – So now you're not a Virgo anymore, you're a Leo. I thought so...

Chris – But that's monstrous! She stole your child...

Janis – I'm the only one guilty... Do what you have to do. File a complaint, if it can bring you relief. It's not up to you to go to the convent, it's up to me to go to prison.

Wendy – No, I won't file a complaint. I should thank you instead.

Chris – Thank you? But why?

Wendy – To be honest, I'm as guilty as you are...

Charlie – What do you mean?

Wendy – I didn't just... forget the baby on a bench. I believe unconsciously... it was an abandonment.

Janis – So that's why, at the time, you didn't report her missing...

Wendy – When I came back into the station and the baby was gone, I felt a sense of relief. I saw it as a sign from destiny. I convinced myself that someone good had taken my child. Someone who would be able to raise her in good conditions and bring her happiness.

Chris – In a way, you weren't wrong.

Wendy – It was only years later that I wanted to find you again. But how? I gave birth alone. You weren't registered at the town hall...

Janis – I'm sure that despite everything, you gave her a name.

Wendy – Yes... Mildred...

Chris – That's awful...

Alex – Yes... Can you imagine... You could have been called Mildred...

Charlie – I wonder if unconsciously, I always knew that.

Alex – That you were an adopted child?

Charlie – And I wonder if this desire to adopt in turn doesn't come from that hidden wound...

Chris – To go to the extent of adopting a jihadist?

Charlie – And what about my father then?

Wendy – Your father... It's complicated...

Janis – At this point... How complicated?

Wendy – Like I told you, at that time, my life was a bit upside down. So your father could be many people...

Chris – But you have an idea, don't you?

Wendy – Yes...

Charlie – And...?

Wendy – I wouldn't be surprised if your father was one of the players from a football team that used to come and celebrate the post-match in that brothel where I worked at the time...

Chris – A team? Which team?

Wendy – Winchester Football Club.

Janis – So that's why when I found the baby, it was wrapped in a jersey of a football team...

Wendy – It was my way of leaving a clue about her origins...

Charlie – But when you say my father could be one of the players...?

Wendy – We would host the whole team when they came to play a match near London... And when they won, believe me, in that Soho brothel, not many stayed on the bench...

Charlie – So, my father is... a football team?

Wendy – That's partly why I left you on that bench at the train station.

Chris – It's true that it looks a lot like abandonment...

Janis – In a way, it gives me relief...

Wendy – But I never forgot about you, I assure you...

Charlie – I believe you.

Wendy – Will you be able to forgive me one day...?

Charlie – I have already forgiven you.

They embrace.

Chris – So, in the end, all's well that ends well...

Alex – Well, almost... I ran over a child, and I still don't know if he'll make it.

Wendy – Do you think the child you hit is the one I proposed for adoption?

Alex – I don't know... Given where we're at... Do you have any updates?

Wendy – Not yet, unfortunately...

Janis – You look upset.

Wendy – There's something else I need to tell you.

Chris – Truly, this is turning into a soap opera...

Wendy – If I was determined to have this child adopted, it's because I know a bit about his story.

Chris – I'm bracing for the worst...

Wendy – Before she died, the woman who raised him allegedly told him that his grandfather was a football player from a team in Hampshire.

Charlie – And you thought that child could be your grandson.

Wendy – Apparently, that's not the case, but he could be the grandson of one of my friends from that time.

Alex – Who also abandoned her child in similar circumstances. Wrapped in a Winchester Football Club jersey...

Janis (to Charlie) – So you could be related to this kid you want to adopt...

Alex – Now, I'm starting to lose track...

Janis – If your father is also the grandfather of that child!

Chris – It all remains highly hypothetical. A football team has eleven players.

Alex – Not counting the substitutes.

A moment.

Charlie – We still need to find out if the child you ran over is indeed the one who escaped from the orphanage.

Janis – By the way, what's the name of that child? I mean, the one you want to adopt.

Alex – True, we didn't even think to ask...

Chris – So? Kevin? Mouloud?

Wendy – Shlomo. His name is Shlomo.

Janis – Shlomo?

Charlie – And I suppose we can't change it anymore...

Chris – If he's ten years old...

Alex – Or older...

Wendy – And where did your accident happen?

