

La Comédiathèque



Save Our Savings

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Translation by the author

Six mysterious characters are stranded on an island due to a ferry strike. They all have a good reason to want to return to the mainland as soon as possible. They board a fishing boat operated by an improvised smuggler. But the price to pay for this crossing will be higher than expected... A humorous fable about the flaws of our society.

Characters

Max
Diana
Mildred
Charles
Dominique
Amanda
Mary

The roles of Max and Dominique can be played
by either male or female actors interchangeably.

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Scene 1

The deck of a fishing boat. In the background, a rudder. Somewhere, a lifebuoy with the boat's name "Enterprise". Two deck chairs are placed in front. Max, wearing a captain's cap, unfolds a map to study it. He looks at the map upside down, then turns it right side up and looks around, trying to orient himself. Diana, dressed like a businesswoman, arrives, dragging a luxurious suitcase with wheels behind her. After a slight hesitation, she addresses Max.

Diana – Did you check the marine weather this morning?

Max hastily folds the map.

Max – Yes, and they're forecasting fog.

Diana – What a stupid password...

Max – Passwords are always a bit dumb.

Diana – The question is... why a password?

Max – In these times... if you knew how many people would be willing to do anything to leave this island as soon as possible. Are you sure no one followed you?

Diana – I don't think so...

Max – Good... But I still ask you not to speak too loudly. From the deck of a boat, you know, voices carry very far. And it's not impossible that we're being observed...

Diana – Don't you think you're overdoing it a bit?

Max – It's my duty to ensure the safety of the passengers. You know the formula: "Captain is the sole master on board, after God." And since I don't believe much in God...

Diana looks around.

Diana – So you're the... captain of this boat?

Max – That's me, yes. But please, call me Max.

Diana – Max? That name sounds vaguely familiar (*Coldly*) Diana Swindlemore.

Max – Diana, very well.

Diana – You were talking about a yacht... I wasn't expecting... this.

Max – Unfortunately, I had to leave my yacht in dry dock for maintenance. A friend lent me this one. But I assure you...

Diana – It looks a lot like a fishing boat, doesn't it?

Max – My friend is a fisherman, indeed. Well... big game fishing, of course. Tuna... or swordfish.

Diana – Tuna? Judging by the smell, it seems more like cod fishing...

Max – It must be from the harbour... Once we're out at sea, all you'll smell is the refreshing sea breeze.

Diana – And are you sure this tub is really fit for open sea?

Max – We're only about thirty kilometres from the mainland... We can't really talk about high seas.

Diana – Well, beggars can't be choosers... How long does the crossing take?

Max – I'd say about an hour, no more.

Diana – Okay...

Max – Two hours at most, if we face headwinds.

Diana – Headwinds? Don't tell me it's a sailboat... You're charging me enough for diesel as it is.

Max – Don't worry, it's definitely a motorboat.

Diana – Can I see my cabin?

Max – Your cabin?

Diana – Oh, okay.

Max – There are two berths down below. But I must warn you, it's quite basic.

Diana – Please tell me there are toilets, at least...

Max – Oh yes, definitely.

Diana – Good...

Max – I told you, it's just a one or two-hour crossing. We're not going to spend the night. (*Lowering his voice*) Well, I hope not...

Diana – Sorry?

Max – No, I was just saying... If you want to relax a bit on the deck while waiting.

Diana – I'm not sure I can relax that easily. I suppose you don't serve cocktails either.

Max – Sorry, the bartender took the day off. But please, have a seat in this deck chair.

Diana – Thank you, I'll stand. When do we set sail?

Max – It's a motorboat.

Diana – Yes, I got it. Setting sail was just a figure of speech.

Max – Well... we'll set off as soon as everyone is here.

Diana – Everyone? What do you mean, everyone?

Max – The others.

Diana – Ah, because there are other passengers?

Max – With the unexpected strike of the ferry company, many people are stranded on this island. They're all desperately looking for a way to get back to the mainland. At any cost...

Diana – So you've improvised as a smuggler...

Max – I'm just trying to be helpful.

Diana – For a fee...

Max – You didn't have to accept... By the way, if you don't mind, I'd prefer to be paid in advance. And in cash...

She rummages in her bag and hands him a few bills.

Diana – Here's your money... (*Ironically*) Captain...

Max – Thank you.

Diana – It feels like we're in a bad remake of an American film noir.

Max – You think so?

Diana – *To Have and Have Not*, for example. Except you don't look anything like Humphrey Bogart.

Max – And you don't resemble Lauren Bacall at all... I'm going to start the engine. If you need me, just whistle for me. Can you whistle, Diana?

He leaves without waiting for a response. Diana's phone rings and she answers it.

Diana – Yes, Mr. Director, we just signed the contract. I was about to call you, actually. Yes, but I'm having some trouble finding a way to get back to the mainland. The sailors of the ferry company are on strike. What can you do? Now, even in tax havens, strikes can happen. No, don't worry, I'll be there tomorrow morning for the board meeting. With the contract signed, yes, I promise you... I know your re-election to the board depends on it... And the shareholders are expecting results... No, I won't let you down, Mr. Director...

Amanda arrives, looking like a starlet or call girl, dressed in a sexy but rather vulgar manner. She carries a suitcase, too, but it's more ordinary and worn out, like a backpack covered in stickers evoking countless travel destinations. Diana, completely engrossed in her phone conversation, doesn't notice her arrival.

Diana – Yes, I'm also bringing back all the funds that were in the secret account you asked me to close. In cash, yes, as agreed... In the hidden compartment of my suitcase, that's right... So in a way, it's true that if we can avoid customs... Listen, I found a spot on some sort of trawler. It's quite picturesque... That's it, I'll tell you about it. Have a good day, Mr. Director.

She puts away her phone.

Amanda – Hey. Have you checked the weather this morning?

Diana finally notices her presence.

Diana (*still distracted*) – No, why?

Amanda – Sorry, I thought...

Diana – Oh yes, well... Excuse me... I think they're forecasting a storm.

Amanda – I thought it was fog, actually...

Diana – Yes, well, fog, storm... who cares, right?

Amanda – Are you the boss around here?

Diana – The boss?

Amanda – I booked a spot on this trawler. Where's the skipper?

Diana – The skipper?

Amanda – The captain!

Diana – Oh yes, well... He's probably getting the engine ready, I think.

Amanda – I'll wait for him here, then. (*Extending her hand*) I'm Amanda. And you?

Diana (*without shaking the offered hand*) – Diana Swindlemore.

Amanda – It's a stroke of luck we managed to find this taxi, otherwise, we'd be stuck here like seals on an ice floe. A surprise strike, just like that, without notice. It shouldn't be allowed.

Diana – Well, if they had given notice, it wouldn't be a surprise strike anymore...

Amanda – You're quite clever, you know... So you're in a rush to leave too?

Diana – Sorry?

Amanda – I mean, you're also eager to leave.

Diana – Yes. You could say that...

Amanda – Do you have an urgent appointment? Or do you have something to hide... I would also much rather avoid customs...

Diana – You certainly don't have to make small talk with me, you know.

Amanda – We're going to spend three or four hours together, we might as well chat a bit. It'll pass the time, won't it?

Diana – Three or four hours? The captain told me it's just a little over an hour!

Amanda – He told me half a day, I think.

Diana – In that case, it's about time to leave. If we want to arrive before nightfall. I don't know what he's waiting for.

