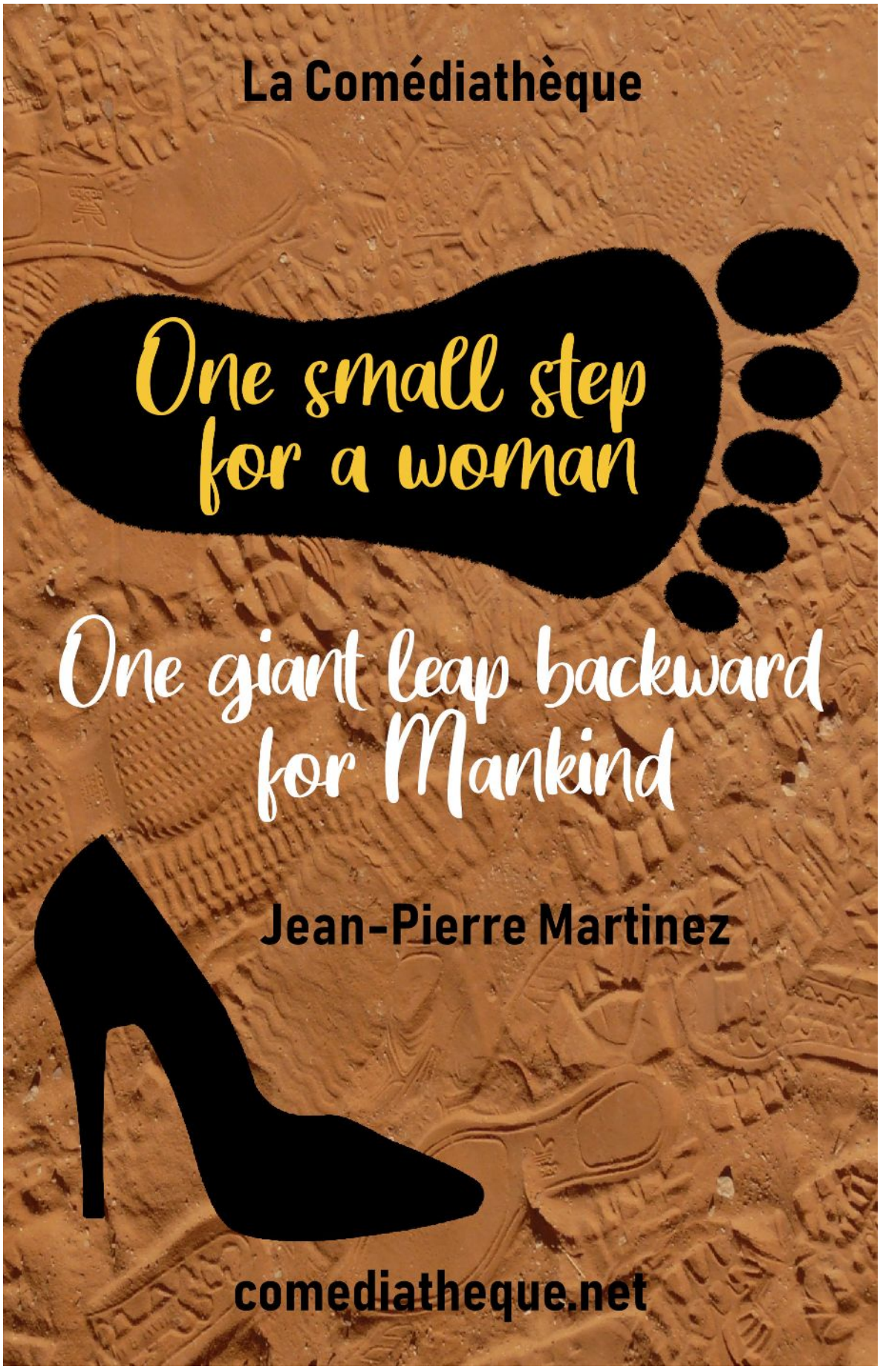
La Comédiathèque
One small step for a woman
One giant leap backward for Mankind
Jean-Pierre Martinez
comediatheque.net

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One Small Step for a Woman, One Giant Leap Backward for Mankind

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Translation by the author

A married couple of astronauts are on their way to Mars to establish a colony and lay the foundations of a new, more humane civilisation. But after a mysterious accident, their journey through space becomes a journey through time. Between an apocalyptic future and a past already carrying the seeds of disaster, rewriting history begins to look tempting... perhaps even rewriting the Bible!

