

La Comédiathèque

FRIDAY The 13Th

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English translation
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Friday the 13th

English translation by Anne-Christine Gasc

John and Christine have invited two of their friends for dinner at their home in London. Patrick arrives without his wife, distraught, having just heard that the plane bringing her home crashed at sea. Together with the potential widower, they wait with bated breath for news confirming whether his wife is among the survivors... and learn that they are the winners of that evening's super jackpot lottery draw. From that moment, the operative phrase becomes “controlling emotions”. And that is just the beginning of an eventful evening, filled with twists, turns, and shocking revelations.

Characters

John
Christine
Patrick
Natalie (optional)

*Alternate versions of this play are available
for 2 women and 1 man, for 3 women and for 3 men.*

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The living room of a chic boho flat still showing a few signs of its past splendour. An avant-garde painting is propped up against the back wall. Everything else is already packed in boxes. In a corner, a decorated Christmas tree. The stage is empty. The phone rings and we hear the recorded message:

John (*off*) – Hi! You have reached John and Christine. We've been held up at the fraud squad for a tax evasion investigation but leave us a message after the beep and we'll get back to you when we're released from custody. Over to you...

We hear the beep, followed by the message that the caller is leaving on the answering machine:

Natalie (*off*) – Hey, it's Natalie. How are you? Oh shit, of course you can't hear me... Listen, we're still on for tonight but...

John enters the room, a Lidl bag in one hand and an ASDA bag in the other. Having no free hands he doesn't pick up the phone, but stands listening to the rest of the message.

Natalie (*off*) – ... we'll arrive a little later than planned, maybe 8:30pm. My plane lands in Luton. I'll take a train home, drop off my suitcase and jump in the car with Patrick... Thanks for the suitcase, by the way. I'll bring it back with me. Right, see ya! And keep it simple guys... It's just a casual dinner between friends...

John drops his bags in the kitchen and returns with house wine in a wine box. He removes his raincoat and takes a decanter from a cupboard. He opens the wine box, places a funnel on the decanter and starts to fill it. Christine enters the room.

Christine – Hi! How was your day?

John – Natalie called, they'll be a little late.

Christine – Oh good, we could use the extra time, we're not quite ready...

She removes her coat.

Christine – It's freezing, isn't it? It's even colder in here than outside...

John – I turned off the heating. I thought we agreed we should try to save money?

Christine finally notices what he's doing.

Christine (*surprised*) – What are you doing?

John – As you can see, I'm decanting the wine. Wine should breathe. Makes it taste better. Apparently.

Christine – Did you really need to splash out on a vintage...? Because all things being equal, I'd rather save on wine than heating...

John – It's a house wine. Don't ask me whose house. Not a local one for sure. £1.24, a litre at Lidl. A Christmas promotion...

Christine – So why are you decanting it?

John (*narky*) – It was recommended by the sommelier at Lidl. It will ensure this precious nectar releases all its subtle aromas of red fruit and vanilla. With a hint of grape finish... (*seriously*) Why do you think? Do you want me to put the wine box on the table and serve it from the tap?

Christine – Oh, right...

John – And anyway, it can't hurt this plonk to get some oxygen. House wine is like tap water. It's safer if it's had time to rest before drinking. So the toxic fumes evaporate and the heavy metals fall to the bottom...

Christine – Did you remember to buy something for dinner?

John – I got an artichoke quiche from Iceland, just needs defrosting.

Christine – An artichoke quiche?

John – It was another promotion... We can serve it with a lettuce salad...

Christine – I'll prepare the drinks.

Christine takes out the glasses.

Christine – Did you stop at the job centre?

John – Yeah...

Christine – And?

John – They offered me a work experience placement...

Christine – Work experience...?

John – Restoration work...

Christine – But... you are a computer engineer!

John – Apparently one must be flexible to find work nowadays...

Christine – Well sure, but... Before you lost your job you were in management. What will you manage holding a can of turps and an old rag?

John – More like how will I manage...

Christine – Did you go to the interview?

John (*speaking about the painting propped up against the wall*) – I took the opportunity to have our painting appraised...

Christine – Oh, yes... the piece of shit you bought for a fortune decades years ago from your friend from art school...

John – It was right after his first suicide attempt... To help him out. And I thought it could only gain in value...

Christine – Well if it means we can afford to pay for heating... So, how much did he appraise this masterpiece for, your art expert?

John – A little over a hundred pounds...

Christine – But you bought it for 1,500!

John – Ah, but you know how much Van Gogh's paintings increased in value after his death!

Christine – Let's just hope your genius painter friend succeeds at killing himself before we die of exposure... (*Sighing*) We can't even hope that the frame will be worth anything because there isn't one...

John – That's the problem with modern art...

Christine – Speaking of which, I hope Natalie will pay us back the 1,000 Pounds you generously loaned her. It would pay for the storage unit while we wait for the council flat that Labour Party cousin of yours promised us... Did you remind her?

John – About the council flat?

Christine – Natalie! About the 1,000 Pounds!

John – I'm not sure it's the right time... It's not easy for them either at the moment. You know that British Telecom just relocated her to a call centre in Manchester? Can you imagine? Manchester! She used to be head of HR in the City... and Patrick's substitute teacher gig doesn't help much...

Christine – Yeah, well, I substitute for everyone at work, including myself! And we still can't afford to pay our bills!

John – Okay, I'll remind her tonight...

The phone rings.

Christine – That must be them... (*She picks up the phone.*) Hello...? Yes, hi Patrick, how are you?... Oh, okay... No, no... No worries, Patrick... Okay, we'll wait for you... See you in a minute, Patrick... (*She hangs up.*) That was Patrick.

John – I don't know why, but when you picked up the phone and said 'Hi Patrick' I immediately thought it might be him...

Christine – Natalie's flight is delayed so he's driving here on his own...

John – What about Natalie?

Christine – He left a message on her voicemail for her to meet us here. We'll start the drinks without her.

John – I don't understand why she had to take a plane to come back from Manchester...

Christine – Especially since they land in Luton. But you know, now with low cost airlines a return trip to Manchester is cheaper than a Tube ticket...

John comes close to her and takes her in his arms.

John – Come on, we'll get through this.

Christine – I know... And as long as we've got each other nothing bad can happen, right?

John – I'd rather drink house wine with you than sip Cristal champagne with anyone else.

Christine – Our fortune will turn, I can feel it. It's almost Christmas. And it's Friday the 13th today, isn't it?

John – Maybe we'll win the lottery.

Christine – We don't play...

John – I bought a ticket the other day when we went to visit your mother in Brighton... I played my job seeker's number...

Christine – I feel better already...

They kiss.

John – What about Patrick? Is he on his way?

Christine – He's been driving around for 15 minutes looking for a parking spot... I'm sure if they had a Smart, like us, instead of that huge Mercedes 4x4, they'd park much more easily...

John – They have two kids. A Smart only has two seats.

Christine – They could make do with a smaller car! I thought they were having money problems...

John – What he really need is to learn how to parallel park a truck.

Christine starts placing bottles on the table. The doorbell rings.

Christine – See? Don't be mean... Can you get the door...?

John opens the door.

John – Hi Patrick! What happened? You look like you've seen a ghost...

Patrick enters with John. He has a bottle of champagne in one hand and does look like he's about to collapse.

Patrick (*in tears*) – You think you're joking...

Christine walks over to Patrick, panicked.

Christine – What's wrong Patrick?

