

La Comédiathèque

**White COATS,
DARK HUMOUR**

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Translation by the author

*The hospital was almost perfect... The crime too.
A darkly humorous detective comedy.*

Characters

The doctor: Gunter (male or female in disguise)

The 2 nurses: Sister Emmanuelle and Barbara

The 3 patients (male or female): Thelma, Louis(e), Mabel (or Marvin)

The 5 visitors (male or female): Jack, Sandy, Fred, Angela (or Angelo), Alex

The 2 police officers (male or female): Captain Ramirez and Officer Sanchez

Patients, visitors, and police officers can be of either gender.

*Multiple characters can be played by the same actor or actress:
Angela can also play Alex, Jack, and Sandy can play both police officers.*

Possible number of male and female actors: 10 to 13

Possible gender distribution as a guide:

10: 8M/2F, 7M/3F, 6M/4F, 5M/5F, 4M/6F, 3M/7F, 2M/8F, 1M/9F, 10F
11: 8M/3F, 7M/4F, 6M/5F, 5M/6F, 4M/7F, 3M/8F, 2M/9F, 1M/10F, 11F
12: 8M/4F, 7M/5F, 6M/6F, 5M/7F, 4M/8F, 3M/9F, 2M/10F, 1M/11F, 12F
13: 8M/5F, 7M/6F, 6M/7F, 5M/8F, 4M/9F, 3M/10F, 2M/11F, 1M/12F, 13F

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The hospital's reception area, designed for welcoming visitors, is adorned with a scrawny Christmas tree on a nearby table, where Sister Emmanuelle, a demure and striking brunette in a nurse's religious attire, decorates it while humming a tune. In front of the tree, a nativity scene is arranged, creating an ambiance reminiscent of a "Harlequin Medical Romance." Dr. Gunter, a dashing physician with a playboy flair, stands behind Emmanuelle, sporting a white coat and a stethoscope around his neck.

Gunter – Good morning, Sister Emmanuelle. Everything okay?

Emmanuelle startles, surprised and a little flustered.

Emmanuelle – Good morning, Doctor Müller. You scared me...

Gunter – I'm truly sorry. But please, call me Gunter...

Emmanuelle – And why is that, Doctor Müller?

Gunter – Because it's my first name, Emmanuelle!

Emmanuelle – Of course... But if you don't mind, I'll continue to call you Doctor Müller. It seems more appropriate to me. And I would prefer you to call me Sister Emmanuelle...

Gunter – As you wish, Sister Emmanuelle... Oh, but you've done wonders with this tree! It looks truly magnificent...

Emmanuelle gazes at the sparsely adorned Christmas tree, its faded garlands fighting to infuse a bit of festivity.

Emmanuelle – Our patients really need some comfort during this festive season, especially when they're not surrounded by the love of their families...

Gunter – Of course...

Emmanuelle – I've added a nativity scene to this secular symbol of the Christmas tree. I hope you don't mind, Doctor?

Gunter – It's also part of the magic of Christmas! Even the big department stores have a nativity scene, so why not our hospital? After all, we are also a commercial enterprise!

Emmanuelle – It's essential for all our patients who don't have families to know that they can still rely on the love of our Lord...

Gunter – That's clear...

Emmanuelle leans over to place the figurines in the nativity scene.

Emmanuelle – Would you help me place the baby Jesus in the nativity?

Gunter – Uh... yes.

Gunter approaches Emmanuelle to lend a hand, and they brush against each other.

Emmanuelle – Here, the ox and the donkey... Right at the back...

Gunter – Perfect.

Emmanuelle – And here's the Blessed Virgin.

Barbara arrives, just as blonde as Emmanuelle is brunette, and wearing a blouse that accentuates her charms.

Barbara (*sarcastic*) – I suppose you weren't talking about me, Sister Emmanuelle...

Gunter – Ah, Barbara, I was actually looking for you...

Barbara – You won't find me in a nativity scene...

Gunter – Here, Sister Emmanuelle... I managed to fit them all in, but it was a struggle...

Barbara – It's not always easy to find a place in the nativity...

Gunter – Good morning, Barbara. I was about to start my rounds. Will you join me?

Barbara – Just like the Wise Men followed the Star of Bethlehem, Gunter. You know that wherever you go, I'll go...

Gunter – I'll leave you to it, Emmanuelle... I mean, Sister Emmanuelle...

Barbara casts a jealous look at Emmanuelle. Emmanuelle, feeling embarrassed, decides to leave.

Emmanuelle – I have things to do as well...

Emmanuelle exits.

Gunter – Shall we go, Barbarella? I mean, Barbara...

Gunter and Barbara exit. Pushed by Angela, dressed in a gothic style, Louise arrives in a wheelchair, with a hanging IV bag.

Angela – So, Merry Christmas, dear Aunt Louise!

Louise – Thank you, Angela... I'm not sure I'll be here for the next one...

Angela – Come on, don't say that... (*She takes a bottle of champagne and two glasses from her bag.*) Look, I've brought something for a festive toast...

Louise – Oh, that's so sweet of you...

Angela opens the bottle and pours the champagne into the glasses. Then she reaches into her bag and pulls out a box of Cat's Tongue Cookies.

Angela – I also brought you some Cat's Tongue Cookies. I know you're quite fond of them...

Louise – You're a true angel, Angela, but considering the state of my stomach... Well, what's left of it... I would have preferred ladyfingers...

Angela – You can always dip these cookies in your champagne to soften them. And here's a little gift for you...

Angela hands Louise an envelope.

Louise – Thank you! What's inside?

Angela – A little surprise!

Louise – An envelope... It's not money, is it? I'm already quite well-off in that department... At my age, what I truly lack is the time to enjoy it...

Angela – Indeed... (*Lowering her voice*) Life can be quite unfair... I seem to have nothing but time...

Louise, not catching Angela's remark, wrestles with the package. In the meantime, Angela discreetly empties the contents of a tiny vial into her aunt's glass. Louise finally extracts a piece of paper from the envelope.

Louise – What is this?

Angela – A one-year subscription to *Growing Bolder!*

Louise – A whole year! I'm not certain I'll make it to the end...