Characters:
Joe
Mary
Brian

Brian may be played by a woman, either as an androgynous or male-presenting character, or as a woman named Briana.

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While the stage is in darkness, a man's voice is heard: Brian, whom we will meet later. His tone is outrageously promotional.

Voice-over – Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the launch site of the Mars Mission! In a few minutes you will witness an event that will go down in history. A century after a man first set foot on the Moon, a woman is about to become the first person to set foot on Mars, after a journey lasting several months. Her name is Mary. She is accompanied by Joe, her co-pilot and husband. But Mars Mission has greater ambitions than this historic first. Our heroic couple will lay the foundations of a Martian city. Another crew will join them in two years to begin large-scale settlement of this rich and promising planet. Within five years, anyone who wishes to join us will be able to help create a new world! If you would like to take part in this extraordinary adventure, you can already reserve your place on our website with a deposit. For now, please wish our brave pioneers every success. They cannot hear your applause, of course: they are already aboard their spacecraft. But they have only just been married, so this voyage to Mars will also be their honeymoon. Ladies and gentlemen, a round of applause for Mary and Joe!

Applause, accompanied by deliberately over-the-top science-fiction film music.

Alternatively, Brian may deliver the opening speech directly to the audience before a closed curtain, or in front of the darkened stage. He exits during the applause.

Lights up, or the curtain opens, to reveal the control room of a spaceship. The set should look deliberately artificial, like a low-budget science-fiction film. A sign bears the ship's name: MARSFLOWER. Mary enters in a close-fitting spacesuit, followed by Joe, dressed much the same.

Mary – Oh, just fuck off, you bastard!

Joe – Look, I don't know what you've heard, but I swear…

Mary – And now you're taking me for an idiot as well…

Joe – I've never slept with that girl! I don't even know her…

Mary – You don't know her? I introduced you to her…

Joe – Oh, right… maybe… I meant I don't know her… intimately.

Mary – If it were the first time, perhaps. But you've been through practically every woman at the training centre. Pilots, engineers, doctors, scientists…

Joe – Not the scientists, I swear!

Mary – Thank you. It's such a relief to know you left the scientists alone. And for once, I believe you.

A pause.

Joe – All right, maybe I slept with Nina once or twice. But that was before we got married!

Mary – We got married yesterday!

Joe – Fine… but before that, we hadn't officially pledged fidelity.

Mary – Naturally… Now that you've officially sworn to be faithful, you won't cheat on me anymore, will you?

Joe – We're going on a mission to Mars for three years! Even if I wanted to, I can't see how I'd manage to cheat on you…

Mary – You're pathetic. Why on earth did I marry you?

Joe – Don't take it like that… Come on, a man and a woman alone for three years in a space barely bigger than a grain silo…

Mary – If you're counting on being stuck together to guarantee yourself sex on this trip, you're going to be disappointed.

Joe – Be reasonable, Mary. You can't expect me to go without sex for three years!

Mary – So, if I understand correctly, you married me just to satisfy your sexual needs during this never-ending journey. You sure know how to charm a woman…

Joe – Mary, you knew what I was like before we married. At least by reputation. You know I'm not cut out for monogamy.

Mary – Then why did you marry me?

Joe – Mars Mission insisted that the selected astronaut couple be married. If you didn't want to be my wife, you could have given up on this mission…

Mary – And give up the chance to be the first woman on Mars? Not a chance! If you couldn't control yourself, you could have withdrawn from the mission.

Joe – The rocket takes off in a few minutes. It's too late to change our minds. We're stuck together for three years. Three years! It'll be a long trip if we spend it refusing to speak to each other.

A pause.

Mary – I've waited for this all my life. And believe me, I've had to work twice as hard as any man to get here: to become the first human being to set foot on Mars. And for that human being to be a woman…

Joe – I'm sure you've prepared a historic line to immortalise this moment. Like Armstrong when he set foot on the Moon…

Mary – Perhaps…

Joe – So, what is it?

Mary – No way I'm telling you.