Patrick – I was about to turn off the radio in the car before stepping out... It was the news... (*a pause*) Natalie's plane crashed in the Channel...

John – The Channel?

Christine – Are you sure it was her plane?

John – She was flying from Manchester...

Patrick – It was a low cost carrier, with a stopover in Brussels. They gave the flight number and the name of the company. There's no doubt. The plane disappeared over the Channel...

Patrick bursts into tears. John and Christine exchange desperate looks, not knowing what to do.

Christine – Look, they might still find it...

John – The Channel isn't that big...

Christine – Maybe the pilot managed to land the plane on the water...

John – Between two oil tankers...

Christine – It's happened before...

John – Not very often, but it has happened...

Patrick (*weakly*) – You think so...?

Christine – What did they say on the radio? Did they say there were no survivors?

Patrick – They don't know yet...

Christine – See? There you go!

John – And flying remains the safest way to travel! According to statistics when you fly you only have about one chance in a million to die. About as much as winning the lottery so...

Christine looks at him, appalled.

Patrick (*crushed*) – Why did it have to be Natalie... I told her not to fly on Friday the 13th ...

John – On the other hand it's only the Channel... On the plus side they'll be able to find the black box...

Patrick breaks down again.

Patrick – Oh my god, but what will I do without her? With two children and a mortgage...

John and Christine, powerless, look at each other, at a loss for what to do.

Patrick (*pathetic*) – And we still owe you 1,000 Pounds...

Christine – What are you talking about? That doesn't matter!

Patrick hands the bottle of champagne to John.

Patrick – Here, I brought a bottle of champagne to thank you. If only I'd known...

John – Cristal... Shit, that's the good stuff.

Patrick – It's a nightmare... Tell me this isn't happening!

John (*suddenly suspicious*) – It's not a joke, is it?

Christine throws daggers at him.

Christine – Come, sit down. Let's see if we can catch the news on TV and see if we can find out more.

Christine turns on the TV. It's the adverts.

Advert (*off*) – Can you tell the difference between these two caskets? It's the price! Use PriceComparison.com, because life is expensive but death doesn't have to be...

Christine quickly changes the channel.

Voice (*off*) – Leo, this isn't your lucky day...

Patrick – I'm a Leo...

Voice (*off*) – Avoid travelling...

Christine – But it wasn't you on the plane...

Voice (*off*) – But if you really must travel, then take the train rather than flying...

Patrick – Natalie is a Leo too...

Christine – Let's listen to the radio instead...

Voice (*off*) –... 60 million Pounds. That's the amount that the winner of today's Friday the 13th super draw will take home. Stay tuned for the draw that will take place in a few minutes...

Christine changes the station.

Newsreader (*off*) – We are still without news from flight 31½ from Discount Travel flying from Manchester to London, via Brussels and Dublin...

Patrick – See, it's really her...

Newsreader (*off*) – The pilot appears to have triggered a distress signal just before the plane disappeared off the radars. Of course we'll keep you informed as soon as we have more information...

Christine turns off the radio.

Christine – We should wait... There's nothing else we can do for now... Let me get you a drink, it'll make you feel better.

John – Maybe not the champagne...

Patrick (*seeing the decanter*) – I'll have a glass of wine. Since it's already open...

Christine – Are you sure you don't want something else?

Patrick – Wine'll be fine, really...

John pours a glass and hands it to Patrick who drinks it all in one go. The other two watch him, a little worried.

Patrick (*to John*) – See, with all that's happening to me I can't appreciate anything... I can't even taste a good vintage...

John – Yeah...

Patrick (*suddenly panicked*) – Oh my god, my mother!

Christine – She was in the plane too?

Patrick – The children are with her. If they're watching TV...

Patrick grabs his mobile and presses some buttons.

Patrick – Hello, Mum? Yes, I know, I know... Are the children watching TV? They're in bed? (*Breathing a sigh of relief*) I really don't want to talk about it now... I'll call you back, okay...? Listen, keep your condolences for later... She isn't dead yet...! Yes, it's likely but it's not confirmed so if you would please... You've always hated her anyway... How many times have you told me she wasn't the right woman for me... that I could have done better... Oh, piss off!

Patrick hangs up, furious. John and Christine look at him feeling both a little sorry and a little embarrassed.

Patrick – She could never stand Natalie... I'm sure that, deep down, she's happy this is happening...

Christine – Come on, you don't mean that...

Patrick – On our wedding day she pretended my father was ill so they didn't have to come to the ceremony.

John – But your father was really ill, wasn't he? Didn't he die a few months later...?

Patrick – Yes, on the day Maxime was born... Just to piss me off...

Christine – Do you want me to get you a sedative?

Patrick – I'm sorry to bother you with all this... I don't want to ruin your evening. (*He stands up to leave*). It's best if I leave.

Christine – What are you talking about, Patrick? We're friends, aren't we? What are friends for if you can't count on them in situations like this?

Patrick (*sitting back down*) – I knew I could count on you... And I'll admit that I wasn't looking forward to staying at home all alone, staring at the Christmas tree, hanging on to every word coming out of the radio, waiting for the verdict...

John – Speaking of which, we should probably try again in case there's more news...

Patrick – I wonder if I really want to know... (*A pause*) Go on, turn it on...

Christine – Okay.

Christine turns on the radio.

Newsreader (*off*) –...planes flying over the area have spotted a large oil slick on the surface of the water. It's not clear whether it comes from the plane of the Not Too Expensive Travel Discount Airways which, as you know, crashed in the Channel just under an hour ago. We are on stand-by for an update from our roaming reporter who joined one of the rescue helicopters... Meanwhile, in other news, the lottery numbers...

Patrick – An oil slick... That means the plane did crash... How can there be any survivors?

John and Christine don't know what to say to lift his spirits.

Newsreader (*off*) –... and the winning numbers are 1 5 2 7 9 6 and the bonus number is 10.

John stops in his tracks.

Christine – If the pilot managed to land the plane on the water, it's possible that some passengers were able to exit before it sunk to the bottom...

Newsreader (*off*) – And the lucky winner will pocket the tidy sum of 60 million Pounds. Enough to plan the future with...

Christine turns off the radio.

John – It's...

Patrick – What?

John – No, nothing...

Christine – You've been on a plane before. Remember what the flight attendants tell you before takeoff? The oxygen masks that fall automatically, the life vests under your seat, the emergency exits on both sides of the aircraft, the evacuation slides, you know...? They don't have emergency procedures for nothing... They plan for everything...

John takes out a Jobcentre card and looks at it more or less discreetly.

Patrick – Flight attendants... You know very well that no one listens to what they say.

John (*to Christine who isn't paying him any attention*) – Fuck!

Patrick – Take John for example. Do you know what they say?

John is totally taken by surprise.

John – What? Who?

Patrick (*to Christine*) – See... What did I tell you...

Christine (*to John*) – The flight attendants, what do they say before takeoff? In case of... loss of cabin pressure, for example.

John (*losing his mind*) – They... the parachutes are under your seat, the snorkel will fall from the ceiling, the flippers are in the glove box, is that what you mean?

Christine looks at John reproachfully.

Christine (*to Patrick*) – And no one called you?

Patrick – Natalie is probably at the bottom of the Channel by now. How is she supposed to call me?

John is miles away and has turned on the TV again.

Newsreader (*off*) – Once again, the winning numbers for tonight's draw, Friday the 13th, are 1 5 2 7 9 6 and the bonus number is 10. The jackpot of 60 million Pounds is...

John checks his Jobcentre card once again.