Amanda – Probably, the other passengers, I guess.

Diana – Do you know how many of us there are exactly?

Amanda – Around ten, I suppose.

Diana – But come on, that's not possible! We'll never fit ten people on this boat!

Amanda – It seems like you've never taken the subway between 7 and 8 in the morning.

Diana – Well, you might be surprised, but no. I've never taken the subway.

Amanda – Do you work in the countryside?

Diana – No, but I only travel by car with a chauffeur.

Amanda – I see... And what's your profession then?

Diana – I work in finance. I'm not asking about yours...

Amanda – You can! I have nothing to hide, you know...

Diana – You mean... in your line of work, you have nothing to hide?

Max returns and notices Amanda.

Max – Ah! You must be Amanda.

Amanda – Yes... How did you recognize me?

Max – I don't know... Male intuition, I suppose. Let's just say... you really match your name.

Amanda – Thanks... And what's your nickname?

Max – Max.

Amanda – Ah, yes... That suits you well too.

Max – Oh yeah? And why is that?

Amanda – I don't know... You seem to handle things to the max... Right, Captain?

Diana – Well... Now that introductions are out of the way, maybe we could raise the anchor.

Max – It's probably just a figure of speech, of course, but know that in a port, we never anchor. We simply cast off the lines...

Diana – Alright, let's make things clear, Captain: I didn't come here to get a boating license. And if I could have done otherwise, I would have taken a plane. So when are we taking off?

Max – As soon as the last passengers arrive, I promise you...

Diana – And when will they arrive? I don't have all day for this! I'm expected in Paris tomorrow morning.

Max – Ah, right on time, here they are.

Mildred arrives, a very elegant lady, accompanied by Charles, a sort of gigolo or handsome older man, who carries both their suitcases.

Mildred– Is this the "Entreprise"?

Max – It's not exactly the password, but let's forget about that detail...

Mildred– I made a reservation earlier. Under the name Crook.

Max – Crook, perfectly. It sounds like a code name, I must say, quite amusing.

Mildred – No, it's not a code name, why?

Max – Mr. and Mrs. Crook, very well.

Amanda – You can say their profiles match their surname...

Mildred– It's Mr. Crook's name, not mine.

Charles – We're not married. Not yet...

Amanda (*to Mildred*) – I see, you were hesitant to become Mrs. Crook...

Max – In any case, welcome aboard!

Mildred– Do we need to check in our suitcases?

Diana – Be careful, he might charge you for excess baggage.

Max – We're not on Ryanair... Let's consider them as carry-on luggage.

Mildred– Charles, you can put the suitcases over here.

Charles – Right away, my love.

He places the suitcases in a corner.

Max – Um... I don't think Mr. was on the passenger list... At least, I haven't collected his fare yet.

Mildred– Just count him as carry-on luggage too...

Max – I'm not sure if...

Charles – Come on, darling, I'm not a suitcase.

Mildred– Yes, that's true... And yet, don't we say "as dumb as a suitcase"? Just kidding, Captain. I'll pay for both of us. As usual...

Diana – Since we're all here, we can go. We can do the introductions later.

Max – I'm still missing one passenger. But never mind. I think he won't come anymore. He was actually my first client. It was even for him that I chartered this boat in the first place.

Diana – That's right... He should have been on time. And if we could get things started quickly...

Max's phone rings.

Max – Hello... Yes... We were just about to set sail, actually... In five minutes, really? Alright... And do you remember the password? That's it... and I think they're announcing rain... Okay, then we'll wait for you, but hurry up...

He puts away his phone.

Diana – What now?

Max – This will be the last one, I promise. He's coming right now. We can't leave without him: he paid in advance...

Mary, a young woman, rather reserved, wearing a crucifix around her neck and visibly pregnant, arrives out of breath.

Mary – Are you going to the mainland?

Max – Yes... But technically, we're full...

Mary – As you can see, I'm pregnant.

Diana – All the more reason not to board with us! Can you imagine if she gives birth during the crossing?

Mary – I was planning to take the ferry today. I'm expected at the clinic over there, on the other side. There's no proper maternity ward here, you understand?

Mildred – Tax havens are rarely known for the quality of their public services.

Max – The thing is... I have safety regulations to follow.

Mary – In the name of the Lord! Please...

Charles – Perhaps we can bend the rules a little. Given her condition...

Mary – I have money. I'll pay you.

Max – In that case... We can't just leave this poor woman to give birth on the dock.

Mary – Thank you! God will reward you... What's your name, Captain?

Max – Max.

Mary – If you safely bring us to our destination, I promise to name this child Max, whether it's a boy or a girl.

Max – I'm truly flattered. But don't forget to settle the fare for the crossing as well.

Mary – Of course. How much is it?

Max – Five hundred euros per person.

Mary – Per person?

Amanda – You're not going to charge her for the bun in the oven, are you?

Max – No, no, don't worry. The crossing is complimentary for the baby. For you, it's five hundred euros.

Mary – Ah, well... That's quite a lot, isn't it?

Max – It's for the fuel.

Charles – I didn't think petrol was that expensive in tax havens.

Dominique, a handsome and mysterious figure like a mafia member, arrives.

Dominique – Hello, Captain. Dominique. I'm the one who just called you.

Max – Dominique, exactly... Is that the only small suitcase you have?

Dominique – Yes, I'm used to traveling light. But I didn't know there would be other passengers... (*Greetings to the group*) Ladies and gentlemen...

Max – While we're at it, I thought it would be a shame not to let them enjoy the trip too. With this strike...

Charles – Hello, sir. But I believe we've already met, haven't we?

Mildred – Be quiet, you fool.

Charles retreats and steps back.

Charles – I must be confusing you with someone else...

Dominique – I'm often mistaken for someone else. It's the tragedy of my life...

Max – Please, take a seat... Sorry, I didn't plan enough deck chairs for everyone.

Dominique (*pointing to Mary*) – I suggest we reserve one for this lady. Due to her condition...

Diana – That's right... And the rest of us can take turns sitting down.

Dominique – I would gladly give up my seat if you wish, dear lady.

Diana – Thank you... There's at least one gentleman on this boat.

Max – There are also two bunks downstairs... but I must warn you, it smells a bit fishy.

Dominique – Now that everyone is here, we can get going.

Max – Very well. Please excuse me. I'll return to my post.

Mary (*crossing herself*) – All right... By the grace of God!

Max takes his place behind the helm and seems a bit uncertain of what to do next.

Max – All ahead full!

Dominique – But discreetly, if possible. I remind you that normally, before leaving this very welcoming island to return to the mainland, we're supposed to go through customs...

Charles – Very welcoming for the wealthy, in any case...

Diana – The last thing we need is to get arrested by the coastguards upon arriving in France. Personally, I have nothing to hide, but still...

Mildred – Of course... No one here has anything to hide, right?

Max – Don't worry, we'll make a discreet exit. (*He pulls a lever, but seems rather surprised by the result, which is a boat siren sound.*) Sorry, that's not at all what I wanted to do...

Charles – Well, for a discreet departure, it's quite a success...

Mary – Are you the only one piloting this ship, Captain?

Max – It's a small boat, you know, one pilot is more than enough.

Mary – Usually, there's a co-pilot.

Amanda – At least in airplanes, that's how it is. If the pilot has an attack, the co-pilot takes over the controls.