Joe – If you don't have an idea yet, I have a suggestion…

Mary – Oh, really?

Joe *(grandly)* – One small step for a man, one giant leap for a woman…

She gives him a murderous look.

Mary – Just goes to show that men who claim to love women are often the most misogynistic…

Brian enters: the charismatic, slightly fanatical head of Mars Mission, dressed with the carefully calculated informality of a technology entrepreneur.

Brian – Dear friends, good morning! I wanted to personally come and wish you a safe journey.

Mary – Thank you, Brian…

Brian – The whole world is watching. Comrades, the future of humanity is in your hands!

Joe – Is he the head of a space company or a general sending us into battle?

Mary – At least a general would salute us.

Brian – Our planet's future is uncertain. The universe is more than thirteen billion years old. Human beings have existed for only a few hundred thousand years. On that scale, humanity is still an infant. An infant that has already wrecked its cradle and set the house on fire.

Joe – Doesn't exactly inspire you to have kids, that's for sure…

Mary – Don't worry; it's not likely to happen to you. At least not with me.

Brian – Mars Mission offers us a fresh start. Somewhere else. And that somewhere is the Red Planet. My friends, we shall build a new world. A new civilisation. A new kind of humanity.

Joe – He certainly knows how to make a speech…

Mary – A new kind of humanity… And they chose a man like you to help create it. We're doomed.

Brian – You will be its first representatives! Humanity will be forever grateful. We shall all be in your debt…

Joe – Speaking of debts, my salary still hasn't appeared in my bank account…

Brian – A minor delay, I assure you. Besides, you won't have many opportunities to spend it in the next three years.

Mary – Three years… That's going to feel like a lifetime.

Brian – Fortunately, you won't be alone.

Mary – Yes, that's exactly what I was thinking…

Brian – Admit it: no husband has ever taken his wife quite so far on their honeymoon.

Joe – Yes. And it takes nine months just to reach the honeymoon destination…

Brian – Think of it this way: you'll spend those nine months in bed!

Joe – Lying in a freezer beside my new wife isn't quite the hot wedding night I had in mind…

Brian – You'll be in hibernation on the way there and back, so time will fly! You'll spend only eighteen months on Mars, waiting for the planets to line up for the shortest return journey.

Mary – We won't have much time to get bored, that's for sure. With all we have to do over there…

Brian – Indeed! You will lay the foundations of the first city beyond Earth.

Joe – We'll be doing more than laying a few foundations, won't we? We have to build part of the place. This isn't like the first Moon landing: take a few steps, make a famous speech, plant a flag and come home to a parade.

Mary – And all that in just a week.

Brian – Quite right! Your achievement will be even greater. You're pioneers! Why do you think I called the ship the Marsflower?

Joe – Because we're going to Mars…

Mary – And you like flowers.

Brian – It's a tribute to the Mayflower, a ship that once carried settlers across the ocean to establish a colony in a new world.

Joe – Oh. That explains it…

Brian – Your ship is the Marsflower. I'll follow in two years aboard the Aprilflower. And in five years, the first settlers will arrive in a much larger spacecraft…

Mary – The Mayflower.

Brian – Exactly! Assuming Earth survives until then. With climate disasters and the conflicts they keep triggering…

Joe – It's clear…

Brian – Nations are invading their neighbours, armies are threatening whole continents… Even countries famous for being peaceful now have nuclear weapons, and they're threatening the countries next door! We've never been so close to global catastrophe. The survival of humanity is in your hands!

Mary – We'll do our best…

Brian – A brilliant future awaits you, rest assured.

Joe – If we survive this mission…

Brian – Do you know how many famous people were descended from the settlers who sailed on the Mayflower?

Mary – No.

Brian – Presidents, film stars, business tycoons…

Joe – Impressive…

Brian – One of them even made a fortune selling pictures of naked women!

Mary – Naked women?

Joe – There's always money to be made from a new world…

Brian – Joe, Mary… I may be speaking to the future President of Mars! And to the First Lady…

Lights start to flash.

Mary – Ah, I think we're about to leave. If you don't want to be on the first trip, now is the time to get off the rocket.

Brian – My dear friends, on behalf of all the shareholders of Mars Mission and all of humanity, I wish you good luck and a safe journey. And I'll see you on Mars in two years!