John – Oh fuck...

Christine turns off the TV.

Christine – No, I mean... There must be a support unit... In these cases there's always a support unit... To notify the families... Support them... You know...

John (*to Christine*) – Can I have a word?

Christine – What?

John – In private...

Patrick's mobile phone rings.

Christine – See, that's probably them right now...

Patrick – I'm not sure I want to know...

The phone continues to ring.

Christine – Do you want me to take the call for you?

Patrick – Oh, would you...?

Christine takes the call.

Christine – Hello... Yes... No... Oh, okay... Oh, right... No, no... Yes, yes, of course we're very happy. Right, thank you...

Christine puts the phone down.

Patrick – So?

Christine (*in a trance*) – It was Natalie's gynaecologist... About the results of her tests.

Patrick – Well?

Christine – Well... She actually is pregnant...

Patrick (*falling to pieces*) – Oh my God...

Christine – You didn't know?

Patrick – No...

Christine – She probably wanted to surprise you... Want me to pour another glass of wine?

Patrick – I think I could use one...

Christine refills Patrick's glass.

John (*to Christine*) – Err... I really need to talk to you about something...

Christine (*to John*) – Do you really think this is the time?

John – It's very important, I promise...

Patrick notices the painting.

Patrick – It's very strange, this painting, don't you think...?

Christine – Um... Yes, a bit, I guess...

Christine hands the glass of wine to Patrick.

Patrick – The painter must have been seriously depressed. (*To John*) Is it a friend of yours?

John – Yes, sort of... He's Hungarian, I think.

Patrick – Oh yes, you can tell. (*To John*) Did he kill himself?

Christine – Not yet, unfortunately...

Patrick empties his glass in one gulp.

Patrick (*to Christine*) – Here, pour me another one...

Christine – I don't know whether you should be drinking that much. Come on, as long as there's life, there's hope... Don't forget you're going to be a dad.

John (*who doesn't know what to say*) – So, you're expecting a little one?

Christine glares at him.

John (*to Christine*) – I really need to speak with you...

Patrick – You're right, I'm getting dizzy. I'm going on the balcony for some fresh air.

Christine – Do you want me to come with you?

Patrick – Thanks, but I need to be alone for a while...

Christine – Sure.

Patrick goes out onto the balcony. John waits impatiently for him to disappear from view.

John – You'll never guess what just happened...!

Christine (*absentmindedly*) – Pregnant... Can you believe it?

John – You're pregnant? But that's wonderful! See, only fifteen minutes ago I would have likened this to a natural disaster. But now I see the positive side of everything. Do you know why?

Christine – I'm not the one that's pregnant!

John – Oh that's right... My bad...

Christine – It's true, you actually don't listen to a word we say...

John – Who's pregnant then?

Christine – Natalie! Can you imagine? On the same day, he finds out that his wife disappeared in a plane crash and that she's expecting his child...

John – How do you know it's his?

Christine (*gobsmacked*) – I don't know... Call it female intuition? I mean, since the first two children are his, and Patrick is her husband, it's the first name that came to me. I know, stupid, huh?

John – Anyway, that's not the point... Guess what?

Christine – What?

John – We won!

Christine (*looking towards the balcony*) – Oh my God!

John – I know... shocking, right?

Christine – Patrick! He's going over the railing!

John turns around and sees the situation.

John – Oh bloody hell! What a pain in the ass, this one... Let him jump so we can get this over with. We're on the first floor anyway, he won't get hurt, not really...

Not listening to him, Christine moves towards the window.

Christine – Patrick, please! Don't do it! Think of your children! It's Christmas after all...

Patrick – Promise me that you'll take care of them if I jump. That you won't let them be taken into care?

Christine – Yes, I promise...

John – Great, what next...?

Christine – I mean, no don't jump! (*To John*) Say something!

John – Couldn't your mother take the kids?

Patrick – I'd rather they went into care.

Christine – We should probably call emergency services...

John – Hang on, it's not a matter of life or death. I'll get him down.

Patrick – Don't come near me or I jump!

Christine – What do we do?

John – Hang on, I'll be right back...

Christine – Don't leave me alone!

John disappears in the hallway.

Patrick (*poignantly*) – I'm going to crash land too... Like a plane without wings... I'll be reunited with my Natalie...

Christine – Do you really think that's what she would have wanted? I mean, she would probably prefer you stay alive to take care of the children. And what if she isn't dead. Imagine if she rings the doorbell only to find you mangled under the balcony.

It's not the doorbell that rings but Patrick's mobile phone.

Christine – See? I bet it's her... Go on, take the call...

Patrick (*hesitating*) – Yes...?

Christine (*in the direction John left*) – I hope it's not the gynaecologist again. To tell him it's twins...

Patrick – Yes, I'm listening... Are you sure? Okay. No, no, don't worry. Sure, thanks, I'll stay by the phone...

Christine – What is it?

Patrick – It was them... The support unit...

Christine – And?

Patrick – They found a few survivors... Natalie could be one of them...

Christine – But that's wonderful! See? Imagine you'd jumped, in a moment of desperation...

John returns.

John – Yes, imagine that... He might have sprained an ankle or something...

Christine – Come on, get down from there... (*To John*) The support unit just called. They found some survivors...

John – I know...

Christine – You heard?

John – I'm the one who called him.

Christine – What?

John – I had to find a way to get him down...

Patrick walks into the room.

Patrick – You're right... I have to keep hoping for the best. I have to believe Natalie is still alive. I know I do...

Christine glares at John.

Christine – Maybe don't get too carried away just yet... And how do they know Natalie might be among the survivors?

Patrick – They spotted a woman hanging on to a suitcase. She's shouting: Patrick! Patrick!...

Christine glares at John again.

Patrick – How do they know my name?

Christine – Good question, how do they know your name...?

John – I'll just shut the door, alright? And don't let him near it again, okay?

Christine – What are we going to tell him when the real support unit calls?

John – There's bound to be more than one passenger on board with a husband called Patrick. Not to mention their lovers...

Patrick – I completely forgot to take down their phone number... I wanted to ask them if I could come help with the search. Oh wait, I can press redial...

Christine (*authoritative*) – I wouldn't do that if I were you...

Patrick is surprised.

Christine – They must be completely overwhelmed, you know. As soon as they have concrete news they'll call you...

John – I really need to speak to you.

Christine – Go ahead...

John – Privately...

Christine – We can't leave him alone. Imagine if the police call to confirm Natalie's death and he decides to really jump over the balcony?

John – Then let's go talk on the balcony!

Christine – I'm disappointed, John. Very disappointed... I thought you were a better friend than that. This is Patrick we're talking about! Your high school buddy! And Natalie, my best friend! They were best man and maid of honour at our wedding. I think we can give up an evening together to help him in his pain and misfortune!

John – We won the lottery.

Christine – How much?

John – 60 million.

Patrick – I'll have that second drink, in the end. All these emotions...

Christine (*harshly*) – Well, you know where the decanter is by now, don't you? Or do you want me to bring you the wine box with a straw?

Patrick takes it on the chin.

Patrick – Okay, I think I'll leave you to it... I don't want to overstay my welcome.

Christine pulls herself together.

Christine – I'm sorry. That's not what I meant. (*She pours Patrick another glass of wine.*) We're all a bit in shock, aren't we? You should eat something too, or you're going to be sick... (*To John quietly while Patrick empties his glass*) I think it's time to offload your artichoke quiche...

John leaves for the kitchen.