Angela (*whispering*) – I have my doubts as well.

Louise – What?

Angela takes a copy of the magazine from her bag and hands it to Louise.

Angela – Here's the first issue... It will provide you with some reading material...

Louise – Thank you, Angela!

Angela – If it makes you happy, it makes me happy too, Aunty... (*They exchange kisses*) So, shall we raise a toast?

Louise – I'm not entirely sure it's wise!

Angela – Come on, a small Christmas glass won't do any harm!

Louise – Oh, but you've poured quite a generous one...

Angela – No, I haven't!

Louise – Could you please pass me my shawl?

Angela turns around to retrieve the shawl from a nearby chair. Seizing the opportunity, Louise discreetly swaps the glasses, opting for the one with less champagne.

Angela – Here you go...

Louise – Thank you, you're so kind... It's a good thing you're here. Otherwise, no one would visit me...

Angela – Of course, Aunty. It's only natural since I'm your niece. (*She smiles warmly*) So, Aunty, have you considered what we talked about last time?

Louise – What's that?

Angela – About your will, remember? I'm not sure it's a good idea to leave everything to the Red Cross.

Louise – It's not the Red Cross, it's Doctor Müller! Well, his foundation! A foundation that takes care of orphans who don't have parents...

Angela – You know, nowadays, it seems like everyone's starting a foundation, even serial killers... And besides, I'll be a bit of an orphan when you're no longer here...

Louise – You have your parents, after all. They're not struggling; they're both dentists... Your mother always held a grudge against me... She never comes to see me...

Angela – But I'm here!

Louise – That's why I initially drafted the first will in your favour... It's in my bedside table drawer... But Doctor Müller convinced me to... And I know that when you come to visit me, it's not for my money...

Angela – Absolutely...

Louise – You have a family, you can continue your studies, and perhaps become a dentist like your parents. But those less fortunate orphans... What if the good Doctor Müller doesn't have the means to look after them?

Angela – Well, you know, it's your money, Aunt Louise. Do whatever you think is best. But have you actually written this new will yet?

Louise – Not quite yet... I'll get to it later...

Angela smiles.

Angela – Excellent... Cheers!

They raise their glasses and take a sip.

Louise – It's quite refreshing...

Angela – Yes, it's delightful...

Louise squints at the label.

Louise – Moët & Sea... I haven't heard of that one before...

Angela – How about a Cat's Tongue Cookie to accompany it?

Louise – Thank you, I might taste them later, once you've departed...

Angela – True... Maybe while flipping through the pages of *Growing Bolder*... Well, I'll leave you, Aunty... You must be feeling a bit weary, I assume...

Louise – I'm holding up quite well... How about a game of Clue before you head out?

Angela – I wish I could, but I'm afraid I don't have the time right now... I'll be back to wish you a Happy New Year...

They share a few kisses.

Louise – Enjoy yourself, and thank you for visiting your old aunt on Christmas... Oh, by the way, I have a gift for you too! It's right under the table...

Angela takes the package, unwraps it, and reveals a knitted scarf.

Angela – What is this?

Louise – Well, it's a scarf! I had knitted it for a friend, but she passed away before she could wear it. Do you like it?

Angela – I really do... Alright, see you soon, Auntie... And Merry Christmas!

Angela leaves.

Louise – She had that peculiar look again... Every time she comes to see me, it feels like I'm already in hell... *(Sigh)* Now, where was I...

Louise opens Growing Bolder and starts flipping through it while dipping a Cat's Tongue Cookie in her champagne. She squints.

Louise – Where did I put my glasses? I must have left them in my room...

Louise wheels away in her wheelchair. Sister Emmanuelle enters, assisting Mabel to a chair, where she helps her settle in.

Emmanuelle – Here, take a seat for a while, Mabel. It's not good to lie down all day...

Mabel – Oh, you know, the Avenue of the Departed will be my next address, so...

Emmanuelle – Even more reason to play; you have plenty of time. Would you like to play Scrabble to keep your mind active?

Mabel – Keep what active?

Emmanuelle – Your brain!

Mabel – Alright...

Emmanuelle sets up the game.

Emmanuelle – Here are your letters... Would you like to start?

Mabel – Oh, you know, I'm not sure I can manage. I'm not all there anymore...

Emmanuelle – Give it a try...

Mabel – Okay, I'll do this then... (*Mabel lines up all her letters on the board*) Let's break it down: for 'QUIZZES'. The 'Q' is worth 10 points, 'U,' 'I,' and 'E' are 1 point each, 'Z' brings 10 points, and the second 'Z' adds 20 points with a double letter score. Finally, 'S' is worth 1 point. Placing it on a double word score doubles the total of 47 to 94 points, plus a 50-point bonus. That's 144!

Emmanuelle – Well... Impressive score! I'm impressed by your brain that is still quite active!

A couple, Sandy and Jack, enters. Sandy is Mabel's daughter, and Jack, who can be played by either a woman dressed as a man or a rather masculine woman (introducing an element of humorous confusion), is her son-in-law.

Emmanuelle – Oh, I think you have visitors, Mabel... I'll leave you to your family... Ladies and gentlemen...

Sandy (*to Emmanuelle*) – Good morning, Sister Emmanuelle...

Mabel – Is she your sister?

Emmanuelle (*indulgently*) – No, Mabel, she's your daughter...

Emmanuelle shares a smile with Sandy and exits.

Sandy – So, Mom, how are you doing today?

Mabel – Oh, you know, at my age...

Jack – Hello, mother-in-law...

Mabel – Who is this one?

Sandy – Come on, Mom, it's Jack, my husband!

Mabel – You're married? Since when?

Sandy – It's been about twenty years.

Mabel – You could have at least sent me an invitation...

Sandy – But you attended our wedding, Mom! (*She takes out a photo from her wallet*) Look, that's you in the picture, outside the city hall.

Mabel – Oh, yes... And the one holding your arm there, in that oversized suit, who is he?

Jack – That's me, mother-in-law. Jack, your son-in-law!

Mabel gazes at him.

Mabel – Oh my... He's aged quite a bit! No wonder I didn't recognize him...

Jack – Well, we all age...

Sandy hands her mother a box.