He hugs each of them successively and exits the spacecraft.

Joe – He's completely nuts, isn't he? Do you think we can trust him…?

Mary – Bit late to worry about that now.

Joe approaches the window supposed to be facing the audience.

Joe – If only the weather were better. It's pouring outside…

Mary – We're sitting on a giant firework that's about to shoot us into space. And in this weather, it feels rather like a damp one.

Joe – You sound excited. I'm pretty fired up myself. Maybe we've still got time to…

Mary *(looking at the control screens)* – The countdown has started. We launch in less than ten minutes. Time to get into our cryogenic chambers. Nine months at minus 200 degrees should cool your ardour.

Joe – All right. Let's get into our freezers.

Mary – At last we'll discover whether the light stays on in the fridge when the door is shut…

The warning lights flash faster. They leave the stage.

The roar of a rocket taking off, with deliberately cheap science-fiction sound and lighting effects.

The same set. Joe enters, stretching and yawning.

Joe – Now that's what I call a long sleep… How can I still be tired after sleeping for *(checking his watch)* 6,572 hours? Well, we're alive. Let's see where we are… *(He looks through the window.)* Damn, we've already landed on Mars! Mission control must have switched us to automatic landing while we were asleep.

Mary arrives as well.

Mary – You're up already?

Joe – Yes…

Mary – For a long time?

Joe – An hour or two.

Mary – Really?

Joe – Slept well?

Mary – I don't know… I don't even feel like I've slept… At least, I didn't dream.

Joe – Or maybe we're still dreaming now…

Like Joe, Mary approaches the window.

Mary – We're already on the surface of the Red Planet!

Joe – I woke up a little earlier, so I took charge.

Mary – You could have woken me up!

Joe – You looked so peaceful… I leaned over your cryogenic chamber like the prince in Sleeping Beauty. You were completely stiff and rather purple. Like a frozen steak.

Mary – Thanks.

Joe – I nearly kissed you awake, but we weren't exactly on warm terms when we went to sleep…

Mary – And since we've landed, what have you been up to…?

Joe – You were still asleep, so I went for a little walk outside.

Mary freezes.

Mary – You didn't do that?

Joe – No, don't worry. You'll be the first person to walk on Mars.

Mary – Don't joke about such a thing. I could kill for less than that…

Joe – Anyway, even if I had done it, no one would ever know; there was no camera.

Mary – I would know… Did you do it or not?

Joe – Who can say?

Mary – Well, in any case, get all the equipment running again. Call mission control, and turn on the camera to immortalise my first steps on the planet Mars.

Joe – Okay…

Mary – I'm going to freshen up and put on my best spacesuit. Those few steps onto Martian soil will be filmed for the history books!

Joe – Haven't forgotten your little phrase, have you?

Mary – No, don't worry.

Joe – So…?

Mary – One small step for a woman, one giant leap forward for all women…

Joe – Yeah…

Mary – What?

Joe – Nothing. It's… very good.

Mary – I'm going…

Joe – Mary…

Mary – What now?

Joe – Are you still mad at me?

Mary – About what? About cheating on me with a girl I introduced to you as my best friend?

Joe – That was nine months ago!

Mary – We spent those nine months frozen! To me, it was yesterday!

Joe – I'm really sorry…

Mary – The whole world is waiting for me to step onto Mars, and I still haven't decided which foot to use. Right or left? You can bet people will read a political message into it…

Joe – You could always jump down with both feet together.

Mary – I'm afraid that wouldn't be very elegant.

She exits.

Blackout.

Still in the dark, Joe and Mary come in with a birthday cake on which two lit candles are planted. They sing in unison.

Joe and Mary – Happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us…

They blow out the candles together, and the scene is plunged back into darkness. Light.

Mary – We're going completely crazy.

Joe – No wonder… It's been two years since we left Earth…

Mary – And over a year since we landed on Mars…

Joe – Still, when we look outside, it's hard to get used to it…

Mary – Yeah…

Joe – It reminds me of the first time I went to a remote desert…

Mary – Only this one comes without the tourists.

Joe – I meant the atmosphere…

Mary – Ah, yes…

Joe – After the excitement of the first few days, Mars gets pretty boring.

Mary – And Brian sold it to us as a paradise…

Joe – That man could sell sand in a desert.