Max – But we're not in an airplane. What could happen to us?

Amanda – That's what the passengers on the Titanic also said...

Max – And look! We can see the coast from here.

The others look out towards the sea.

Charles – I don't see anything...

Mildred – Neither do I...

Dominique – Well, they did forecast fog.

Diana – As long as it's not a storm...

Dominique (*whispering*) – Or a tsunami...

Diana – Do you have any specific information about that?

Dominique – No, no, not at all...

Max pulls another lever, and this time an engine rumbling sound is heard.

Max – Alright! This time, we're off!

Blackout.

Scene 2

Max is still at the helm. Dominique hasn't let go of his briefcase. Diana and Amanda are dozing off on the deck chairs. Charles, Mildred and Mary are sitting on their suitcases, waiting patiently.

Mildred (to Charles) – You shouldn't be sitting on that suitcase, it'll damage it...

Charles – But Mildred...

Mildred– Could you stop arguing with everything I say? It's annoying!

Charles – I'm sorry... (*He takes a deep breath and stands up.*) Anyway, the weather is beautiful.

Mildred – Yes... We'll get some sun. (*To Marie*) It'll do you good, my dear, as you look a bit pale... How are you feeling?

Mary – How long have we been sailing?

Charles – A little over two hours, right?

Mildred– And we still can't see the coast...

Charles – But look over there!

Mildred– Ah yes, perhaps...

Mary – I'm starting to feel seasick.

Mildred – It's not advisable to take a boat when you're pregnant.

Charles – Bless her heart... We can't always do what we want. (*Trying to be kind*) Do you know who the father is?

Mary gives him a disapproving look.

Mildred – Charles, those are not the kind of questions to ask a respectable woman...

Charles – I'm sorry, I misspoke. I meant... The father will be delighted! Is it a boy or a girl?

Mildred – Charles, the father is always a boy! Even with same-sex marriage, that won't change. You still need the little seed...

Charles – I was talking about the child, my dear. A boy or a girl... That's usually what we ask in these cases, right?

Mildred – A boy or a girl... Of course... I was joking, obviously. Poor Charles... So, is it a boy or a girl then?

Mary – I don't know... I prefer to be surprised.

Mildred– You're right. I didn't want to know either. Besides, back in my time, we didn't have a choice. We took whatever came, and that was it.

Mary – Children are a gift from God.

Mildred– Yes... He gave me seven. All girls. (*Lower, to herself*) If I could have drowned one or two... But in the end, it was my husband who died. Drowned, as it happens. Otherwise, I don't know how many more girls the Good Lord would have given me... Believe me, my dear, in those days, widowhood was the best form of contraception...

Charles – Oh yes... It was a different time... There was no internet yet. The television was black and white, but the world was already in colour.

Mildred– What a world we live in... Soon, we'll be able to choose the gender of our child, their hair colour, their IQ... (*To Marie*) Do you find that normal? (*The other doesn't react*) What do you think??

Mary – It makes me want to vomit.

Mildred – Believe me, if in our time we could have chosen our children, today the whole world would be populated with tall blonds with Einstein's IQ.

Charles – As the Nazis wished.

Mildred – Yes... And you probably wouldn't be here to talk about it, my poor Charles.

Charles – Fortunately, we were the ones who won the war.

Mildred – Did you win the war, huh? My poor thing... You don't even know how to kill a mosquito in a bedroom, and you want to liberate France from the Nazis?

Charles – And you, Mr. Dominique, what do you do for a living?

Dominique – Dominique.

Charles – Dominique?

Dominique – Dominique, that's my name. I'm Corsican.

Charles – Ah! Nice to meet you. I'm Charles. And what do you do for a living, Dominique?

Mildred – Don't be so nosy, Charles. The gentleman just answered you: he's Corsican... Don't you know that Corsicans speak very little, and generally don't do anything for a living? Especially not work...

Diana and Amanda wake up from their doze.

Diana – Sorry, I dozed off a bit.

Amanda – I think you even snored at the beginning...

Diana – That didn't stop you from sleeping, apparently. Are we there yet?

Amanda – They would have woken us up, I suppose.

Diana – Captain! Are we still far away?

Max – Don't worry, we're getting closer.

Amanda – But we still can't see the coast...

Diana (*looking at her watch*) – This is unbelievable! We've been sailing for two hours and still can't see the coast!

Max – It's a small boat, you know, and we're heavily loaded...

Diana – Whose fault is that? You overbooked to line your pockets!

Max – I just wanted to be helpful...

Mildred – Sure... Taking advantage of the world's misery...

Max – The world's misery... Let's not exaggerate, shall we?

Mildred – We're always someone else's poor, you know. Isn't that right, Charles?

Dominique – Are you sure this is the right way, at least?

Max – What do you mean?

Dominique – The mainland! Are you sure it's this way?

Max – Sure? Absolutely! What do you think? I have my compass!

Dominique – Considering the time we've been sailing, shouldn't we see the coast by now?

Max – Well... I can't quite tell... (*Lower, to himself*) It's my first time doing this...

Diana – What?

Max – No, I mean... It's my first time making this crossing with this boat! Usually, I use my yacht. The engine is much more powerful...

Mildred – It looks like the weather is turning, doesn't it?

Charles – Yes, it's turning into a storm.

Max – It's just a bit of fog, don't worry.

Amanda – Did you check the marine forecast this morning?

Max – Yes, and they forecasted fog...

Amanda – I'm not talking about the password! Did you really check the marine forecast?

Max – Ah, uh... No... Why would I?

Mary – I feel seasick...

Amanda – You should have checked the weather, at least!

Max – Make up your mind! Everyone was in a hurry to leave, and now I should have checked the weather!

Dominique – Let me see that compass.

Max – Trust reigns... I know how to read a compass.

Dominique takes the compass from Max's hand.

Dominique – Where is the coast?

Max – To the east. Well... northeast..

Dominique – East or north?

Max – Let's say northeast. But you know, the coast is vast. We won't miss it.

Dominique – Unless we've completely gone the other way..

Dominique moves around with the compass, orienting it in different directions.

Dominique – On a compass, the needle is supposed to point in the same direction, right? Even when you turn it around.

Max – Obviously.

Dominique – Then why does the needle move with the compass on this one?

Diana – This is a joke! It's for a hidden camera, right?

Max – Let me see... (*He takes back the compass and turns it in all directions.*) Oh shit, you're right. It seems like the needle is stuck.

Dominique – So we don't know where we're going...

Max – Just before we left, it slipped from my hands and fell on the floor. It must be broken...

Diana – Tell me this isn't true!

Charles – We could have navigated using the sun, but with this fog, we can't see it anymore...

Mary – I think I'm going to throw up.

Amanda – Better do it somewhere behind because with the wind... we'll get it all in our faces.

Dominique – It's true, the wind is getting stronger.

Mary hurriedly exits.

Diana – You're crazy!

Max – I'm sorry... I really thought we were going in the right direction. But it's true that... I was also wondering why we couldn't see the coast yet.

Dominique – Do you have your license?

Max – Yes, of course! Like everyone else...

Dominique – I mean your boating license.

Max – Well, actually... I'm more used to sailing on my yacht.

Dominique – And...?

Max – On my yacht, I'm not the one usually piloting it. I have a crew for that...

Dominique – So you don't have a boating license, and you know nothing about navigating at sea.