Christine – We were very close to her too. So naturally we're also deeply upset by Natalie's death (*Correcting herself*) I mean, by the possibility of her disappearance... At the same time, one should know how to move on, don't you think? You only live once, and all that.

John returns with a slice of pie and hands it to Christine.

Christine (*handing the slice of pie to Patrick*) – You have to learn to enjoy the good things in life...

Patrick takes a bite of pie.

Patrick – It's not bad... What is it?

Christine (*hypocritical*) – John does the cooking. What is it again...?

Patrick (*with his mouth full*) – Oh, as long as it's not artichoke. It's the only food I'm allergic to. I can't even remember what it tastes like. The only time I ate some was at my grandmother's in Wales. I had to be taken to A&E...

The other two look at each other with dismay.

Patrick – The good thing about artichoke is that you're not about to eat one without knowing...

Christine rips the slice of pie from Patrick's hand and mouth.

Christine – Right, are you ready for dessert...?

Patrick, caught off-guard, doesn't seem to be feeling well.

Patrick – I think I'm going to throw up... See, normally I can hold my drink without any problem. Especially with delicious food like that... Must be the stress...

He leaves in the direction of the bathroom.

Once Patrick is out of earshot, Christine unleashes her excitement.

Christine – Are you sure?

John (*showing his Jobcentre card*) – My Jobcentre number! They drew the same numbers! They just announced it on the radio! Didn't you hear? 60 million Pounds, can you believe it? We have enough to buy an Airbus! Well, maybe a second hand one. But in good condition...

Christine – But that's crazy!

John pours two glasses of wine and gives one to Christine to toast.

John – Here, have a taste of Lidl's house wine for the last time, to remember what it's like. Because you're not about to have it again any time soon...

They toast.

Christine – It's unbelievable... It's not a joke, right?

John – I find it hard to believe too. But I checked three times. I swear, it's ours! We won! Friday the 13th Super Draw is ours!

Patrick comes back.

Christine – You'll never guess what we just found out!

Patrick – They called? It was really her in the water? She's alive?

John (*embarrassed*) – Err, no... They aren't quite sure yet...

Christine – But they spotted a suitcase that looks a lot like hers. A Vuitton suitcase. Floating on the surface...

Patrick – So what's the good news?

Christine – Well... It's... (*Very excited, bordering on hysterical*) We're going to get the suitcase back!

John tries to calm Christine down with a hand motion.

John – Forgive her... Her nerves...

Patrick – You're right. This wait is unbearable... Even if Natalie is still alive, just picturing her all alone, clinging to her suitcase, in the middle of the Channel, in the depths of winter... While we're sitting comfortably here in the warmth... it leaves me cold... (*A pause*) Actually it's not that warm, is it? Or is it me?

John (*with a knowing look*) – We'll be able to turn the heating back on, right, Christine? I'll crank it right up.

He leaves to turn on the boiler.

Patrick – How long do you think one can last, in December, in the freezing Channel waters?

Christine – It depends... She was rather sensitive to cold, wasn't she?

Patrick – Oh my God...

John returns.

John – I've turned the heating right up... (*Winking in Christine's direction*) That way, if we have to leave unexpectedly for warmer climes we won't suffer from thermal shock...

Patrick – You're going on holiday...?

John – No, well... Actually, why not?

Patrick – If I were you I'd avoid flying...

Christine – Yes, it's probably safer... Sod's Law and all that... After all, a nice spa break at the Best Western in Saint Ives isn't bad either... Recharge our batteries ready for a new life...

Patrick – You're right to enjoy it while you can... You never know what life will throw at you... You're having dinner with friends on a Friday evening and, just like that, you become a widower...

Christine – Yep... (*Hysterical*) Or multimillionaires!

Patrick – Oh no, we couldn't afford life insurance... Actually, she had mentioned it recently... So the children would be able to afford university if something happened to her... She must have felt something... A bad feeling perhaps ..

John – Yeah... Well, I can tell you we certainly didn't feel it coming... It came right out of the blue...

Christine (*to Patrick*) – You know what they say: the darkest hour is before the dawn...

John – Being unprepared, it's quite a shock... You have to find a way to cope...

Patrick – Do you have one?

Christine – One what?

Patrick – Life insurance! Or death insurance, more like...

John – We have better than that, believe me.

Patrick – I swear that if she makes it, I'll see life entirely differently...

Christine – So will we, I promise.

Patrick – All those little sacrifices that we impose on ourselves daily, thinking we'll reap the benefits later... Bollocks to that... We'd be better off living hand to mouth... Without thinking of tomorrow...

John – You're right. Tomorrow I'll quit my job.

Patrick – I thought you were on the dole...

John – Yeah, well I'll stop looking for work.

Patrick – At the same time, we need to earn a living. And save a little. Because if we rely on government pensions... Oh my God... I have a feeling that Natalie isn't going to cost the government a whole lot, pension-wise...

Christine – Come on, don't say that...

Patrick – How am I going to make ends meet, with two little ones...

Christine – We're here for you... Right, John...? If you want, we can take one off your hands, lighten your load a little!

John (*not enthralled*) – Yes, well...

Patrick – That's nice of you but... We already owe you 1,000 Pounds...

Christine – You know what? Consider it a gift. We won't miss it, will we? Right, John?

John – Yeah, well, no... All right... Go ahead, it's yours...

Patrick (*touched*) – That means a lot to me, to know that I can count on friends like you... I know how much that 1,000 Pounds means to you... Especially now. With John out of work. You know, if I asked the bank for a 1,000 Pound loan I'm not sure it would be approved. And with all the profits they make off our backs... And you... You don't even have the means to turn on the heating in December... Except when you have guests... Actually, it's getting a little warm in here now, don't you think? I wouldn't want you to end up with an eye-watering heating bill on my behalf...

John – I'll turn it down a bit...

John leaves for a few seconds.

Patrick – What am I going to tell the children...

Christine – Aren't they asleep?

Patrick – But they're bound to wake up one day...

Christine – Listen, I probably shouldn't say this, but I can't believe she died. Not tonight...

Patrick – Why not tonight?

Christine – I don't know, it's... like you said before about your Dad. That he died on the day your son was born. Just to piss you off.

Patrick – You think Natalie decided to be in a plane crash tonight just to ruin our evening?

John returns.

Christine (*happy to change the subject*) – Maybe we should turn the TV back on, to get confirmation... There might be a repeat of the lottery draw... I mean, the news...

Patrick's mobile phone rings, interrupting Christine who was making for the TV. Patrick, frozen, considers not answering, then picks up.

Patrick – Yes...? Yes, speaking... (*To Christine and John*) It's them! The support unit.... Yes...? Yes, I'm listening...

The other two look very uncomfortable.

Patrick – But you had told me that... All right... Okay... Thank you...

He hangs up.

Patrick – They spotted five survivors, hanging to pieces of the plane... Maybe a sixth one...

John – The bonus number.

Patrick – They're attempting a helicopter rescue but the weather conditions are very bad over the Channel... They haven't ID'ed them yet...

Christine – They'll let you know as soon as they proceed with the draw... I mean the rescue!

Patrick – Yes, you're right... It's exactly like gambling. This wait is unbearable. I feel like I've played the lottery and I'm waiting to see if my numbers come out...

Christine – I know... That's also how I felt when I married John... I mean... How many were they in the plane?

Patrick – I don't know... It was a small plane... London-Manchester...

John – Let's say they were a hundred passengers. If there's five survivors... That's 20%. Much better odds than the lottery.