Sandy – Here, I brought you a box of fruit jellies.

Mabel – Thank you... Are they too hard? Because with my teeth...

Jack – They're fruit jellies, mother-in-law... They're soft...

Mabel (*aside to Sandy*) – Why does he insist on calling me "mother-in-law"?

Jack prefers to change the subject.

Jack – So, Mabel, did you sleep well last night?

Mabel – I had a strange dream...

Jack – Oh yeah? What was it about?

Mabel – Oh, it doesn't matter much now...

Sandy – Come on... (*Speaking softly*) At least it'll give us something to discuss...

Mabel – I dreamt about those gold bars my mother had gifted me for Christmas just before she passed away...

Sandy and Jack, amazed, exchange glances.

Jack – Gold bars?

Sandy – Your mother gave you gold bars? You never mentioned that before!

Mabel – It wasn't any of your concern... And since I had entirely forgotten what I did with them... It was only last night that it all came back to me...

Jack – And then?

Mabel – You know how it goes with dreams, as soon as you wake up, you forget half of it.

Sandy – And what half do you recall?

Mabel – I remember the box... And all the gold bars inside.

Sandy – All the gold bars? Because there were a lot of them?

Jack – And this box, do you remember where you put it?

Mabel – Put what?

Jack – Come on, mother-in-law!

Sandy – Perhaps you buried them somewhere in the garden?

Mabel – Buried what?

Jack (*exasperated*) – The gold bars, damn it! The damn gold bars!

Mabel – Oh, I completely forgot about those...

Sandy – Please, try to remember...

Mabel – Yes, I remember the box quite well. (*Pointing to the box of fruit jellies*) It was somewhat larger than that, though.

Dr. Müller passes by once more. Sandy and Jack appear uneasy due to the unexpected presence of this inconvenient witness.

Gunter – Good morning, Mabel. So, how are you today?

Mabel – Good morning, Doctor.

Gunter – Ah, but I see you went to the hairdresser for the holidays! It looks lovely on you...

Mabel – You sweet talker...

Gunter – Ladies and gentlemen... Is everything okay?

Jack – Good morning, Dr. Müller...

Sandy – Yes, yes, everything's fine. Right, Mom? (*Speaking softly*) Her memory is fading more and more, but aside from that, she's doing well...

Gunter – Your mother is remarkably resilient, believe me. She'll outlast all of us! Isn't that right, Mabel?

Jack – And concerning her memory, don't you have any suggestions for...

Sandy – Even if it's only a temporary solution.

Gunter – For memory, let me think... I take something that works quite well, but... I can't recall the name of the medication at all... (*Sandy and Jack exchange puzzled glances*) I'm just joking, of course... Here, we have to laugh a bit, you know, otherwise... We'd quickly think about suicide. No, unfortunately, there is no cure for memory loss today...

Jack – I see... It could be a degenerative disease...

In her wheelchair, Mabel slowly starts to doze off.

Gunter – And there you have it! A long-term degenerative disease that, regrettably, we're all afflicted with from the moment we're born...

Jack – And what's it called?

Gunter – Life, dear Sir! Life! A hereditary ailment with an inevitably terminal prognosis, sooner or later. (*The Doctor's pager beeps*) Well, my dear friends, duty calls. I wish you all a Merry Christmas!

Sandy gently rouses her mother from her slumber.

Sandy – Wake up, we're going for a little walk in the park...

Jack – Some fresh air might help jog her memory...

Sandy – Come on, Mom! Get up and walk!

Sandy, Jack, and Mabel leave. Louise returns in her wheelchair and continues reading Growing Bolder. Thelma arrives, walking with some difficulty. She clutches the rolling IV stand with one hand and holds a laptop with the other.

Thelma – So Louise, you're not dead yet?

Louise – Oh, Thelma, always a way with words... We'll miss you when you're gone...

Thelma – With a bit of luck, you'll go before me... What's your reading there?

Louise – *Growing Bolder*. It's a gift from my niece...

Thelma – At least she has a sense of humour... Is it an interesting read?

Louise – Yes, but there are so many ads... Hearing aids, stairlift chairs, funeral plans...

Thelma – Sounds like a blast...

Thelma sits in a chair and opens her laptop.

Louise – Is there Wi-Fi here?

Thelma – The Wi-Fi signal is actually stronger near the morgue. Unfortunately, that area is currently occupied.

Louise – Occupied? By whom?

Thelma – Well, I thought it was you, but it seems I was mistaken...

Thelma powers up her laptop.

Louise – Perhaps it's Mabel...

Thelma – You believe so?

Louise – You know, it's often the good ones who go first...

Thelma – I'd rather be a little wicked, it seems to keep me going...

Louise – Poor Mabel... She didn't seem that unwell. I wouldn't have bet on her being the first to depart.

Thelma – I did...

Louise – No, really?

Thelma – I placed a fifty-euro bet on it. So, with you not being the one in the morgue, I still have a shot...

Louise – Just as long as you don't wager on me as the next candidate...

Thelma starts reviewing Louise's medical records attached to her wheelchair.

Thelma – Let's see... Oh, indeed... Without flattering you, you have a pretty good file...

Louise gives her a worried look.

Louise – You think so?

Thelma starts typing on her keyboard.

Thelma – It's okay... I have two bars...

Louise – Two bars?

Thelma – For the Wi-Fi!

Louise – Oh, yes...

Thelma continues to type on her computer, and Louise returns to her magazine.

Thelma – Wow! This one looks good! Check this out!

Thelma briefly turns the screen toward Louise.

Louise – What kind of website are you on?

Thelma – A dating site... My username is Thelma...

Louise – Thelma, that's not your real name?

Thelma – My real name is Gertrude... But to meet someone online, Gertrude isn't an easy name.

Louise – Do you really think that in our condition, we can still meet someone?

Thelma – Except for someone who's here to administer the last rites, confirm death, or perform an autopsy, you mean? One can always dream... But I must say, I have a little crush...

Louise – With your blood pressure... A crush could quickly turn into a heart attack.

Thelma starts typing again.

Thelma – I'm hesitating...

Louise – Given our condition, it's better not to hesitate too long.

Thelma – Alright, I'll give it a try...