Max – I didn't think it was so complicated. On clear days, you can almost see the French coast from this tax haven...

Mildred– Oh my God... We're lost... We're all going to die...

Max – Let's not be dramatic.

Mary returns.

Mary – Oh, I feel better now...

Charles – You think so?

Mary – What's going on? You all look worried!

Diana – The captain doesn't have his boating license, and we're lost at sea, that's what's going on.

Charles – Oh, this time, I think I really see something on the horizon.

Mary – We're saved!

Mildred– Are you sure?

Amanda – Oh yes... But it's strange, it looks like the coast is getting closer to us at a phenomenal speed...

They all look towards the back of the room, representing the horizon line.

Dominique – That's not the coast... It's an enormous wave!

Max – No... I've never seen anything like it...

Diana – The wave is coming straight at us.

Mary – If you know a prayer, now is the time to say it...

Blackout.

Scene 3

They are all there, huddled together, petrified.

Charles – I thought we were all going to perish.

Max – Yes, we almost got swallowed up.

Mildred – But the wave passed under the boat without capsizing it.

Mary – It's a miracle! Thank God!

Diana – I was so scared! (*Under her breath*) I think I even had an orgasm...

Mary – For once, my seasickness is gone.

Diana – The last time I felt like this was with my boss. On a roller coaster at the fair.

Mildred – Fortunately, there were no more waves behind that one.

Dominique – And now the sea is calm again.

Charles – So, we might still have a chance to get out of this...

They start to relax a bit and separate from each other.

Mary – We must keep hope.

Amanda – If we went in the wrong direction, we can simply turn back, right?

Dominique – Turning back at sea is not exactly the same as on a highway, you know.

Mary – The sky is clearing up. There's even a rainbow... It's a sign from God!

Dominique – Well, now that we can see the sun, we can try to orient ourselves. Since the sun sets in the west, we just need to go the opposite way.

Diana – So what are you waiting for, fool!

Max – Unfortunately, it's not that simple...

Diana – And why is that? Don't tell me the rudder is defective too!

Max – No, but we're almost out of fuel...

Diana – What? But you collected money from all of us before we set sail to fill up the tank!

Max – We've already covered quite a distance... and I only filled the tank halfway.

Dominique – Halfway?

Max – I thought it would be enough for a two-hour crossing...

Diana – Is this a joke?

Max – I'm afraid not, unfortunately.

Mildred – Here we are, all aboard a leaky boat, piloted by an inexperienced sailor, and we'll soon run out of fuel.

Dominique – Did I hear correctly... a leaky boat?

Mildred – I went down to the hold earlier, looking for a restroom that I never found, by the way. And it seemed like there was a big puddle at the back.

Amanda – Captain...?

Max – It's just a small leak. Nothing serious.

Charles – And what do you plan to do, call a plumber?

Diana – What we really need is to call for help.

Max – Let's not panic too quickly.

Amanda – Because you think our situation doesn't deserve a little panic?

Diana dials a number on her cellphone. Dominique exits.

Diana – There's no signal...

Amanda – Of course, there's no signal! We're lost in the middle of the sea!

Max – Lost... Let's not exaggerate.

Diana – I'm going to kill him.

Amanda – I suppose you don't have an onboard radio either?

Max – I haven't seen anything like that, unfortunately. There's just an old transistor.

Charles – Are you sure this wreck is really yours?

Max – Let's say... I borrowed it from a friend and didn't have time to notify him properly.

Diana – And on top of everything, it's a stolen boat!

Dominique returns.

Dominique – Indeed, there's a leak at the back. If we don't start bailing out water immediately, the boat will sink within an hour or two.

Mary – This can't be true... Tell me it's a nightmare, and I'll wake up...

Dominique – We'll take turns bailing out water. But in the meantime, we would better unload any unnecessary cargo from the boat.

They all look at each other with tension.

Max – Maybe, we could start with the suitcases...

Mildred – The suitcases?

Amanda – Are you kidding?

Dominique – That's out of the question.

Mildred – Definitely not mine, anyway...

Diana (*to Max*) – How about we throw you overboard first, Captain...

All eyes, menacingly, turn towards Max.

Blackout.

Scene 4

They are all present, except Max and Dominique. They appear overwhelmed.

Mildred – And to think that instead of dying of thirst on this wreck, I could be lounging in the jacuzzi of my five-star hotel on that paradise island we just left, sipping an exotic cocktail.

Charles – It's true... In the end, we weren't in a hurry to leave. There was nothing so urgent to do.

Mildred – Speak for yourself! You never have anything to do! I had an appointment this morning with my surgeon in Paris...

Charles – Well, it's just a minor liposuction. Not open-heart surgery...

Mildred – A minor liposuction? Have you ever had liposuction done, then?

Charles – No, not that kind of liposuction, at least...

Mildred – We'll talk about it when you know what it is, then!

Charles – I'm sorry...

Mildred – My poor thing... Sometimes I wonder why we're together...

Charles (*under his breath*) – Yes, me too...

Mildred – And you're responding as well?

Diana – Will you both shut up!

Mildred – Hey, who does she think she is?

Diana – If I were you, Charles, I would have thrown her overboard already.

Amanda – That would be one less burden.

Diana – But of course, you're too weak for that, my poor thing.

Charles – I would appreciate it if everyone stopped calling me "my poor thing." It's starting to get annoying.

Diana – Sorry... But I suppose if you had money, you wouldn't have to put up with that shrew.

Amanda – In the end, you and I do the same job, don't we, Charles? The oldest profession in the world. But I do it as a temp, and you have a permanent position...

Mildred – For now, he's still on probation...

Charles (*to Amanda*) – In any case, stop calling me "my poor thing." Do I call you "my fatty"?

Amanda – But it's this little squirt who will go overboard!

Amanda moves threateningly towards Charles. Mildred intervenes. Charles cowardly takes refuge behind her.

Mildred – Back off! If anyone's going to throw this little twerp overboard, it's me.

Max returns with Dominique, ending the confrontation.

Dominique – The engine just stopped. We ran out of fuel.

Mary – Jesus, Mary, Joseph... We're all going to die...

Max – I'm truly sorry... I thought half a tank would be more than enough.

Diana – And what were you planning to do with the rest of the money? We each paid you five hundred euros! Wasn't that enough for a full tank?

Max – It's a long story...

Dominique – And maybe it's not the right time to tell it.

Diana – Mr. Dominique is right. We'd better focus on finding a solution, don't you think?

Amanda – A solution? Seriously?

Diana – Let's pretend we're playing a game! An escape game!

Amanda – What?

Mary – One of those group games they do in corporate seminars to strengthen bonds between employees. We have to escape from a place where we're trapped by finding a way out together.

Charles – And what do you think we've been doing? I've been focusing for an hour. I'm at my limit here.

Amanda – If it was just about focusing, we wouldn't still be here on this wreck, waiting to sink with it...

Mildred (to *Diana*) – But if you have an idea to get us out of here, Miss Know-It-All, feel free to share it...

Diana – I don't know... The phones aren't working.. What if we throw a message in a bottle into the sea?

Charles – Well, congratulations...

Dominique – And what would you say in that message to help the rescuers locate us?

Diana – It was just an idea...

Amanda – A stupid idea, that's what it was..

Diana – Maybe, but in brainstorming, you shouldn't censor yourself. Sometimes, it's after saying twenty stupid things that that you come up with the right idea.