Patrick – I never had any luck gambling...

Christine – You know what they say: You have to be in it to win it...

Patrick – Thank goodness you're here, otherwise...

Christine – You don't want to go and rest a little in our bedroom?

Patrick – What if they call back...?

John – It could be hours, you know... What with the storm and all... A sea rescue like this one is a very delicate operation... They're not even sure they'll get to them alive. And in water that is only two or three degrees as well...

Patrick – Anyway, I wouldn't be able to sleep.

Christine – I can get you a sleeping pill, if you want.

Patrick – I don't think that'll be enough. In the state I'm in...

Christine – You could take two or three. They're very light...

Patrick – That's very sweet, but I don't want to take over your bedroom on top of everything else...

Christine – We won't be able to sleep either, so it doesn't matter...

Patrick – Thank you... Honestly, I didn't think it would upset you as much as me... (*Checking his mobile*) Shit, I set it to silent mode. Out of habit... I'll check and see if I have any voice mail...

He moves away to check his mailbox.

John (*to Christine*) – We'll never be able to get rid of him...

Patrick – No, nothing...

Christine – Well... given that they only called five minutes ago...

John – And to be honest, you know... 20%... Might as well start preparing yourself for the worst...

Patrick – But you were just saying that...

Christine – We wouldn't want to raise your hopes... Right, John?

John – I have to say, it looks like she'll be sleeping with the fishes tonight...

Christine – What John is trying to say, in his own words, is that if Natalie is really dead, you'll find out soon enough... Really, you should go home and lie down a bit... Do you want me to call you a taxi?

Patrick – No, I drove here, in the Mercedes.

Christine – Oh that's right...

Patrick – But I don't know whether I'm fit to drive right now.

John and Christine exchange looks of exasperation.

Patrick – You're right, I'll go and lie down for a bit. I won't be able to sleep but... I think I need to be alone for a while...

John – So do we... I mean, of course, we understand how you feel. Right, Christine?

Patrick – I'm going...

Christine – Right...

Patrick leaves the room under John and Christine's sympathetic gaze who, as soon as he's disappeared from view, explode with glee.

John – Fucking hell! 60 million!

Patrick walks back in the room. John and Christine freeze.

Patrick – I forgot my mobile...

Patrick leaves the room again.

Christine – I won't be able to believe it until I see the winning ticket. Show me...

John – I'll get it... (*He makes to leave the room.*) Shit, it's in the bedroom... With any luck he's falling asleep and will get off our tits for a while. Let's not wake him up... How about we open this bottle of Cristal while we wait? To celebrate...

Christine – In the bedroom? I didn't see anything... Tell me you didn't lose it, this ticket? Imagine if it fell from the bedside table... and ended up in the Hoover. I changed the bag yesterday, and I emptied the bins this morning.

John – No worries... It's safely tucked away. (*About to open the champagne*) I'll try not to make too much noise with the cork... don't want to wake him up.

Christine – Safely tucked away where?

John – In my suitcase. Top of the wardrobe... Inside pocket... I didn't think to take it out when we came back from Brighton... I didn't even remember I'd played the lottery to be honest...

Christine (*haggard*) – Not the Vuitton suitcase?

John – Yes, of course... My suitcase... My only suitcase... Don't tell me you also hoovered the inside of my suitcase... (*Finally seeing Christine's anguish*) What?

Christine – Natalie needed a suitcase to go to Manchester... She asked if I could lend her one...

John releases his grip on the champagne cork which pops loudly.

John – You lent her my suitcase? You let her take my Vuitton suitcase on this shitty plane from this shitty low cost carrier?

Christine – Okay, well for starters the Vuitton, I remind you, is a fake... A counterfeit that we bought in Rome on the way back from that 'Islands of Italy' cruise.

John – With our 60 million Pound ticket inside! We could have bought the factory that makes the real suitcases...

Patrick returns.

Patrick – I heard like a bang... It woke me up... (*Seeing their fallen faces*) What's wrong...? You have news, is that it? You have bad news and you don't know how to tell me?

John (*sulking*) – Yes, actually...

Patrick – Oh my God...!

Christine – Not really, I mean, it's not about Natalie...

John – I wouldn't say that...

Christine – John didn't know that I had given Natalie his suitcase... So it's only natural that he would be shocked... Emotionally shocked I mean... Imagine your very best friend hanging on to your suitcase in the middle of the Channel... And the sharks circling in...

Patrick – There's sharks in the Channel?

Christine – I don't know, probably...

Patrick – Oh my God, that's right, the suitcase... We already owe you 1,000 Pounds that we're not about to pay you back, and on top of that you'll never see your Vuitton suitcase again. Thank goodness it was a fake...

Christine – But there's still hope, right? (*Looking at John*) I mean, that they find Natalie... with the suitcase.

John – You think...?

Christine – A suitcase floats much better than a corpse! Remember those images on TV after a plane crash. What do you see floating on the surface of the water? Suitcases!

John – If they're not too heavy, maybe...

Christine (*to Patrick*) – Was Natalie's suitcase very full?

Patrick – She was only spending one night at the Travel Lodge hotel in Manchester, so she didn't take much...

The other two regain some hope.

Patrick – Apart from all her sales catalogues, obviously. Paper weighs a ton. I couldn't even lift the suitcase into the boot of the car when she left. Thankfully, it was the kind with wheels. You know, for a fake it really was good quality. You were right. Why waste your money on the real stuff... Why do you want to know what was in her suitcase?

Christine – Well... If it can float then Natalie might be using it as a floating device. Like a life ring...

Patrick – Oh, well no... Might as well have been hanging on to an anvil... And in any case, the luggage goes in the hold, doesn't it? Sinks like a stone with the rest of the plane...

John glares at Christine who is devastated.

Christine – Sometimes they manage to locate the wreck and they bring it back to the surface. To find the black box, determine what caused the crash, and retrieve the suitcases – I mean the bodies – so the families can grieve...

John – You think so...?

Christine – Yes, of course! I don't know why but I'm still hopeful. Right, Patrick?

Patrick – Yes, well...

Christine – It's Friday the 13th after all!

Patrick – I never understood if you're meant to have good luck or bad luck on Friday the 13th...

Christine – Obviously a little bit of both!

John (*to Patrick*) – Are you 100% sure that's how she traveled?

Patrick – With Very Low Cost Travel Discount Airways? Yes, unfortunately... I even bought her ticket on the internet...

John (*hysterical*) – With my suitcase, for fuck's sake! With my fucking suitcase!

Patrick is a little unsettled. Christine signals to John to calm down.

Patrick – Okay, I think I'm really going to leave now... I'll spend the night at my mother's. At least I'll be with the children when they wake up. And if I have any news, good or bad, I'll let you know. Promise.

John – 60 million... 60 million for fuck's sake! Tell me this is a nightmare...

Christine (*to Patrick*) – Yes, it might be best...

Patrick – Right, I'll let you two go to bed...

John – Because you really think we're going to be able to sleep now?

Patrick – I'll call you tomorrow morning... You'll find out soon enough... Me too actually. You're right Christine. It could be hours. I'll take a sleeping tablet when I get to Mum's...

John – Oh no you won't! Call us right away! Right, Christine? We're not going to sit here and wait like a couple of fucking idiots...

Patrick – Honestly, I am very touched... that you are that upset. I know that Natalie was a friend... but I didn't think that her disappearance would affect you that much.

John – I'm turning the TV back on...