Louise – I wouldn't want to discourage you, but when he sees your photo...

Thelma shows her screen to Louise again.

Thelma – Here's my photo...

Louise – But... it's Sister Emmanuelle!

Thelma – She might not be super sexy, but it was the best I could do... I took it with my phone yesterday, saying I wanted to have a picture of her on my wallpaper...

Louise – I hope she's not browsing the internet too...

Thelma – A nun... Well, she probably doesn't frequent dating websites. But at least it makes it more believable...

Louise – What do you mean?

Thelma – The photo! Let's not exaggerate; men know that when you have the physique of a football player, you don't need to go on this kind of site to get the ball...

Louise – You have a point there... That slightly naïve and innocent look might be appealing to some...

Thelma – You'd think she's as innocent as a lamb...

Louise – Speak of the devil...

Sister Emmanuelle arrives. Thelma quickly closes her laptop.

Thelma – Good morning, Sister Emmanuelle!

Emmanuelle – Thelma and Louise! Always together, I see! How are you today?

Louise – As Dr. Müller says, life is a long degenerative disease...

Thelma – Let's say we're more at the terminal stage...

Emmanuelle – Here or elsewhere, we are only passing through this Earth. The Lord awaits us all in His paradise.

Thelma – Can you imagine, Sister Emmanuelle? We're the first internet generation to reach the heavens... Do you think there's Wi-Fi in paradise?

Emmanuelle – If it's paradise, there's likely Wi-Fi...

Thelma – That's probably why it already has better reception near the morgue...

Emmanuelle – Is there anything I can do for your well-being today, ladies?

Thelma – Is hashish still not allowed in this facility, even for therapeutic use?

Emmanuelle – I'm afraid not...

Thelma – Oh, well.

Emmanuelle – Alright, then I'll come back later for your gym class... Have a wonderful day, ladies.

Louise – Wishing you a wonderful day as well, sister Emmanuelle.

Thelma – Thank you again for the photo... I set it as my... wallpaper.

Emmanuelle – If it brings you comfort, then I'm glad to have helped.

Emmanuelle exits. Louise puts away her magazine and starts rolling her wheelchair to leave.

Louise – Well, it's not that I'm bored with you, but I need to get to my homework...

Thelma – Homework? Are you taking classes again?

Louise – No, but it's just to be prepared. I have to write my will...

Thelma – You're absolutely right, Louise. At our age, it's easier to put someone in your will than in your bed... So, who's the lucky one?

Louise – I've never gotten along very well with my family... So, I'm thinking of leaving everything to Dr. Müller. He's so kind...

Thelma – And quite handsome...

Louise – See you later, Thelma.

Thelma reopens her laptop's lid.

Thelma – Goodbye, Louise.

Louise exits. Thelma goes back to typing on her computer. A young man arrives, dressed like a rapper.

Alex – Hey, Grandma, what's up?

Thelma closes her laptop lid once again.

Thelma – Don't call me Grandma, Alex.

They exchange a kiss on the cheek.

Alex – What were you up to on your computer?

Thelma – Just some random browsing, why?

Alex – You hastily closed the page as soon as I walked in. It's kind of weird.

Thelma – Did you manage to grab my prescription from the pharmacy?

Alex – Don't worry, I've got it right here.

He opens a pocket in his jacket and hands Thelma a small package wrapped in aluminium foil.

Thelma – You didn't pick up the generic version, did you?

Alex – No, it's the real deal, Grandma. I get my supplies directly from an Afghan herbalist.

As Thelma is about to take it, he stops her.

Alex – Not so fast! I don't offer direct billing.

Thelma hands him a fifty-dollar bill.

Thelma – There, it's legit money.

Alex – Fifty bucks? Where did you find that?

Thelma – I won a bet.

Thelma puts away the small aluminium package and takes out a joint, which she lights.

Alex – A bet, huh? What was the stake?

Thelma – You wouldn't believe it...

Thelma takes a drag from the joint.

Alex – Do you think they'll ever legalize weed, Grandma?

Thelma – Maybe for the elderly. In palliative care.

Alex – That's a bummer.

Thelma – And how are your parents doing?

Alex – They're good. Want to share this?

Thelma – Hey, I may be your grandmother, but I won't promote drug use.

Alex – Come on, you're no angel yourself, huh?

Thelma – It's different for me; it's a means to manage my pain.

Alex – Yeah, right...

Thelma is startled by Sister Emmanuelle's unexpected return. She hastily hands the joint to Alex, who discreetly attempts to conceal it.

Emmanuelle – Oh, hello, Alex! It's nice of you to come and visit your grandmother.

Alex – Yes, I... Hello, Sister Emmanuelle.

Emmanuelle – The air in here has a distinct scent, doesn't it? Eucalyptus, perhaps? Are you smoking eucalyptus-flavoured cigarettes, Thelma?

Thelma – Well, you see...

Emmanuelle – You're aware that it's strictly against the rules to smoke on the premises, even if they're cigarettes meant for respiratory relief... All right, I'll let you enjoy your family time. Farewell, Alex.

Alex – Goodbye, Sister Emmanuelle.

Thelma – Let's make ourselves scarce.

Alex – Where can we have some privacy?

Thelma – Follow me, and you'll find out. Plus, it's a spot with excellent Wi-Fi connectivity.

Alex – Cool.

They exit, but Thelma forgets her laptop. Gunter, the doctor, returns with Barbara.

Gunter – It seems like things are going rather smoothly this morning, wouldn't you agree, Barbara?

Barbara – All our patients have shown up. It doesn't happen that often. It's almost like a miracle...

Gunter – That's strange; I could have sworn I saw someone in the morgue...

Barbara – Perhaps it was an oversight... Sadly, there are deceased individuals with no one to claim them...

Gunter – I'll take care of it...

Barbara (*provocative*) – Wouldn't you prefer to take care of me instead?

Gunter – Well, you see... We can't just leave an unattended body like that.

Barbara – An unattended body... Doctor Müller, there's one right in front of you. Are you that blind?

Gunter spots the computer and takes the opportunity to make a swift exit.

Gunter – But what do I see?

Barbara – What?

Gunter – An Apple computer.