Amanda – In that case, I think you've already exceeded your quota a long time ago. Now would be the perfect time for you to come up with a brilliant idea.

Dominique – Come back down to earth, Diana. We're not in a corporate seminar here. We're on a boat about to sink!

Amanda – If we lose this life, we won't have another one. It'll be game over, and that's it.

Mary – What if we try a collective prayer? Maybe God will come to our aid...

General consternation.

Mildred – Sure, and why not a procession?

Charles – Or a human sacrifice...

Max – Okay, we said we had twenty stupid ideas...

Dominique – Unless God can turn water into diesel...

Max – Yes... Then we just need to help ourselves from the hold. Because it's already up to our knees... By the way, someone should go back to bailing out water...

No reaction.

Charles – We should hoist a distress signal, at least. In case a police helicopter flies over us, so they know we're in distress.

Mary – Yes, let's do that...

Awkward silence.

Mildred – On the other hand, not all of us are in a very regular situation...

Diana – Come on, we're not illegal immigrants either.

Mildred – Well, if the police asked us to open our suitcases...

Amanda – I have nothing to hide.

Mildred – Oh, really? Then open your suitcase and show us what's inside...

Amanda – I don't need orders from you.

Max – When you leave a tax haven on a fishing boat, you're not necessarily bringing fish in your luggage, that's for sure.

Amanda – So what should we do? Would you prefer we all drown?

Moment of hesitation.

Dominique – Okay. I'll take care of the distress flag.

He exits.

Mary – I'm starting to get very thirsty.

Charles – Dying of thirst while surrounded by water. What an absurd situation!

Max – "Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink"...

Diana – Is that all you find absurd in this situation?

Mildred– We didn't ask for your opinion.

Max – Don't worry, I have a few bottles in the hold.

Charles – You really did think of everything, Captain...

Diana – How many bottles?

Max – Two.

Mildred – Large ones?

Max – 33 centilitres each.

Charles – Ah yes, that's so reassuring...

Diana – At 500 euros a ticket, you could have at least provided some refreshments...

Amanda – Two 33-centilitre bottles make 66 centilitres.

Mildred – Bravo, at least you can count...

Amanda – There are seven of us. That's not even 10 centilitres each.

Mary – We'll have to ration it. I think pregnant women should have priority.

Diana – Oh really? And why is that?

Charles – And why, as a pregnant woman, would you choose to spend your vacation in this banana republic? What were you even doing there, really?

Mary – I didn't ask you any questions, did I? And what about you? Were you on your honeymoon? On an island the size of three football fields, but with five banks per square meter..

Silence.

Max – By the way, did you know that the highest point of the micro-state we just left is only three meters above sea level?

Amanda – No, and we don't care.

Mildred – We didn't come to this tax haven to go skiing. We come to stash our cash.

Diana – In Switzerland, you can do both.

Dominique returns.

Dominique – I hoisted the distress flag. But if we don't want to sink before any help arrives, someone really needs to go back to bailing out water.

Max – We said pregnant women are exempt, so it's your turn, Mildred.

Mildred – Charles will do it for me.

Charles – And why is that?

Mildred – Because I'm the one supporting you, idiot! That's why!

Charles – I'll go... Out of gallantry... But I don't like being called an idiot either.

Mildred – My poor thing...

Charles leaves, containing his response.

Max – If we manage to survive, I promise to refund you half the price of the crossing.

Diana – And he's making fun of us too! If we ever get out of this, you scoundrel, you'll be dealing with my lawyer!

Max – Are you sure?

Diana – What are you insinuating?

Max – We all have a good reason to be here on this boat. And to want to reach the mainland without going through customs. All of us, including you...

Diana – How can you say that?

Max – Otherwise, you would never have agreed to pay such a sum for the crossing. And you wouldn't be so attached to your suitcase...

Dominique – Let me remind you that the ferry company is on strike.

Max – The strike... That's just an excuse... It looks more like the rats are leaving the ship... taking the silverware with them.

Dominique – If only we could leave this damn ship...

Max – Ship, that's a figure of speech. I mean this island. This haven of peace for stateless billionaires. Why were you all in such a rush to leave?

Diana – That's none of your business... We just wanted to get back to the mainland as quickly as possible. The ferries were on strike, so we boarded the first departing boat...

Mary – When you're on the Titanic, you have to choose your lifeboat carefully... Unfortunately, it seems like we made the wrong choice...

Max – We're all in the same boat, indeed. But not for the same reasons. And I'd be curious to know which of these suitcases contains the most money... Not mine, that's for sure...

Diana – Even if you have nothing compromising in your luggage, Captain, I remind you that acting as a smuggler is a crime.

Mary – Especially when you don't even have a boating license.

Charles – It's true, if we're rescued by the coastguard, we could get into trouble...

Mildred – Well, I hope we won't be rescued by pirates.

Dominique – At least, with them, we could probably make a deal.

Mildred – And we wouldn't end up in jail.

Mary – If it's to end up at the bottom of the sea, eaten by sharks...

Embarrassed silence.

Mildred – So what do we do? Besides bailing out water...

Dominique – What do you want us to do? We're out of fuel. We can only drift and hope that the currents or winds bring us back to the coast.

Mary – Is that all you're proposing?

Dominique – Hey, I'm not the captain of this boat, okay? You should ask the idiot who led us out here, in the middle of the sea, on the brink of shipwreck.

All eyes turn to Max, who deems it wiser to keep a low profile.

Mildred – I'm starting to feel hungry.

Max – Sorry, I didn't plan for any meal trays. The crossing was supposed to last only a few hours. There's only an opened pack of biscuits in the hold.

Mildred – I think the larger ones should be prioritized. After all, they need to eat more than others.

Mary – Unless they need to lose weight. And by the way, I'm bigger than you, just so you know!

Mildred – When we're done with the biscuits, we might end up devouring each other. Like on the Raft of the Medusa.

Mary – That's right. We'll draw straws to determine who gets eaten first. Just like in the song.

Max – What song?

Mary – It's a French nursery rhyme...

Dominique – Bloody French...!

Mildred glances at Mary's rounded belly.

Mildred – In the song, it's the youngest one that ends up being eaten...

Mary – Let's hope I don't give birth on this boat.

An oppressive silence follows.

Dominique – Still, Max, there's something I don't understand.

Max – Oh, really?

Dominique – Now, it's my turn to ask you a question.

Max – Go ahead, I'm listening.

Dominique – There are more effective ways to make money than piloting a fishing boat without a boat license.

Diana – Especially when you're already very wealthy, as you claim to be.

Dominique – What made you improvise as a smuggler when you can't even pilot a small boat?

Max – I told you, it's a long story.

Dominique – Given the situation we're in, we have nothing else to do but listen.

Max – As you know, the ferry company that usually connects this island to the mainland is on strike...

Mildred – Yes, we noticed that, otherwise... why would we end up in this mess?

Max – The employees went on strike after learning about the company's sale to a financial group, which announced a major downsizing plan.

Diana – And what do you have to do with all this?

Max – I am the owner of that ferry company. Well, I was...

Diana – So, it's you?

Mildred – You know him?

Diana – Let's just say... I've heard about this acquisition.

Dominique – And why did you sell the company?

Max – I made some bad investments. Followed by a few shady deals trying to recover. I'm bankrupt. The bank took advantage of it to buy back my company at a ridiculous price.