Mary – Even if this were paradise, being condemned to spend eternity alone with one other person could turn it into hell.

Joe – Thanks for that, really…

Mary – I understand that after a while, Adam and Eve wanted to get out of the Garden of Eden.

Joe looks out the window.

Joe – This is not my idea of paradise, for sure…

Mary – And this spaceship is already a wreck. Nothing works! The washing machine is broken, there's no hot water, and even the video player has died…

Joe – Anyway, only three more months to endure, and we'll be back home.

Mary – If the rocket engine holds up until then.

Joe – It's a new engine based on completely revolutionary technology.

Mary – I didn't even understand how it works…

Joe – Neither do I. Let's hope it doesn't break down. Repairing the engine is bound to be harder than fixing your electric car…

Mary – I've never even looked under the bonnet. When the windscreen washer runs out of water, I take the car to the garage…

Joe – Walking on Mars is one thing. I can't wait to have solid Earth under my feet again.

Mary – Earth may not be a paradise, but at least it's home: we can shower every day, go shopping once a week, go to the hairdresser once a month, and get waxed once a year…

A pause.

Joe – And when you say home, you mean…?

Mary – I mean separate homes.

Joe – So you still haven't forgiven me…

Mary – I think I'm going to find it very hard.

Joe – Yet, for two years, I've never looked at another girl but you, I swear…

Mary – You didn't find any Martian to your liking?

Joe – The only Martian I want is you.

Mary – Because there are no others…

A pause.

Joe – And give or take a day, it's our wedding anniversary too. Not that we've even consummated the marriage…

She appears hesitant.

Mary – All right, I'll call a truce. *(He looks delighted.)* How about a game of Scrabble?

He expresses disappointment.

Joe – You brought Scrabble to Mars?

Mary – Well, surprise!

Joe – I didn't know you had it.

Mary – I've been saving it for a special occasion.

Joe – Fine, Scrabble it is… It's not exactly the anniversary celebration I had in mind, but sure.

They set up the Scrabble board, draw their letters and arrange them on their racks. Mary goes first, using all seven of her letters.

Mary – CHEATER.

Joe catches the hint and reflects before strategically placing his letters on the board.

Joe – SORRY.

They exchange a meaningful look before reaching for more letters in the bag.

Mary – BETRAYAL.

Joe – MERCY.

They grab more letters from the bag.

Mary – LIES.

Joe – LOVE.

They share another meaningful glance, and Mary appears to weigh her decision with a hint of hesitation.

Mary – All right, you win… I'll forgive you.

Joe – After all, as Brian would say, we're a bit like Adam and Eve… not much of a choice, are we?

Mary – Don't push it too far; I can still change my mind.

They share a passionate kiss, and suddenly, the doorbell rings.

Joe – Who could that be at this hour?

Mary – What time is it anyway?

Joe – We're on Mars; it's hard to tell.

Mary – More importantly, does anyone even ring doorbells on Mars?

Joe – I didn't even know we had a doorbell.

Mary – Neither did I.

Another doorbell sound.

Joe – It's quite creepy, actually.

Mary – Do you think Jehovah's Witnesses could have tracked us down here?

They turn their gaze to the control panel.

Joe – It's coming from the control panel… *(Joe approaches the screen)* Another one of Brian's pranks… It's him calling.

Mary – By the way, he still owes us money.

Joe answers the call, and Mary joins him in front of the screen as the charismatic voice of Brian, the demagogue, resonates.

Brian *(off)* – Dear friends, hello! I wanted to personally wish you a happy anniversary! How are our two heroes?

Joe – Hello, Brian… Well, you know… we're holding up just fine…

Brian – Not working too hard, I hope?

Joe – We were right in the midst of a…

Mary – A captivating game of Scrabble!

Brian – It's Sunday, after all. Everyone deserves a day off.

Joe – Ah, it's Sunday…

Mary – Indeed, we were wondering…

Joe – That's probably why we're even more bored than usual…

Brian – And how's the new Martian city coming along?

Mary – Fine…

Joe – In fact, we're even a bit ahead of planned schedule…

Mary – Since we really have nothing else to do but work…

Joe – Yes… At this rate, we should finish a month early…

Brian – Excellent. Very good…

Mary – Although, it's mostly the robots handling the lion's share of the workload…

Joe – We must acknowledge they've done a great job.