Barbara (*disappointed*) – Cruel, I'd love to throw that apple in your face...

Gunter – "An Apple a day, keeps the doctor away..."

Barbara – You speak so well English, Gunter! I thought you were German...

Gunter – My grandfather emigrated to Argentina at the end of the war, but I was raised in an English boarding school in Switzerland.

Barbara – I see...

Gunter – In any case, you shouldn't leave something like this lying around... Is it yours?

Barbara – No...

Gunter – I doubt we have many thieves here, but still...

Barbara's attention is drawn to the image on the screen.

Barbara – Indeed, as you mentioned... It's even riskier to leave it out when you're browsing these kinds of websites...

Gunter – What kind of site?

Barbara – A dating site!

Gunter – But our patients...

Barbara – Well... it's a photo of Sister Emmanuelle!

Gunter – You must be kidding...

Barbara – If it's not her, it's a striking resemblance...

Gunter – Let me see...

Barbara – She's using the name Thelma.

Gunter – No?

Barbara – Apparently, when your name is Sister Emmanuelle and you're on a site like this, it's wiser to use a pseudonym to avoid running into unsavoury characters...

Sister Emmanuelle arrives. Gunter and Barbara, utterly surprised, exchange glances.

Emmanuelle – Is everything all right?

Gunter – Everything's fine...

Barbara – More than fine...

Emmanuelle – Excellent...

Barbara – Are you sure you're not forgetting anything, Sister Emmanuelle?

Emmanuelle – I don't think so. Well, see you later...

Sister Emmanuelle proceeds on her way, a bit embarrassed by their staring, and she exits.

Gunter – I would have never expected that from her... She appears so...

Barbara – Yeah... You think you know women...

Gunter – She didn't take her computer...

Barbara – She probably didn't dare... That holier-than-thou...

Gunter – It would've been quite awkward, indeed.

Barbara is about to leave.

Barbara – Are you coming?

Gunter – Yes, yes, I'll be along shortly...

Barbara exits. Gunter hesitates for a moment, then begins typing feverishly on the computer. Thelma returns. Gunter makes a quick exit.

Thelma – Whoa, it's good stuff... (*She spots the computer*) Ah, I thought I had forgotten it there...

Mabel returns with Sandy and Jack.

Thelma – Mabel? I thought you had passed away!

Mabel – Well, as you can see...

Thelma – Fifty more euros down the drain... So who is in the morgue then?

Thelma's attention is drawn to the computer screen.

Thelma – Well, here's a new proposition... It seems I'm quite in demand... (*She types on the keyboard and looks at the screen*) No, not Doctor Müller!

Thelma exits while still looking at her screen. Fred, Mabel's second daughter (or second son), arrives.

Fred – Good morning, Mom... (*More coldly*) Sandy... Jack...

Mabel (*to Sandy*) – Here's your mother.

Sandy – You're my mother. She's my sister...

Mabel – Are you sure? She looks so old...

Jack – We'll leave you now, Sandy, right?

Fred – I'm not kicking you out, am I?

Sandy – We were about to leave.

Sandy kisses Mabel.

Fred – Well, I brought you some fruit jellies...

Mabel – Oh, thank you... Your sister never brings me anything...

Sandy – We brought you a box, Mom. It's right here...

Jack – See you later, Mabel...

Jack and Sandy exit, giving Fred a hostile look. Fred offers the box she brought to Mabel.

Fred – Help yourself to a fruit jelly...

Mabel – Thank you... (*She takes a fruit jelly and eats it*) They're not as good as your sister's...

Fred – So, Mom, have you considered my previous question?

Mabel – What?

Fred – I asked about the box with the gold bars that you claimed to have hidden somewhere in the house...

Mabel – Oh, that...

Fred – Do you recall what you did with it?

Mabel – Yes.

Fred – And then?

Mabel – So what?

Fred – What did you do with it?

Mabel – Well, I think I put it in the attic.

Fred – No?

Mabel – Yes, but I just told your sister...

Fred – That bitch...

Fred exits hastily. Louise arrives.

Louise – Do you want some chocolate? Doctor Müller gave them to me because I just left him my entire fortune...

Mabel – That's very kind of him... What kind of chocolate is it?

Louise – Chocolate gold bars.

Mabel – Oh, I'll take one. It reminds me of my youth. My mother used to give them to me often when I was a child. I still have all the boxes in the attic...

Thelma arrives as well. From behind, she uses a clothespin to pinch the tube of Louise's drip. Mabel sees her. While sporting a mischievous smile, Thelma signals her to stay quiet.

Thelma – I shouldn't do this, I know, but I find it so amusing...

Mabel starts to feel faint. Sister Emmanuelle returns, dressed in flashy gym attire, carrying a large CD player on her shoulder like a streetwise rapper. Like a schoolgirl caught in the act, Thelma discreetly removes the clothespin, and Louise regains her senses.

Emmanuelle – Come on, ladies, it's time to get moving! Gym class awaits.

Thelma – Oh no, not gym...

Sister Emmanuelle presses the play button on the CD player, and an energetic workout soundtrack starts playing.

Emmanuelle – Come on, everyone, let's join in!

Emmanuelle, with great enthusiasm, starts performing impressive step aerobics moves, while the ailing patients half-heartedly attempt to mimic her.

Emmanuelle – Let's see a bit more enthusiasm!

Thelma secretly pinches Louise's IV tube again, and she starts feeling faint once more.

Mabel – Sister Emmanuelle... It seems like Louise overexerted herself...

Emmanuelle – Well, alright, we should probably stop for today, then...

Thelma removes the clothespin from Louise's IV tube, and she gradually regains her senses.

Thelma – We got away with it...

Emmanuelle – Feeling better, Mabel?

Mabel – I'm okay... I had a little fainting spell...

The three patients leave. Gunter arrives and discovers Sister Emmanuelle's rather tight and flashy outfit as she's turning off her CD player before leaving.

Gunter – Well... I must say, I'm discovering a different side of you, Emmanuelle...

Emmanuelle – It's a gym outfit... Do you think it's a bit too...?

Gunter – I never expected such a dazzling display hidden beneath your white coat... Did you receive my message?