Dominique – And you accepted?

Max – It was either that or go straight to prison.

Mary – That still doesn't explain how you ended up stealing a fishing boat.

Max – The striking sailors were holding me captive in my office. I narrowly escaped being lynched. I managed to flee, but I thought it best to leave the island as quickly as possible. I... borrowed a fishing boat that was in dry dock.

Dominique – Probably to fix that leak...

Max – I didn't even have enough fuel. And I needed some cash. Enough to survive upon reaching the mainland until luck turned in my favour.

Diana – I see...

Max – I left my assistant to sign the sales contract with the bank's negotiator. By the way, they almost lynched her too.

Diana – I know...

Max – How do you know that?

Diana – I'm the one who signed the contract on behalf of Continental Finances.

Max – You're the negotiator from Continental Finances? The one they call "the shark"?

Diana – That's me.

Max – That's ironic... So, in a way, I saved your life.

Diana – Don't push it too far... Let me remind you that we're lost at sea, out of fuel, and on the verge of sinking.

Max – Yes... and I don't know what's stopping me from throwing you overboard. It's because of your bad advice that my investments ruined me! And then you bought my company for next to nothing!

Diana – I'm just carrying out the orders of my management. Times are tough for everyone. It's a crisis...

Mary – It's strange, the world has been in crisis since God created it... And yet the rich keep getting richer.

Max (to Diana) – I'd better go bail out water... before I give in to murderous impulses that I might regret.

A heavy silence follows.

Mildred – Let me get this straight, the "shark"... He was talking about your bad advice that ruined him... I hope you've given me better advice. I've entrusted the management of all my investments to Continental Finances as well.

Diana – Don't worry... If we're the world leader in wealth management, it's for a reason.

Dominique – Unless your bank built its fortune by ruining its most gullible clients.

Mildred becomes increasingly worried. Charles returns.

Max – Have you finished bailing out water already? Is there no more water in the hold?

Charles – Bailing water is no longer useful. The leak is too significant...

Mary – So, this is the end. All that's left for us is to pray...

Charles – Come on, Mildred, do something for once!

Mildred – What do you expect me to do, idiot! The only problems I can solve are the ones that can be resolved by pulling out my checkbook.

Dominique – Unfortunately, this time, I doubt we can get out of it that way.

A moment of collective despair.

Mildred (to Charles) – And stop biting your nails, it annoys me.

Charles – Leave me alone! I'll bite my nails if I want to...

Amanda – Well... You didn't talk to her like that before, did you?

Charles – Before, I dreamed of marrying a billionaire. But what good is it to marry a billionaire who's about to die? Especially if I have to die along with her.

Mary squirms a little.

Mary – It's torture...

Dominique – You're not going into labor now, are you? That's all we need...

Mary – No, don't worry. No risk...

Max returns.

Max – I couldn't connect to the network, but I managed to listen to the marine weather forecast on an old transistor I found in the hold.

Diana – So what? Is there still fog expected?

Max – No, but they say a tsunami just devastated the tax haven we left.

Mary – A tsunami?

Max – Of sufficient magnitude to completely submerge the island, given its low altitude.

Mary – Oh my God! That's the huge wave that almost swallowed us earlier.

Max – No one could be warned in time. There are no survivors...

Amanda – This is awful!

Mary – It's probably a divine punishment. Just like Jesus drove the merchants out of the temple. And God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah...

Max – In any case, it's a miracle for us... If we hadn't hastily left that island, we would all have drowned.

Dominique – Yes, what a fortunate coincidence...

Mildred (to Max) – So, in the end, by boarding this wreck, you saved our lives...

Max – That's a fact.

Diana – We should call you Noah.

Amanda – Yes... You brought on your ark a sample of everything that's worst in humanity, just to make sure the species would survive this flood.

Charles – We escaped the flood, but unfortunately, our ark is taking on water at the back.

Dominique – And if we don't reach a coast quickly, we will sink.

Mary – Let's hope that the rescue teams rushing to the site of this catastrophe will be able to see us and come to our aid.

Mildred – With a bit of luck, given the circumstances, they won't think of searching our suitcases...

Charles – Well... Every cloud has a silver lining.

Mildred – Do you have any other stupid expressions like that?

Charles – One man's loss is another man's gain, if you prefer.

Mildred – I'd prefer if you shut up.

Amanda – Are you two going to start again?

Mildred – And what brings you here, anyway? You don't strike me as the type to stash your savings in a tax haven. And as for your profession, very ancient, they say, five-star hotels shouldn't usually be your preferred hunting ground, right?

Amanda – Don't judge too quickly by appearances. Look at yourself, for example. You are living proof that fortune and class don't always go hand in hand...

Mildred – I can't shake the feeling that you don't belong here. Who are you really, and what are you hiding in that ridiculous suitcase?

Amanda – Don't even think about touching it.

Mildred – We have nothing left to hide from each other. Why not show us what's inside that suitcase?

Dominique – Go ahead, open it. At this point, what does it matter....

Amanda – No way.

Mildred – Come on, Charles, open the suitcase.

Charles – I don't know if...

Mildred – Open it, I'm telling you!

Charles – What if it's a booby-trapped suitcase?

Mildred – Why do you think I'm asking you to open it, you idiot?

Charles – Okay...

He hesitantly approaches Amanda.

Amanda – Forget it... I'll open it myself.

Amanda opens her suitcase and takes out a gun, pointing it at Charles.

Amanda – I wouldn't advise you to come any closer!

Dominique – Is it to defend your virtue that you're walking around with such firepower?

Amanda – I confess... I'm not who you think I am...

Charles – Then who are you? And what do you do?

Mildred – Arms trafficking? Terrorism?

Amanda – I'm a cop. From the Financial Brigade. I was here undercover, to monitor your various illicit activities and catch all of you red-handed.

Max – And what do you plan to do now? Arrest us all in the hold?

Amanda lowers her weapon.

Amanda – You're right. It's pointless now. We're all going to die, so why bother playing cops and robbers anymore...

Fade to black.

Scene 5

They are all there. Their outfits are in disarray. They have tanned skin, some even have sunburns.

Mildred – I'm really starting to feel hungry.

Mary – We could go fishing... We're on a fishing boat, after all.

Dominique – I don't see a fishing net.

Charles – Does anyone know how to fish?

Max – Yes, big game fishing. On my yacht. And with staff. But here...

Mildred – Do you think we'll resort to cannibalism?

Charles – In extreme necessity, it's not a crime.

Dominique – It is if we have to kill the person before eating them...

Mildred – Well, then we'll wait for the first among us to die a natural death.

Charles – If we're not rescued soon, it might happen in the near future.

Diana enters, very excited.

Diana – I caught a fish!

Max – How did you manage that?

Diana – With a landing net.

Max – Where did you find a net?

Diana – I improvised one with a broomstick handle and... my panties.

Dominique – And you managed to catch a fish like that?

Diana – Well, yes... It wasn't moving. It was lying on its back. It must have been sleeping.

Amanda – Do fish sleep?

Diana – Maybe a little nap, who knows.

Dominique – Or maybe it was dead.

Diana – It's true that when I pulled it out of the water... it had a strange smell.

Charles – Are you sure it was the fish?

Mildred – Come on, Charles...

Charles – Sorry, it must be the sun. I'm on the verge of heatstroke.

Dominique – And what did you do with it?

Diana – Well, I ate it!