Mary – But it doesn't seem to make you happy.

Brian – No, no, of course, obviously, it's just that… it's the first time a housing development will be completed before the expected delivery date, isn't it?

Joe – Uh-huh…

Brian – I mean… On Earth, it's typically the opposite, isn't it? Construction projects tend to lag behind schedule…

Mary – Yes, we got it…

Brian – Well, I won't bother you for too long… If you've just started a game of Scrabble…

Mary – We're so bored up here, we almost wish someone would interrupt us more often…

Joe – It's incredibly quiet… It's almost scary…

Mary – We've even started to miss the noisy neighbours in our shabby apartment building back on Earth.

Brian – I understand. Someone once said that the silence of infinite space is frightening…

Joe – Well, they weren't wrong.

Mary – At least silence is cheaper than rent…

Brian – But the silence won't last! Soon Mars will echo with the voices of new settlers… and perhaps the laughter of children born on the Red Planet!

Joe – Well, we're mostly looking forward to going back to Earth. I must admit, we've already begun marking off the days on the calendar…

Mary – In exactly ninety-eight days, we'll be on our way home…

Brian – And that's precisely why I'm calling…

Joe – What do you mean?

Brian – I bring both good news and bad news…

Mary – Let's start with the bad news…

Brian – The sale of tickets to Mars for the colonists hasn't taken off as quickly as we had hoped…

Joe – So what?

Brian – Mars Mission is still losing money. Since we listed the company on the stock market, our share price has fallen from fifty dollars to just ten cents…

Mary – So they're almost worthless?

Brian – Five hundred times less, to be precise.

Joe – And most of our pay was supposed to be in shares…

Mary – So, is that the bad news?

Brian – Not entirely…

Joe – I dread to hear it…

Mary – Come on, spill the beans…

Brian – We haven't raised enough money to finish the Aprilflower, the ship that's supposed to bring the replacement crew and me to Mars.

Joe – So what?

Brian – It won't be ready on time. And the best planetary alignment for your return occurs only once every eighteen months. I'm afraid you'll have to stay a little longer.

Mary – Another year and a half stuck on this planet!

Brian – But look on the bright side! Thousands of people would give anything to be where you are!

Joe – Yeah, right… If there were that many, you would have already sold all your one-way tickets to Mars…

Mary – And what's the good news?

Brian – I've finally managed to deposit an advance into your bank account!

Joe – How much?

Brian – Five hundred dollars… I know we promised five hundred thousand…

Mary – A thousand times less?

Brian – Precisely. That's the only calculation I've got right this year.

Joe *(to Mary)* – If he weren't 78 million kilometres away, I would have strangled him by now…

Brian – I'm confident our financial situation will swiftly turn around. I'm actively seeking new investors, and…

Mary – You mean new suckers, like us…

Brian – I must go. I've another call… I think it's the bank. Good luck, and congratulations again. You're writing a new chapter in the history of humanity!

Joe – Wait!

Mary – Are you absolutely certain there's no alternative?

The communication is abruptly cut. Joe and Mary look at each other, clearly furious and dejected.

Joe – Damn it, another year and a half…

Mary – That'll make almost five years!

Joe – The last time I spent that much time in one place was in prison…

She looks at him in astonishment.

Mary – You've been to prison?

Joe – Did you really think they'd find someone with a spotless record willing to board this wreck with its experimental engine?

Mary – And the prison stint, what was it for?

A pause.

Joe – You go first… Why did you sign up for this suicide mission? Don't tell me it's just for the glory…

Mary – It's a long story, one I might share someday when we find a moment.

Joe – We've just added eighteen months to our sentence. We've got two and a half years looming ahead.

Mary – Yes… Assuming he can raise enough money to finish the Aprilflower and finally send a replacement crew…

Joe – If Mars Mission goes bankrupt, we're really in trouble…

Mary – I'd rather not dwell on it.

Joe – Five years of absence, can you imagine?

Mary – I can hardly imagine what Earth will be like when we get back after five years.

Joe – Everything changes so fast now. Five years is a lifetime. Imagine leaving just before a major technological breakthrough and coming back to a world you barely recognise.