Newsreader (*off*) – And the winning numbers are...

John – Yeah, alright, we get it...

Patrick (*worried, to Christine*) – Maybe you should give him a sedative too?

John changes the channel.

Newsreader (*off*) – It has now been confirmed that there are no survivors following the Super Low Cost Travel Discount Airways crash. The few people who had been spotted clinging to a makeshift raft, and were previously thought to be survivors, only turned out to be refugees trying to reach the UK by sea. They were naturally immediately put on a plane back to their home country. A plane from the same airline, actually. The least we can do is to wish them a safe flight home... In other news, the winning ticket for the lottery still hasn't been claimed and...

John turns off the TV, devastated.

John – Oh fuck... No survivors...

Patrick's mobile phone rings. He pulls it out and looks at the number.

Patrick – If it's my mother, I'm not answering...

John – My Vuitton suitcase...

Patrick – It's her...

Christine – Her who?

Patrick – Natalie... Someone's calling from her phone...

Christine – No way...

John (*impressed*) – What's your mobile carrier?

Christine – Well, go on, answer it!

Patrick, white as a sheet, takes the call.

Patrick – Yes...

John and Christine are hanging to his every word.

Patrick – Natalie? But where are you calling from? Listen, I can barely hear you... You sound like you're calling from very far away...

John – No shit... They said there weren't any survivors...

Patrick – Can you hear me...? Natalie...? Hello...? Hello...? (*He turns to the others with a dramatic look on his face*) We were cut off...

Deadly silence.

Christine – Are you sure it was her?

Patrick – I don't know... The connection was very bad...

John – I bet...

Patrick – In any case, the call came from her mobile. It's her number...

John – The bonus number...

Christine – Maybe she fell out of the plane... and managed to hang on to something...

John – Her suitcase maybe...

Christine – And she's using the last of her battery to call you.

Patrick – Oh my god... But they said there weren't any survivors... I was just getting used to the idea...

Christine – A miracle is always possible.

John – A miracle... They would have to locate her before the sharks start eating her...

Patrick – Can you imagine Natalie, in this storm, alone, in the middle of the Atlantic...

John – The Channel...

Christine – The Channel isn't that large...

Patrick – In the middle of the night, hanging on to your suitcase, lost in this ocean...

John – The Channel, for goodness' sake!

Patrick – She might have drifted... How are they going to find her...?

John – Might as well look for a suitcase in a haystack...

Patrick – I'll try to call her back... Even with a low battery she might have time to describe where she is. It will help the search parties...

Christine – On the other hand, if she's lost in the middle of the Pacific...

John – The Channel, for fuck's sake!

Patrick dials the number and waits anxiously.

Patrick – It's ringing... Oh my God, it's going to her voicemail. I feel like I'm hearing a voice from beyond the grave... Hello, Natalie? If you get this message, know how much I love you. And the children too. Natalie, please try and hang on. For me. For your children. For yourself too, of course. Just long enough for the rescue teams to find you. I love you lots, darling...

John and Christine look at each other, moved. But Patrick hesitates and doesn't hang up.

Patrick – I wanted to tell you something else, Natalie. To get it off my chest. Because maybe I'll never get the chance again. Or the courage. I cheated on you once. Just one small time. But I swear, it meant nothing... And now that I know I'm going to be a dad... Yes, because I forgot to tell you... Your gynaecologist just called. You're going to be a mom, Natalie! So you see... You have to hang in there! Sending you a big kiss, my love.

Patrick hangs up, overwhelmed. The others exchange a dismayed look.

Christine – Well that should help her get through this...

Embarrassed silence.

John – The phone...

Christine – I can't hear anything...

John – No, I mean Natalie's phone. They should be able to use her mobile to track her down! You must notify the rescue teams immediately. There's even hope they'll find the suitcase... I mean find Natalie... What's their number?

Patrick hands him his mobile.

Patrick – Here, the phone number is in the recent calls.

John takes Patrick's mobile and presses the redial button.

John – Shit, no signal. I'll try from the balcony...

John leaves the room.

Patrick – I'm not sure it was the best time to tell her.

Christine – You think...?

Patrick – It was about three months ago. With Nicoleta...

Christine – Nicoleta?

Patrick – My dentist. She's Romanian...

Christine – And?

Patrick – I went to see her about a bridge.

Christine – You play bridge with your dentist?

Patrick – A bridge! In her dental office! I don't know what came over me. Or maybe it was the anaesthetic...

Christine – Just say that... The bitch drugged you to take advantage of you...

Patrick – Well, it was only local anaesthetic, you see... Because for the rest, let me tell you, I definitely felt it... More than with Natalie, anyway...

Christine – Right...

Patrick – And you, have you ever cheated on John...?

Christine – Never, since we got married...

Patrick – Well, you've only been married six months. After fifteen years together...

John returns, conveniently preventing Christine from finishing her answer.

John – Sorted. They'll put things in motion right away. And they'll call us as soon as they find anything.

Christine – I saw that in a cop show on TV. It's really easy to locate someone with their mobile. And it should be really quick. Of course, in this case it's in the middle of the Atlantic, but you know...

John – The Channel.

Patrick – Oh my God. I don't know if my heart can take any more. This roller coaster of emotions...

His mobile rings.

Patrick – Already?

Christine – I told you...

John – Go on! Pick up!

Patrick – Hello? No Mum, I haven't received official confirmation of her death, sorry... No, I don't have Auntie Adele's new address. Don't you think it's a little early to start thinking about death notices...? Look, I've got to go. I can't be on the line right now. I'm waiting for an important call... That's right... Flowers? Listen, do whatever you want, I don't give a shit, OK? *(He hangs up, furious.)* Life is really unfair... It should have been her on the plane instead of Natalie...

The phone rings again. Beside himself with anger, Patrick takes the call.

Patrick – Leave us the fuck alone...! Oh, I'm sorry, I thought it was my mother... Yes, yes, of course I'm listening... No, I promise it's not a prank... My wife was in that plane and... Yes, all right, thank you. Please call me back if you hear anything...

He hangs up, confused.

Patrick – It was the support unit... They located Natalie's mobile phone...

The others hang on to his every word.

Christine – And?

Patrick – The call came from Manchester train station...

Now it's John and Christine's landline that rings. Christine picks up without thinking.

Christine – Hello? *(Devastated, handing the phone to Patrick)* It's her...

Patrick grabs the phone.

Patrick – Natalie? Where are you? Everyone is looking for you in the middle of the Atlantic...! No way, I can't believe it...! *(To the others)* She missed her flight! She's on the slow train to London!

John – So there is a God...

Patrick – So you don't know? *(To the others)* She doesn't know... The Cheap Travel Discount Airways plane you were meant to take crashed above the Med... There are no survivors... Thank God, it's a miracle...! *(To the others)* She was stuck in the toilets at Manchester airport for two hours... Couldn't open the door... Of course the terminal for Too Low Cost Airways in Manchester isn't exactly Business Class... Okay... Call me back as soon as you get to London, all right...? Love you lots darling... *(He's about to hang up but changes his mind.)* Er... Natalie...? Did you get my message? No, no, it's not important... Actually, go ahead and delete it... Now that I know you're not dead...

Patrick hangs up the phone.

Patrick *(glowing)* – I think this is a good time to open that champagne I brought!

John and Christine are slightly uncomfortable since they've already opened the bottle. But they are overjoyed nonetheless.

Christine – But that's wonderful! Right, John?

John – You get your wife back, and we get...

Christine – Our friend!