Stunned silence.

Mary – I think this time we hit rock bottom.

Charles – That phrase takes on a special meaning when said on a boat about to sink.

Mildred – Now, he's getting philosophical... You're right, it must be the sun...

A pause.

Dominique (to Mildred and Charles) – And what about you, what did you come to this island for?

Charles – We were on a reconnaissance mission. For our honeymoon. We initially thought of Saint Barth, but it's so overrated now...

Mildred – Never mind, my poor thing. At this point, I can tell him the truth.

Charles – I thought it was the truth...

Mildred – I make the trip to this tax haven twice a year to secure my savings.

Dominique – Don't tell me your suitcases are empty...

Mildred – I bring cash and leave with bearer bonds...

Dominique – And this year, did you have a good catch? What are you bringing in your nets? I mean, in your suitcase. It's huge...

Mildred – Treasury bonds issued by the micro-state that governs this island.

Diana – No way... And who advised you to buy that?

Charles – Continental Finances, why?

Diana – Let's just say that... now that this banana republic has been wiped out by that tsunami, your treasury bonds are worthless.

Mildred – Are you sure?

Diana – Haven't you heard? By now, this island no longer exists. It's been wiped off the map.

Charles – What? So, Mildred, you're broke...

Diana – The ferry company we just bought isn't worth much either... but at least it solves the strike problem. And who knows, we should keep hope. Even if all the sailors drowned, the boats themselves might still be afloat.

Mary – It's true, it's a terrible tragedy... At least we're still alive... For now.

Max – Well, Mildred, it's your turn now.

Mildred – My turn?

Max – To bail out the water!

Mildred – Charles, it's your turn.

Charles – No way, I'm fed up. I'm not your lackey.

Mildred – You can't be serious about what you're saying?

Charles – I've been your punching bag for years, hoping for a marriage that would make me your heir. But you're broke, and we're all going to die, so what's the point now?

Max (*to Mildred*) – Well, are you going to do it?

Mildred – What's the point? He's right, we're all going to die. Sooner or later. No need to exert ourselves.

Mary – In that case... We just have to leave it to God...

Silence.

Amanda – And you, Virgin Mary? What really brought you here?

Mary – Let's just say... I'm also in business.

Mildred – What kind of business?

Amanda – There's no need to pretend anymore, you know... I remind you that I'm a cop. I'm aware of everything.

Mary – Oh, screw it, it's true... I can't stand this anymore...

She removes her fake belly.

Dominique – What is that?

Mary – Cocaine.

Mildred – And to think she used her supposed pregnancy as an excuse to avoid bailing out seawater from the hold and to drink up all the fresh water we have left...

Charles – So, she's the one you came to arrest?

Amanda – Among others, yes... Because on this boat, between you and me, I have a wide choice, don't I?

They all look at her.

Mary – You're taking a risk, my dear...

Amanda – Oh, really?

Mildred – You're alone, we're six.

Diana – We might feel like getting rid of you.

Dominique – In the situation we're in, it wouldn't be surprising if not all of us make it out alive..

Mildred – I'm so hungry... What if we eat her?

They take a step towards Amanda. She pulls out her gun again.

Amanda – Don't forget that I'm armed...

Charles – Alright.

They all freeze for a moment before cautiously stepping back.

Mary – And you, Dominique? What do you have in your briefcase? A miniaturized atomic bomb?

Dominique – No, but it's just as explosive...

Charles – You've either said too much or not enough... What is it?

Dominique – Secret campaign funds. From completely selfless donors, (*Pointing at Mildred*) like Madame...

Charles – I didn't know you were so generous, honey...

Mildred – Even though we might be selfless, we can still hope for some favours in return if our dear President is reelected. And what's wrong with that? Would you prefer the left to come back to power?

Max (*to Dominique*) – Alright... So that's why you also didn't want to go through customs...

Charles – It's amazing how the rich can be so supportive of each other when it comes to preserving their privileges...

Dominique – I'm following orders. The President asked me to urgently retrieve the funds held by his campaign committee in this tax haven.

Mary – Urgently... So you were aware of the tsunami, right?

Dominique – As the Chief of the Armed Forces, the President has privileged access to marine weather forecasts.

Mary – He was worried about his war chest. But he didn't warn anyone else about the tidal wave that swept away this island and all its inhabitants...

Dominique – There wasn't enough room for everyone on the boats anyway. Only a few privileged ones were informed.

Mary – His generous donors, for example. Those who finance his campaign.

Max – Yes... Like you, Mildred.

Charles – So you knew too?

Mildred – You should thank me, you idiot! After all, I saved your life...

Charles – You only made one reservation, for yourself! If I hadn't caught up with you in the hotel lobby as you were leaving in a hurry...

Amanda – If it's any consolation, I didn't know either. And yet, I'm a police officer. If I hadn't decided to tail this whole bunch, I would have been swept away by that tsunami...

Charles – That's probably what the President wanted. To bury the investigation with the investigator... (*To Diana*) Were you aware too?

Diana – No... But obviously, my boss was in the loop... I understand now why he was so eager to settle his account in this tax haven and why he sent me there to bring back his cash.

Max – Without warning you that you might be swept away by a tsunami.

Diana – And here I was, trusting him completely... I'm disappointed...

Dominique – Trusting the head of largest French bank? Your naivety surprises me, my dear.

Charles – And they call you the "shark"...

Diana – I thought even sharks had a family, that I was part of it, and that sharks didn't eat each other...

Dominique – Well, now you know the limits of solidarity among the real billionaires and those who serve them as valets, hoping for a few crumbs from the feast.

Max – As one of our great philosophers said, "When seagulls follow the trawler, it's because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea."

Dominique – Oh, I didn't know that quote... What's the name of this philosopher?

Max – Eric Cantona.

Mary (*to Dominique*) – You could have at least warned the striking sailors. Given the circumstances, they would have returned to work without hesitation...

Dominique – We could have, yes...

Mary – But...?

Dominique – The head of state of this banana republic was once a friend of France. And above all, a personal friend of our President. A very generous friend, by the way. Unfortunately...

Max – I suppose this friend became too much of a burden...

Dominique – I can't tell you more. This matter falls under the realm of state secrets.

Max – Anyway, the problem is now resolved...

Dominique – Thanks to God.

Max – And marine weather forecasts...

Blackout.

Scene 6

Everyone is here, except for Marie. They are looking more and more like shipwrecked people. Marie arrives, very excited, with a water bottle in each hand.

Mary – It's a miracle! Yesterday there were two water bottles, and this morning there are four.

Amanda – The multiplication of water bottles... A divine intervention, perhaps?

Max – No, but it's still a little miracle. It rained last night, and I was able to fill some empty bottles.

Charles – I didn't know it rained in the middle of the sea.

Max – Does that surprise you?

Charles – Yes, I don't know why...

Max – It will allow us not to die of thirst right away.

Charles – Do you know why seawater is salty, Captain?

Max – No... And you?

Charles – Neither do I...

Mildred – Are you sure you haven't caught sunstroke, my poor Charles? You should wear a hat.

Charles – Can you imagine if seawater wasn't salty? It would solve a lot of problems in the world.

Amanda – Is he going to keep pissing us off for much longer?

Diana – Fortunately, we won't die of hunger. With all these dead fish floating to the surface...

Dominique – Ocean pollution has its benefits, after all.