Mary – It's true… No significant discoveries for millions of years, and suddenly there's a major change every decade or so.

Joe – And we're only discussing positive changes. There's also the looming risk of a general systemic collapse…

Mary – Even so, I doubt we can stand another two years of Scrabble every evening…

Joe – Yes. We'll have to find other ways to pass the time…

They throw themselves into each other's arms, sharing a passionate kiss.

Blackout.

Joe enters with a suitcase in each hand, looking delighted. Mary follows with a wheeled suitcase. The realistic question of why they need luggage is best ignored.

Joe – It's official this time! We're leaving!

Mary – We just have to hand in the keys at reception.

Joe – Fingers crossed they overlook the minibar charges; we've had quite a bit to drink in five years.

Mary – Considering all the money they owe us…

Joe steps forward, facing the audience.

Joe – The world will remember the day we arrived on Mars. I'll remember the day we left.

Mary – Just received a message from Brian. Aprilflower is already orbiting Mars. They'll be here in an hour.

Joe – Another week here and I might have lost my mind.

Mary – We finished assembling these habitation modules over a year ago…

Joe – And it isn't exactly a tourist destination.

Mary – Even if the views are spectacular…

Joe – Who wants to spend three years staring at the same view?

Mary – You take a photograph and move on.

Joe – And Scrabble… Fine for a rainy afternoon on holiday, but morning, noon and night for two years…

Mary – I'll never play Scrabble again in my life.

Joe – Well, we did more than just play Scrabble, after all…

He kisses her.

Mary – No… And precisely, on that note…

Joe – What?

Mary – I have some news to share.

Joe – Oh, really…

Mary – Can't you guess?

Joe – No…

Mary – I'm pregnant.

Joe – Is it mine?

Mary – Who else's? An alien's?

Joe – I thought you were taking the pill.

Mary – Apparently, contraception still isn't foolproof in the future.

Joe – We've had sex almost as often as we've played Scrabble…

Mary – So?

Joe – So what?

Mary – Try to contain your excitement…

Joe – We're on Mars… And it will take us nine months to return to Earth. I can't picture myself playing midwife…

Mary – We'll be in hibernation during the trip. I assume the baby will be too…

Joe – You think so?

Mary – I don't know. It's never been tried. Normally, you freeze the eggs, not the mother as well…

Joe – Do you think we should tell Brian?

Mary – Tell Brian? What would it change?

Joe – Nothing…

Mary – Let's hope it's yours and not some alien that visited me in my sleep. If the baby grows while I'm frozen, this won't be a family science-fiction film. It'll be a horror film.

Joe – It's strange; suddenly, this return journey doesn't excite me as much…

A doorbell rings.

Mary – Another prank?

Joe – No, this time, I think someone really rang at the entrance airlock…

Joe leaves briefly and returns with Brian, wearing a flowing robe and a long beard, like a hippie or a prophet.

Brian – Hello! Sorry, I'm a little early.

Mary – We were expecting you eighteen months ago…

Joe – Are you alone?

Brian – The others are still in orbit. I preferred to come as a scout with the shuttle to make sure everything was in order to welcome these missionaries of modern times…

Mary – Everything is ready, don't worry.

Brian stands in front of the window.

Brian – Oh yes, you've done an extraordinary job. It's truly impressive.

Joe – The first village on Mars…

Brian – It's beautiful!

Mary – It looks rather like a campsite full of prefab cabins, but still…

Joe – No wonder people aren't queuing to buy tickets.

Brian – In any case, congratulations!

Joe – Thank you… But I won't conceal the fact that now, we're truly eager to return. How's Earth?

Brian looks embarrassed.

Brian – Well… It's fine…

Mary – Is it just fine, or…?

Brian – Yes, yes, it's fine.

Joe – Don't tell me some saviour has come down from heaven and made our mission pointless…

Brian – No saviour so far, I'm afraid. I'm standing in until one arrives.

Joe – Well, that's a relief…

Mary – We've had ample time to make a list of the first things we plan to do when we get back. And believe me, it's a long list.

Joe looks at Mary.

Joe *(with a suggestive pause)* – The first thing I'll have is… a really good steak. We've lived on frozen imitation meat for five years.

Mary – And I'll kick things off with a relaxing bath…

Brian – It does smell a little wild in here.