John – What time does she get to London?

Patrick – In less than an hour... This nightmare is almost over... Thank you... I don't know how I would have managed without you... *(He makes as if to leave the apartment.)* I think we'll save the champagne for another time... I'll pick her up at the train station and then we'll go straight home... After this ordeal you'll understand that we have a lot to talk about...

Christine – Especially if she listens to that voicemail you left...

John – But that's out of the question! We're going to celebrate together. Right, Christine?

Patrick – Now that I think about it, she's the only survivor... I don't know if... I can imagine the distress of the families that weren't as lucky as I was...

John – Life is a lottery! You just need to choose the right numbers! It's unfortunate for those who don't win, but tough. C'est la vie! And honestly, you're not fit to drive. Wound up like you are you'd never manage to park at the station on a Friday night. I'll call her back. I'll tell her to jump in a cab when she gets off the train and to come here. With her suitcase...

Patrick – A cab...? You know, I'm not sure we can afford it...

John – But we can! Right, Christine?

Christine – We also have some good news to share with you... Might as well tell you now... Go ahead John...

As John is about to speak, the landline rings. Christine takes the call.

Christine – Yes... Oh, Natalie... We were just about to call you to... *(Her smile freezes.)* Sure, here he is... *(To Patrick)* It's Natalie. She got your voicemail...

Patrick, distraught, takes the landline handset and moves towards the balcony.

Patrick – Natalie, listen, I can explain everything... Oh, don't take it like that!... Honestly, after what's just happened to us can't you put things in perspective? You just cheated death by the skin of your teeth! What's important is that we are both alive and well! You're a survivor, Natalie!

He goes out onto the balcony to continue the conversation.

John – Oh, shit... Just what we needed...

Christine – It won't be so easy to get her over here to crack open the champagne with us.

John – Imagine that after learning she's a cuckold, she decides to jump into the Thames when she gets to London. With my suitcase...

Patrick returns, haggard.

Christine – So...?

Patrick – She doesn't want to come home... She talks of divorce...

John – But she can stay here until you sort things out! Right, Christine? And she already has a packed suitcase.

Patrick – Oh, about the suitcase... Never mind, that's not important right now...

The two are stunned.

John – What about it?

Patrick – Well, see... Natalie missed the flight but the suitcase didn't... It was already checked in... So unfortunately you can forget about it... It's in the cargo hold of the plane...

John – What a fucking idiot! *(To Christine)* Please tell me this isn't happening!

Patrick – True, but thankfully it wasn't a real Vuitton... You know that possession of counterfeit items is now illegal... I saw a documentary on TV... Natalie could have had serious problems going through customs...

Christine – Going to Manchester from London?

Patrick – With a stopover in Brussels...

John – If he doesn't leave right now I'm going to kill him...

Patrick is a little surprised by John's reaction.

Patrick – Don't worry, I'll get you a new one, a real one, as promised... I owe you that much...

John – Sure, along with the 1,000 Pounds you owe us already...

Patrick – Okay, I this time I really have to go. Right, Christine? We've all had our share of emotions today.

Christine gently guides Patrick towards the front door to get him out of reach of John's fury.

Christine – Don't worry, it'll pass... Call me tomorrow, okay?

Patrick – Sure, I'll let you know how it goes...

Patrick is about to cross the threshold but turns back one last time.

Patrick – By the way, what's this good news you wanted to tell me...?

Christine pushes him outside for good.

Christine – I'll call you tomorrow...

Patrick leaves. John and Christine are alone. They crash on the sofa. Heavy silence.

John – 60 million Pounds...

Christine makes a tender move towards him.

Christine – Come on, it's not so bad... What's important is that we're alive. And that we're together...

John relaxes a bit.

John – You're right...

Christine – And what would we have done with 60 million anyway?

John – I ask myself the same thing...

Christine – Would our relationship even survive such a storm...

John – Not to mention our friends... Look, we almost had a falling out with Natalie and Patrick...

Silence.

John – Do you really think that if we had won the 60 million we would have gotten a divorce?

Christine – It can go to your head... When all of a sudden you realise you'll be able to satisfy all the secret desires you've been repressing...

John – You're right... Frustration is the cement that holds couples together... When I think that we almost became multimillionaires... Sends chills down my back...

Christine – Come on, let's have a low key evening, just the two of us in front of the telly...

John – You know what would really help me unwind...

Christine (*full of hope*) – Tell me... I am ready to satisfy all your desires. Consider it compensation... for the loss of your fake Vuitton suitcase.

John – A documentary about animals... On the reproductive habits of large lizards...

Christine's enthusiasm is considerably dampened.

John – They're very much into group sex, lizards are... The female shags several males and the eggs contain the genetic material of all her partners... Can you imagine that little dentist kid? A bit of Patrick and the rest from all his other patients.

Christine (*depressed*) – There's a little bit of house wine left... Well, whatever Patrick left us... Do you want some? We'd better get used to it...

She pours two glasses while John turns on the TV.

Newsreader (*off*) –...The authorities just located flight Travel Discount Airways 32 ½ that was previously thought to have crashed in the Channel. It turns out the pilot simply fell asleep in the cockpit and instead of landing in Dublin, the plane continued until it reached Alaska where it ran out of fuel and had to crash land on an ice floe.

John – It's funny, all this feels like it's happening to another person now...

The landline rings and Christine gets up like a zombie to pick up, while John remains glued to the TV.

Newsreader (*off*) – Here are some images taken from the rescue plane sent by the Mexican army...

Christine – Yes...?

Newsreader (*off*) – We are still without news of the passengers inside the plane, but these images show, with a stunning clarity, a couple of penguins playing with a suitcase...

Christine – No...!

Stunned, Christine hangs up and walks towards the sofa.

John – Who was it...?

Christine – Natalie's gynaecologist... Well, mine... We have the same...

John – And...?

Christine – He mixed up our files... She's not pregnant, I am!

John (*lost*) – Do you also have the same dentist?

Christine (*overjoyed*) – It's yours! I am going to have your baby, John!

John (*not particularly happy*) – But... I thought we couldn't have children... Your doctor said that with my wonky sperm we had a chance in a million!

Christine – It's Friday the 13th!

Black.

End.

DIFFERENT ENDING FOR A FOURTH CHARACTER (Natalie)

John doesn't have time to say anymore: the doorbell rings.

John – If it's him again, you ask him in and I'll throw him over the balcony myself...

Christine opens the door reluctantly.

Christine (*surprised*) – Oh, Natalie...! Did you have a good flight? I mean... We weren't expecting you anymore...

Natalie (*sinister*) – Am I disturbing you?

Christine – Not at all, why would you think that...

John – You couldn't make things any worse.

Natalie steps into the room, beside himself.

Natalie – Hey John, you're here...

John – As you can see. You may remember that I live here...

Natalie – I know it's late. But what with everything that just happened to me...

John – Come on, your train didn't crash on the ice floe, did it?

Natalie – No, I meant Patrick. I'm still in shock.

Christine – We're so very sorry Natalie... Right, John...?

John – Mmm...

Christine – Come in, sit down, please. Do you want to drink something?

John – A tall glass of arsenic? Or strychnine...?

Christine pours her a glass of house wine.

Christine – Do you want ice...?

Natalie doesn't reply. She sits and empties the glass without batting an eyelid, under the stunned gaze of the other two.

John – Wow... She must really not be well... She doesn't even react to the house wine...

Natalie – We've been married for ten years... Can you believe what he did? I never would have thought Patrick capable of that...