Mary – Unless we all die poisoned, like those sick fish we're forced to eat, half-rotten.

Diana takes one of the fish and takes a bite.

Diana – It's not that bad.

Amanda – Yes... You get used to it.

Mildred – I think I've already lost ten kilos.

Charles – Well, there you go! Liposuction can wait a little longer...

Amanda – I'll see if I can catch a few more.

Amanda walks away. The others continue chewing their fish. Amanda returns hastily.

Amanda – There it is, we can see the coast!

Diana – No way?

Amanda – But yes, look!

They all look.

Mildred – It's not a mirage, is it?

Max – Good Lord, it's true!

Charles – Land! Land! It's incredible, I feel like Christopher Columbus discovering America!

Mary – I hope we haven't drifted that far, but well... Thank God, we're saved!

Max – It's about time. Even with all the bailing we've been doing day and night, the boat was sinking deeper and deeper.

The atmosphere immediately relaxes, and they all smile again.

Diana – Phew... We'll finally be back to civilization.

Max – Except that we lost a lot of money.

Mildred – And a few kilos.

Max – We'll recover. Once rich, always rich...

Dominique – Yes... Unless we end up in prison.

All eyes turn to Amanda.

Amanda – I promise I won't say anything. After everything we've been through together...

Mildred – Thank you.

Amanda – But the President seems to be doing well, doesn't he?

Dominique – I sense an insinuation in that last remark... or even an attempt at blackmail with extortion of funds.

Amanda – Now, let's not use such strong words... But I wouldn't mind a little reward for services rendered to the nation... and as a token of my discretion.

Max – And we wouldn't mind a little compensation either. Because with all the money we lost in this ecological disaster...

Mildred – Since you have the President's ear...

Mary – Because between us, if we were to tell what we know... your President's reelection would be seriously compromised.

Dominique – Among well-mannered people, we can always come to an arrangement...

Max – And how about a little medal? Thanks to my heroic action, I managed to save a few lives.

Dominique – I'll mention it to the President.

They all start looking towards the coast again.

Max – The winds are favourable, we're getting closer to the coast. We just have to wait...

Mildred – It's strange. It doesn't really look like the French coast.

Charles – That's true... With all these palm trees...

Amanda – One thing's for sure, it's not Brittany.

Dominique – And the French flag isn't flying above the port.

Charles – What could it be then? Corsica?

Dominique – There's a boat coming, we'll ask them.

Mary – It's just a big rowboat, and there are about a hundred people on it.

Mildred – They look like migrants.

Charles – But why would they leave France and head out to sea?

Diana – I can see the flag more clearly now.

Mary – It looks a bit like Morocco...

Max – What kind of flag is it?

Amanda (*to Dominique*) – You're familiar about flags, aren't you?

Charles – It's not the Palestinian flag, is it?

Dominique – Worse...

Mildred – What could be worse than landing on the Gaza Strip?

Dominique – It's the flag of Libya...

They all freeze, stunned.

Blackout.

Scene 7

They are all there, dazed, their gaze turned towards the back of the room, representing the inhospitable coast.

Amanda – This time, we can clearly see the beach.

Mildred – Yes, but I wonder if there's any reason to rejoice.

Mary – We can even see their faces now.

Max – And their Kalashnikovs...

Charles – Some of them seem to be laughing.

Diana – They're going to be surprised to see us, that's for sure.

Dominique – Of course. Usually, the traffic goes the other way around.

Mary – A group of French people landing on the Libyan shores with suitcases full of banknotes, treasury bonds, and bags of coke...

Max – Maybe we should get rid of all that, right?

Mildred – Throw our money overboard?

Dominique – We could always give them your bearer bonds, they're worthless now.

Diana – If they find us with all this money, they'll kill us to rob us.

Dominique – But if we arrive empty-handed, in rags and half-starved, they won't understand... and that might anger them too.

Mary – It's hard to pass ourselves off as French migrants trying to land in Libya to seek political asylum.

Max – We could always tell them the truth.

Amanda – They'll never believe us.

Mary – I must admit, this story is quite hard to believe.

Max – Yes...

A cell phone rings. It's Dominique's, and he answers it.

Dominique – Yes...? Yes, Mr. President. Very well, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President.

He puts away his phone.

Mildred – So, what did he say?

Dominique – It was the President.

Mary – And then?

Dominique – The French Air Force in the region has spotted us. They're sending a helicopter.

The sound of a reconnaissance helicopter is heard, getting closer and then moving away.

Mary – God exists!

Mildred – We're saved! Well, I hope this time it's for real...

Charles – Yes, because we've had enough of all these twists and turns. This comedy has lasted on long enough.

Dominique – Rest assured, this time, all our troubles will be over.

Amanda – This ending feels a bit like a Western, doesn't it? The cavalry arriving...

Mary – All's well that ends well, that's the main thing.

Diana – Yes... A true fairy tale.

Max – It could even end with a wedding... As the captain of this ship, I would be authorized to officiate.

Charles – Well, here goes... (*He kneels before Mildred*) Mildred, will you be my wife?

Mildred – Go to hell!

Amanda – Not this time, unfortunately.

Diana – But the good news is that in a few hours, we'll be back in France!

General relief and mutual congratulations.

Diana – It's fortunate the President values you so much. You must be a very valuable collaborator.

Dominique – He's mostly interested in getting his briefcase and the millions it contains to finance his campaign.

Mary – Are you sure we won't all end up in prison? I have at least five kilos of cocaine as accompanied baggage.

Mildred – After everything we've been through, prison would almost be a relief.

Dominique – Don't worry. I promised you. The President will make sure not to publicize this matter too much

Amanda – The army is repatriating us, not the police. . That will make things much easier.

Dominique – The Special Forces are used to dirty tricks, and they're under the President's command.

Diana – That's good, that's good... So, all's well that ends well!

Charles – Except for the few citizens of that tiny state, which has been wiped off the map.

Mildred – Well, most of them were bank employees anyway. Since we're talking about a tax haven, we can consider that they died for the homeland.

Max – And let's be honest, the disappearance of Sodom and Gomorrah is good for everyone's business, isn't it, Dominique?

Dominique – I can tell you now, the French state, represented by its President, had a colossal debt with the Central Bank of that little haven.

Amanda – No more haven, no more debt.

Dominique – And when France's debts are erased, all the French become a little richer. Well, some French people at least...

Diana – It's what you call a magic slate: erase everything and start again. The show is over, but business continues.

Dominique – The President promised to eliminate tax havens. For once, a candidate kept his promises.

Max – One lost haven, ten others found.

Amanda – But for now, thanks to our beloved President, we'll soon be back in our beautiful country!

Charles – Long live the President!

Dominique – Long live the Republic!

Charles – Long live France!

All together – And long live Finance!

They stand at attention. The French national anthem plays and fades away as they all leave in close formation and marching in step. Diana is at the end of the line and exits last.

Diana (as she exits) – I just had another orgasm...

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
All's well that starts badly
An innocent little murder
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Cheaters
Check to the Kings
Crash Zone
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but stable
Eurostar
Four stars
Fragile, handle with care
Friday the 13th
Heads or Tails
Him and Her
In lieu of flowers
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
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
One marriage out of two
Preliminaries
Quarantine
Running on Empty
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Ideal Son-in-Law
The Jackpot
The Joker
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Performance is not cancelled
The Smell of Money
The Window across the courtyard
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!

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