Alex – Just as I was exiting the ring road... In Dartford...

Wendy – That's exactly where little Shlomo was hit by a car.

Charlie – So, it's him for sure!

Alex – Apparently...

Charlie – We wanted to adopt a child, and you run him over.

Alex – But come on... I didn't know!

Chris – If he had known, he probably would have preferred to run over someone else...

Charlie – I'm sure he did it on purpose!

Chris – This story is becoming completely unbelievable.

Alex – Yes... If this were a play, we'd say the author is exaggerating...

Janis – It's true, it's quite a strange coincidence.

Charlie – You know what they say. There are no coincidences, only appointments.

Chris – So, in your opinion, this child had an appointment today to be run over by his adoptive father?

Alex – If I hadn't run him over, I would have arrived on time for that appointment. We wouldn't have had to play this little comedy. We wouldn't have had all these complications. And Wendy and Janis would have never revealed their secrets to us.

Wendy's mobile rings.

Wendy – I need to answer. It's probably about Shlomo... (*Wendy answers the call*) Yes...?

Alex – Shlomo... I'm not sure I can get used to it... Isn't there a nickname?

Charlie – What could be a nickname for Shlomo...?

Chris – Momo?

Wendy – Alright... Thank you... (*She puts her phone away*) Everything is fine, he's out of danger...

Alex – Phew... That's good... I would never forgive myself for causing a child's death.

Silence.

Wendy – Now it's up to you to decide if you want to adopt him or not...

Alex – I admit, initially, I wasn't very enthusiastic about the adoption idea.

Charlie – Because you don't want children?

Alex – Yes... And also...

Chris – Because he cheated on you with the plumber.

Charlie – I see... (*To Chris*) And I suppose you don't have three children.

Chris – Well... That was before... Before my divorce... And my orientation change...

Charlie – Career change, you mean?

Chris – Yes, that too...

Alex – I'm truly sorry...

Chris – Don't worry, it was just a one-night stand...

Alex – What happened today made me think, Charlie. I've realised how important this child is to you.

Janis – Especially now that we know he's already a part of the family. And you too, Wendy.

Alex – So, if you're willing to forgive me... Let's leave it up to fate. If it's important to you, I'm ready to embark on this adventure with you.

Wendy – Even if this child is over ten, called Shlomo, and was raised in a camp by jihadists in Syria?

Alex – It could be worse...

Chris – Oh really? Like what, for example?

Alex – I don't know... But I'm sure it could be worse.

Janis – Actually, that's true... How did the parents of a child named Shlomo end up in a camp in Syria?

Wendy – That's another story that I might tell you one day.

Chris – I admit, I'd be curious to hear it...

Alex – What matters is that this child could be your nephew, or something like that...

Charlie – And if we go back far enough, after all, John, Mouloud, or Shlomo, we're all from the same family, right?

Chris – Well then, I'll leave you... as a family.

Charlie holds her arm gently, with a tender gesture.

Charlie – Wait... *(They both seem a bit flustered)* Despite everything, I won't forget what you did for me...

Alex senses the emotional tension between the two women and believes it's a good time to intervene.

Alex – You mean for us...

Charlie – Don't you want to be the godmother?

Chris – The godmother of a little bearded delinquent who's already stealing scooters to run away from his orphanage? It's always been my dream...

Alex – Provided they let us adopt him, of course...

Wendy – I'll give you the approval for adoption, of course.

Janis – Besides, no one else would have wanted that kid.

Charlie – Thank you.

Wendy – I'm becoming both a mother and a grandmother.

Charlie – And I'm becoming the daughter of a second-division football team and the mother of a little Shlomo.

Alex – We'll call him Momo, it's versatile.

Chris – So this time, we can truly say it.

All – All's well that ends well!

Janis – With all that going on, I really missed my appointment with the eye doctor...

Fade out

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
Best and Breakfast
Casket for two
Cheaters
Check to the kings
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but stable
Euro Star
Four stars
Fragile, handle with care
Friday the 13th
Heads or Tails
Him and Her
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Last chance encounter
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
One marriage out of two
Preliminaries
Quarantine
Running on Empty
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Perfect Son-in-Law
The Smell of Money
The Window across the courtyard
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!

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