Christine – Come on... Don't you think you're being overly dramatic...?

John – She did just find out she was a cuckold...

Christine – I always hated that word...

Natalie – You think you know someone and then...

Christine – Everybody makes mistakes...

John – Sure... but sleeping with his dentist...

Natalie – Actually, she was my dentist.

Christine – What matters is that he had the courage to tell you, doesn't it? It takes a lot of courage to do that, you know...

John – More like a lot of stupidity...

Christine – It proves he trusts you... And trust is very important in a couple... Right, John?

John – Bullshit, he thought she was dead...

Christine – Come on, you'll see... Things will work out...

Natalie – I don't know... I think I'll need some time...

John – Just how much time...? Because like you say, it's already late... I'd like to hit the sack...

Christine – What John is saying, in his own words, is that we've all had our fill of emotions today... But it's normal that you need to take time to think about it... Why don't you sleep here on the sofa... And tomorrow you'll see things more clearly.

John – We're not promising that things will be better tomorrow, right? Just that you'll see things more clearly...

Natalie – Thank you... I knew I could count on you... It's during the hard times that you find out who your real friends are...

John – Yeah, yeah... That's what your husband told us all evening...

Christine – I'll get you some sheets... John, grab a blanket from the wardrobe...

John and Christine leave for a moment. Natalie gets up and moves towards the balcony. She steps to the railing and leans over a little. Christine returns and sees her; she freezes assuming she is thinking of jumping.

Christine – Natalie, no!

Natalie turns around, a little surprised.

Natalie – Huh...? I was just taking in the view...

Christine – Oh my God, you scared me... I thought...

Natalie – I never noticed that if you lean over a little you can see the Pink Oboe from here...

Christine (*worried about her mental state*) – The pink oboe...

Natalie – It's a club.

Christine – A jazz club?

Natalie – Actually, yes... but more importantly, a lesbian club.

Christine is a little disconcerted. John returns with the blanket and throws it on the sofa.

John – There. I'm not tucking her in or kissing her goodnight.

Natalie looks at her with ambiguity.

Christine – You promise you won't do anything stupid?

Natalie – Promise.

Christine – Right, so we're all going to bed. We've had a hard day too...

The landline rings. John picks up.

John – Yeah...? Yes, she's here... Sure, here you go... *(He holds the phone in Natalie's direction.)* It's Patrick. He wants to talk to you...

Natalie takes the phone reluctantly.

Natalie – Yes... Listen... No... I don't know... No... I'll tell you tomorrow, all right... Yes, well I need to think about it for a few days, surely you can understand that...?

John *(worried)* – A few days...?

Natalie – That's right, we'll talk later...

She hangs up.

Christine – I'm sure your couple will overcome this hurdle... and that you'll come out even stronger!

Natalie – I slept with the dentist too...

Christine *(after a short hesitation)* – Well you see, you shouldn't give him a hard time...

John looks at her with utter bewilderment.

Christine *(to Natalie)* – Oh, I didn't tell you! *(To John)* Shall we tell her?

John – Tell her what?

Christine – I'm the one who's pregnant, Natalie!

John – Oh yes, that's right...

Christine – Isn't that wonderful news?

John – For you, the wonderful news is that you're not pregnant by that bastard.

Christine – Because after all that's happened to us today as well... We were just saying earlier, with John. What's important is to stay together, no matter what... To overcome hardships... Together... So you know, in the end the money isn't very important!

Natalie – The money?

Christine (*to John*) – Shall we tell her about that too? (*John doesn't reply, overwhelmed.*) You're not going to believe this but in the suitcase you borrowed to take to Manchester...

Natalie – The fake Vuitton suitcase...

Christine – There was a lottery ticket...

Natalie (*absently*) – Oh really, a lottery ticket...

Christine – We found out tonight watching TV that we had picked the winning numbers...

Natalie – How much?

John – 60 million.

Natalie – Oh, that much...

Christine – Needless to say we'll never see this ticket again...

John – Unless the penguin who found my suitcase takes it to the nearest newsagent to cash it in.

Christine – You see? We just lost 60 million Pounds but we also just won a baby that we weren't hoping for anymore!

John – You know that they say: lucky in love, unlucky at cards...

Natalie – I'm really sorry... I mean for the 60 million... It's sort of my fault...

John (*threatening*) – Sort of...?

Christine – This time I really think we should all go to bed. Are you coming, John...?

Christine drags John towards the bedroom. Natalie is left alone. She goes on the balcony and thinks for a moment. Then she takes her mobile phone and dials a number.

Natalie – Hello...? No, I'm not dead... I'm sorry to disappoint you once more, dearest mother-in-law... May I speak to Patrick? Thank you... (*After a quick pause*) Patrick? It's Natalie... Listen, I've been thinking and... Yes, already, what can I say... Usually you complain I take too long to think... So I wanted to tell you right away... I will never be able to forgive you for having slept with my dentist... Patrick, I am going to ask for a divorce... Yes, I know, I'm just an idiot... Yes, I know, your mother had warned you about me... Okay, my dentist will send you the divorce papers... Yes, my lawyer, that's what I said. That's right, go fuck yourself too... Good night, Patrick.

Natalie hangs up, thinks for a second, then takes a lottery ticket out of her shirt pocket and looks at it.

Natalie – 60 million... Christine was right... It's not tomorrow morning yet and already I see things more clearly... *(Realising the full extent of the situation)* 60 million Pounds! *(Her hand is shaking, the lottery ticket falls on the edge of the railing)* Shit... I can't believe it... Fuck...

She feverishly steps over the balcony railing. Suddenly, she slips, cries out, loses her balance and freezes in a falling position.

As if in a dream, we hear the rest of the dialogue recorded on an audio track.

John – What can you do against fate...

Christine – Nothing...

John – It's unbelievable though...

Christine – Natalie was the only passenger not in the plane and in the end she was the only casualty...

John – Did you call emergency services?

Christine – They should be here any minute.

John – Do you really think she committed suicide?

Christine – You don't just fall off a balcony...

John – If only she was the artist who did my painting... it might be worth more now.

The siren of an ambulance getting closer.

Christine – Here they are... They're going to be able to confirm whether she's really dead... Since we're only on the first floor.

John – She looks very dead.

Christine – You can always hope for a miracle...

John – It is Friday the 13th!

Black.

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.

Other plays by the same author translated in English

Comedies for 2

EuroStar
Heads and Tails
Him and Her
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Last chance encounter
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
Not even dead
Preliminaries
Running on empty
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Joker
The Rope
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Ménage à trois
One small step for a woman,
one giant leap backward for
Mankind
The Way of Chance

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
A Skeleton in the Closet
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Déjà vu
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
How to get rid of your best
friends
Is there a critic in the audience?
Is there an author in the
audience?
Just a moment before the end of
the world
Lovestruck at Swindlemore
Hall
One marriage out of two
Perfect In-laws
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The Fishbowl
The Perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money
The Tourists

Comedies for 5 to 6

All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police
Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
Traffic Jam on Graveyard Lane

Comedies for 7 or more

At the bar counter
Backstage Comedy
Blue Flamingos
Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police
Station
False exit
In flagrante delirium
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana
Abbey
Music does not always soothe
the savage beasts
Neighbours'Day
Nicotine
Of Vegetables and Books
Offside
Open Hearts
Reality Show
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not
cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
For real and for fun
Him and Her
Killer Sketches
Lost time Chronicles
Open Hearts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air

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