Emmanuelle – What message?

Gunter's pager beeps.

Gunter – Excuse me, I've been paged... But we'll continue this conversation later, shall we?

Gunter leaves. Barbara arrives.

Barbara – So, Sister Emmanuelle, working up a sweat?

Emmanuelle – I know, I shouldn't push them too hard, but at the same time...

Barbara – You should also be a bit more discreet...

Emmanuelle – Discreet?

Barbara – We understand each other, don't we... But I warn you, when it comes to Gunter, he's off-limits!

Sister Emmanuelle exits. Gunter returns, looking shocked, pushing a cart in front of him with a body covered by a white sheet.

Gunter – I just found a corpse in the mortuary!

Barbara – It's not that extraordinary, is it? On average, we have two or three every morning...

Gunter – But this is not one of our patients. I'm even beginning to wonder if it's really a human being. It looks like a zombie. Take a look...

Gunter lifts a corner of the sheet, revealing Angela. Louise returns in a wheelchair and sees the corpse.

Louise – Angela!

Barbara – Do you know her?

Louise – She's my niece; she came to visit me earlier!

Barbara – Where did you find her, Doctor?

Gunter – In the mortuary, I'm telling you!

Barbara – Clever place to hide a corpse. It's the last place anyone would think to look...

Gunter covers the body again with the sheet.

Gunter – Do you think it could be a murder?

Barbara – Who knows... Oh, my God! The criminal might still be among us! We need to call the police!

Gunter – I've already done that; I just called the police station. In fact, here they are...

The Captain and his Officer arrive.

Captain – Captain Ramirez, and this is the Officer Sanchez... I hope no one has touched anything.

Gunter – I only transported the body here on this rolling cart...

Captain – Very well, that will save us a needless change of scenery. (*Lifting the sheet to take a look*) Oh my... It's not a pleasant sight... The producer really didn't hold back on the special effects...

Officer – Oh yes, that green goo coming out of its mouth... It's like something out of *The Exorcist*...

Captain – How long ago did this person pass away, Doctor?

Gunter – I have no idea. I'm not a forensic pathologist...

Officer – Don't worry; you'll probably become one...

Captain (*spotting Louise*) – How's it going, Granny, is the soup good here? I hope they're improving the menu for Christmas? Did you get an ice cream log at least?

Barbara – She's the victim's aunt, Captain. She must be in shock...

Captain – Ah, very well... So we already know the victim's identity... That'll save us some time. Sanchez, do me a favour, roll this cart of cold meat a little farther, it seems like it's starting to smell...

Sanchez leaves.

Captain – So, Granny? Don't you want to confess right away? It would relieve your conscience, and I could spend the evening with my family.

Louise – I had given her a wool scarf as a gift. Did she hang herself with it?

Captain – It looks more like poisoning, judging by the colour of the drool coming from her mouth... Did you eat something together when she visited you?

Louise – We had some Cat's Tongue Cookies...

Captain – Apparently, it didn't agree with her... Poor cats... I bet they were black cats... But was it a Christmas meal or a satanic ritual?

Louise – Well, they weren't real cat's tongue cookies... They were low-quality store brand. And then we had a bit of champagne...

Captain – Well, you're certainly living it up! With my retirement, I don't think I'll be able to afford champagne...

Louise – We saved up, too! And besides, it's not Christmas every day... And in my condition, there's no guarantee I'll see another one.

Captain – You don't know how lucky you are... Christmas has always made me a bit down... even as a child...

Louise – I see... you don't need to tell me about your unhappy childhood, Captain.

Captain – Fair enough... Now, let's return to your relationship with your late niece, Madam. Was it strained?

Louise – Well, she did come to visit me, seemingly hoping for a piece of the inheritance pie. But when you have only a few months left and millions in the bank, it's hard to believe in entirely selfless visits, you know?

Captain – That could explain why she wanted to relieve your suffering, but not the other way around... Did you put her in your will as a token of gratitude for her visits?

Louise – Gratitude... that's one way to put it.

Captain – After all, visiting the terminally ill in a hospital is no joyride. Not to mention the expenses: flowers, sweets, magazines... One could argue it deserves compensation, couldn't they?

Louise – In the end, I left everything to Doctor Müller.

Captain – A wise choice, I dare say. This Doctor Müller does seem like a saintly man...

Sanchez returns.

Officer – Captain, we've just identified the victim's vehicle. It's a black car of car with a greyish hue, parked in the hospital's disabled spot...

Captain – And what conclusions can you draw from that, Sanchez?

Officer – Well, it seems the victim wasn't handicapped...

Captain – That's a detail the autopsy will confirm. By the way, have you assigned someone to this case?

Officer – Yes, Captain... Doctor Müller is handling it...

Captain (*to Sanchez who is still there*) – What's on your mind?

Officer – I was thinking that... we might have found the motive for the crime...

Captain – What motive?

Officer – Perhaps a disabled person seeking revenge for their parking spot being taken?

Captain – Well done, Sanchez. We won't overlook this lead. For now, please escort the elderly lady out, and bring in the next witness...

Officer – Which witness, Captain?

Captain – I don't know, anyone available... (*Sanchez takes Louise away.*) These young ones need everything spelled out for them...

The Captain examines the area. He picks up a vial from the ground and tries in vain to read the label. Sanchez returns with Sister Emmanuelle.

Captain – What does it say on this, Sanchez? I seem to have misplaced my glasses...

Officer – Poison, Captain... Do you think this might be related to the poisoning?

Captain – Honestly, I'm skeptical... But we'll send it to the lab to determine if it's a toxic substance...

Officer – Understood, Captain...

Sanchez takes the vial and leaves.

Captain – Now, Sister, it's our turn... To begin, what inspired you to become a nun? A beautiful woman like you...

Emmanuelle – I am wedded to Our Lord... My life is dedicated to aiding others...

Captain – In that case, we're somewhat in the same line of work.

Emmanuelle – By different means, nonetheless...

Captain – The ways of the Lord are mysterious... Have you observed any unusual occurrences in the vicinity recently?

Emmanuelle – Such as?

Captain – I trust you're not engaged in any witchcraft, dark rituals, human sacrifices, or exorcisms, are you?

Emmanuelle – No, Captain.

Captain – A bit of euthanasia now and then, perhaps?

Emmanuelle – That's entirely against the principles of my religion, Captain.

Captain – Really? I was unaware. I'll have to reread the Quran one of these days...

Emmanuelle – And it's not one of our end-of-life patients who passed away, but a young woman who came to visit one of them...

Captain – You think you're shortening a dying person's suffering, and you end up claiming a young life. Nobody is safe from a medical mistake...

Emmanuelle – I'm a qualified nurse...

Captain – Come now, Sister... Don't tell me that it has never happened here that a patient comes to have their haemorrhoids removed and leaves with a missing leg...

Emmanuelle – Do you have any more questions for me, Captain? My patients need me...

Captain – That will be all for now, but I'd ask you to remain at the disposal of the police until further notice.

Emmanuelle – What do you mean?

Captain – We'll try to avoid the electronic monitoring bracelet for now, but if you had planned a little trip to a country without an extradition agreement with USA, I would ask you to postpone it...

Emmanuelle – I had only planned a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Guadalupe for New Year's...

Captain – Very well, we'll issue you a special permission to go pay your respects to Nuestra Señora...

Emmanuelle – Thank you, Captain.

Captain – Go in the peace of the Lord, dear child.

Emmanuelle exits. Sanchez returns.

Captain – So, how did the search go, Sanchez?

Officer – The usual, Captain... A bit of marijuana, handguns, cash stashed under mattresses... I even found some morphine...

Captain – Morphine... Where are we headed? To a hospital, can you believe it? But when you say cash under mattresses...

Officer – I mean liquid cash, Captain: Dollars, Euros, Pesos... I even found a few Pesetas...

Captain – Ah, the Pesetas! Those were the days, right, Sanchez? The Spanish Costa Brava at an affordable price, the civil guards with their peculiar tricorne hats, General Franco on TV with his sunglasses... What an orator he was! It doesn't make us any younger, Sanchez...

Officer – But what worries me, Captain, is more this...

He leaves and returns with a stack of boxes.

Captain – What's this, Sanchez? Do you think it's time for your Christmas shopping? We have an investigation to solve, for heaven's sake!

Officer – Fruit jellies, Captain. Exactly twenty-four boxes...

Captain – I see what's going on... And where did you find this?

Officer – Under a patient's bed. A certain Mabel. I wonder if that might be an alias... No one is named Mabel these days...

Captain – I agree with you, Sanchez... I think we've got a promising lead. Send this to the lab as well... It's not going to explode, is it?

Officer – Most of these products have exceeded their use-by date.

Captain – And have you interrogated this Mabel?

Officer – She's a real tough nut; I couldn't get anything out of her... I thought you might be more skilled at it... Everyone knows your qualities as a psychologist when it comes to questioning the most difficult witnesses... I've brought her to you...

Captain – You did well, Sanchez... Bring in Madame...

Sanchez leaves briefly and returns with Mabel.

Captain – Sit down here, Mabel, please...

Sanchez leaves. Right away, the Captain slaps Mabel.

Mabel – Are you out of your mind?

Captain – I used to prefer the phone books, but nowadays, with the internet, they're hard to come by... So, are you going to talk?

Mabel – You haven't even asked me any questions yet!

Captain – Right... And these fruit jellies, of course, you're going to tell me they were for your personal consumption?

Mabel – Everyone insists on bringing me fruit jellies, Captain... I can't stand them... Do you like fruit jellies?

Captain – Well... (*He takes one and tastes it*) Yes, they're not that bad...

Mabel – What I like is gold bars... My mother used to give me some when I was little. Do you like gold bars, Captain?

Captain – Gold bars?

Fred, Mabel's daughter, arrives.

Fred – Oh, Mom... Forgive me for barging in, Captain, but I had to talk to you... (*She takes him aside and speaks to him in a low voice*) Did you get her to spill the beans?

Captain – About what, dear lady...

Fred – The gold bars! Did she tell you where she hid them, or not?

Captain – Not yet, but it won't be long. Trust the police...

Fred – Don't hesitate to use somewhat... forceful methods. I thought it was my sister who found them, but she assures me that's not the case...

Captain – Really?

Fred – I'll leave you to do your job... Keep me informed, please?

Captain – I won't forget, dear lady.

Fred exits.

Captain – What greed, all the same... Tearing each other apart in the family over chocolates...

Sanchez returns.

Officer – I took the liberty of questioning some witnesses myself, Captain, and all their statements match: the food is terrible in this place...

Mabel – Ah, yes, I can confirm that! It's awful!

Officer – I even found spoiled meat in the fridge.

Captain – In addition to our cadaver, you mean? Just kidding...

Officer – I'll head back, and I'll keep you posted if there are any updates...

Captain – Good, get rid of this witch for me, and bring me Barbara.

Officer – Barbara, the nurse?

Captain – That's right...

Sanchez leaves with Mabel. Barbara arrives.

Captain – Ah, dear lady... Please have a seat...

Barbara – You can call me Barbara. (*She sits down, crossing her legs.*) Did you have a question for me, Captain?

Captain (*disturbed*) – Um... yes. But oddly enough, right now, I can't remember...

Barbara – I have all the time in the world...

Captain – Ah, yes, there it is... Do you have any reason to suspect your boss, Dr. Müller, of conducting prohibited medical experiments on his patients?

Barbara – Like the Nazi doctors, you mean?

Captain – He has a Germanic-sounding name... and he's a doctor. Admit that it's a hypothesis not to be overlooked... Even if it's just a hypothesis...

Barbara – Dr. Müller? I don't think so, Captain. Besides, Gunter is Swiss...

Captain – There were also Nazis in Switzerland... In German-speaking Switzerland, at least...

Barbara – That's a page of history I knew nothing about, Captain...

Captain – Let's assume... But Dr. Müller could also be secretly administering genetically modified corn to his patients to see if they develop tumours? We're aware of the sometimes incestuous relationships that the medical profession has with pharmaceutical companies...

Barbara – It's true that almost all of our patients already have tumours... But that doesn't fit with the character, Mr. Captain... Dr. Müller is a completely selfless doctor. Have you heard of his foundation for orphans who have no parents?

Captain – Let's forget about that, dear friend. It was just a routine interrogation, and I won't keep you any longer... (*Barbara gets up to leave*) Ah, Barbara, one last little question...

Barbara – Yes, Inspector Columbo...

Captain – Especially after eating spicy dishes like couscous or chorizo, I have terrible itching... in a place that decency prevents me from naming in a play... Do you know what it might be?

Barbara – Your posterior, I imagine...

Captain – No, I mean, what disease... Do you think it's serious?

Barbara – Probably just a little problem with haemorrhoids... I'll arrange an appointment for you with Dr. Müller after the holidays. In the meantime, avoid excesses...

Captain – Thank you, Barbara, I already feel relieved...

Barbara leaves. Sanchez returns.

Captain – So, Sanchez, how are your investigations going?

Officer – This hospital is a real mess, Captain: drug trafficking, underground betting, financial exploitation, money laundering, call girls recruited on the internet...

Captain – And the autopsy?

Officer – On that front, we've made some progress too. The autopsy revealed that the victim had consumed a significant quantity of Cat's Tongue cookies.

Captain – No fruit jellies, are you sure?

Officer – Only Cat's Tongues, and their use-by date was over a week ago... I found the packaging in the trash.

Captain – Well done, Sanchez! This is probably the cause of death... Stale cat's tongue cookies don't forgive. Now we need to determine if it's poisoning or just an accidental overdose...

Officer – There's something else, Captain...

Captain – What now?

Officer – The autopsy revealed that the victim wasn't actually dead before the autopsy...

Captain – So what?

Officer – Well... Dr. Müller tried to put everything back together more or less...

Captain – The victim was found in a mortuary room... That's probably what led the doctors to make a mistake. This goes to show, Sanchez, you should always be wary of hasty conclusions...

Officer – One last thing, Captain... I examined the computers...

Captain – And?

Officer – Bingo! I just arrested a guy who had a date with a hospital staff member he met on the internet...

Captain – Introduce him, Sanchez, introduce him...

Sanchez brings in Gunter and Emmanuelle.

Captain – You, Dr. Müller? And you, my sister?

Gunter – I can explain everything, Captain...

Captain – Confess to me, Doctor...

Gunter – I've been secretly in love with Sister Emmanuelle since her arrival at our institution. When I accidentally discovered her profile on a dating site, I created a pseudonym and proposed a date... To my surprise, she accepted without realizing who I was... (*Turning to Emmanuelle*) Emmanuelle, I hope you're not too disappointed...

Emmanuelle – But it must be the work of the Devil, Captain! I don't use dating sites, I assure you!

Captain – Come on, Sister Emmanuelle, no need to act like a startled virgin... You know, sooner or later, we've all surfed on those kinds of sites...

Sanchez arrives.

Officer – I'll bring the victim, Captain... Trust me, it's a real resurrection... I attended the autopsy myself, there were organs all over the place...

Captain (*to Gunter*) – Well done! Dr. Frankenstein couldn't have done better...

Angela staggers in, her appearance even more zombie-like than before, coloured drool oozing from the corner of her mouth.

Gunter – I did my best, but if you plan to question her, you might want to be quick...

Captain – You're right... It's not every day you get the chance to interrogate a murder victim...

Angela (*in a ghostly voice*) – May you all burn in hell!

Emmanuelle – It's the Antichrist, and the Lord has chosen me to face it. (*She opens her coat to reveal her fluorescent workout attire and assumes a karate stance, making a few intimidating moves*). Vade retro Satanus!

Emmanuelle strikes Angela with a fatal blow. Sanchez leans over the body.

Officer – This time, she appears to be genuinely deceased, Captain...

Emmanuelle – The Forces of Good have vanquished the Forces of Evil... Now, you may deal with me as you see fit...

Captain – Don't tempt me, Sister Emmanuelle... But as for the dearly departed you've just dispatched, we shall adhere to the official narrative... We'll claim the victim had already passed before the autopsy...

Officer – We're not monsters, after all. We're not going to put a nun in prison.

Captain – Especially a nun who has recently discovered true love through the internet...

Barbara arrives, furious, closely followed by Thelma.

Thelma – But I'm telling you that Thelma is me!

Barbara (*to Emmanuelle*) – Bitch. I warned you to stay away from Gunter!

Barbara lunges at Emmanuelle, and they start a fight.

Officer – Perhaps we should consider separating them, Captain?

Captain (*fascinated*) – Let's wait a bit longer...

Mabel and Louise enter.

Thelma – I bet on the brunette, how about you?

Mabel – Fifty euros on the blonde...

Fred enters and confronts Mabel.

Fred – What have you done with the gold bars, you old hag?

Mabel – Well, I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about! Captain!

Fred – Don't worry, Captain, it's just a minor family dispute...

Fred grabs Mabel by the collar and begins to shake her.

Fred – You're going to spill the beans, you old hag!

Captain – I believe we can consider this case resolved, Sanchez. We are the upholders of law and order,, and I think we can say that order has been restored.

Officer – Great work, Captain. Another case successfully closed. Well done...

Captain – Thank you, Sanchez. Will you be spending Christmas with your family tonight?

Officer – Unfortunately, Captain, I'm a police orphan. I have no family left.

Captain – You might not realize how fortunate you are, Sanchez...

Officer – My father died in the line of duty. He served under your command, and he was proud of it... That's why I wanted to join your unit, Captain.

Captain – Our words touch me, Sanchez. Consider me like a father to you, and I won't let you spend a day like today alone.

Officer – I knew I could rely on you, Captain...

Captain – Here comes Dr. Müller. With his Foundation, supported by generous end-of-life donors like Mabel, he takes care of orphans who have no parents, just like you. I'm sure he can make sure you won't be alone on Christmas Eve. Is that right, Doctor?

Officer – Thank you, Captain.

Captain – I'll leave you, Sanchez... They're awaiting me at home, and I'm in charge of stuffing the Christmas turkey... Merry Christmas, everyone!

The Captain exits as the quarrels continue among those remaining, while some observe. Ambulance and police sirens merge into the soundscape...

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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