Joe *(darkly)* – Wild animals in cages. That's what we've become, Brian. Scrabble and sex to keep us entertained.

Mary – We're still meeting the relief team, right? Your missionaries, as you like to call them…

Brian – I don't think it's very necessary… And I understand that you're eager to leave…

Joe – Too bad; we had planned a karaoke night to welcome them.

Mary – Followed by a Strip Scrabble tournament.

Brian – Strip Scrabble?

Mary – It's like Strip Poker but with Scrabble. Since we didn't have a deck of cards.

Joe – So, the loser of the game removes an item of clothing.

Mary – We've become experts at it.

Joe – Can you spell 'coccyx'?

Mary – It's a little bone at the bottom of your spine. With a spelling that's worth a fortune in Scrabble.

Brian – No, I'm afraid not…

Joe – And do you know how many points you get on a triple word score?

Brian seems a bit stunned.

Brian – I must express my gratitude once again for all you've done…

Mary – I hope you enjoy board games. It's nice here, but you may find it a little quiet.

Joe – Particularly on Sunday nights…

Brian – Well, I'd better get back to the Aprilflower and supervise the landing…

Mary – Mars-landing?

Brian – Yes, a landing on Mars. If we can have a Moon landing, why not a Mars landing?

Mary – Right. Moon landing on the Moon, Mars landing on Mars…

Joe – Mars landing… That could score a few points at Scrabble.

Brian – My friends, have a safe journey. And good luck getting back to Earth!

He exits. The two exchange a concerned glance.

Mary – He looked rather uncomfortable when we asked about Earth, didn't he?

Joe – And he didn't seem keen for us to meet his new settlers.

Mary – Perhaps he was afraid we'd put them off.

Joe – Well, at least missionaries never change position.

Mary – Very funny…

Joe – Yeah… but I wonder if we'll find much to laugh about when we return. What if Earth has become uninhabitable?

Mary – More uninhabitable than Mars, you mean…?

Joe – You're right. It can't be worse than here…

Mary – We haven't got another planet to fall back on.

Joe – Who'd choose to spend their life in a frozen desert with an atmosphere that's dissipated into space?

Mary – Yes, it's on Earth that we're destined to spend the rest of our days.

Joe – And it's on Earth that our child is destined to live… after being conceived on another planet.

Mary – That's also a first…

Joe – Do you think we're the first to have done the deed somewhere other than Earth?

Mary – Thanks for sparing me a grand historic declaration to mark the occasion.

Joe – One little thrust for a man, one giant leap for humanity.

Mary – Well, enough joking… It's time to prepare for liftoff.

The doorbell rings again.

Joe – Him again?

Mary – This time, he's calling us via video…

They stand in front of the control panel.

Joe – Brian? Did you forget to tell us something?

Brian – Yes… And it's a matter… a bit delicate.

Mary – Go on…

Brian – When you asked me how Earth was doing earlier, I didn't want to spoil the mood. You seemed so eager to reunite with your home planet, your family, your friends…

Joe – But…?

Brian – The world you'll find isn't the one you left behind.

Mary – What do you mean? What happened?

The signal crackles, and Brian's words become increasingly broken.

Brian – A few months after your departure… The situation suddenly… Life on Earth has become…

The communication is abruptly cut.

Joe – We've lost the connection…

Mary – What should we do?

Joe – We're going back! What else can we do? Don't forget, you're pregnant…

Mary – Trust me, I haven't forgotten that… You're right, let's return home and assess the situation…

Joe – After all, maybe it's better that we don't know what awaits us there…

Mary – True. By the time we get there in nine months, things might have improved…

Joe – Or they could be worse…

Mary – Thanks for the encourageing thought.

Joe – Well, let's proceed…

Joe and Mary take their seats at the command centre, focusing on their tasks

Mary – Ready for take-off?

Joe – Automatic procedure initiated.

Mary – Everything is so automated in this mission…

Joe – Probably because, before stepping onto this rocket, our only piloting experience involved electric cars.

Mary – Yeah… Sometimes, one wonders if sending robots wouldn't have been a better choice. Or monkeys…

Joe – At least, a robot never gets bored…

Mary – They don't need five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

Joe – And they don't get pregnant by accident.

Mary – Are you subtly blaming me? Do you think I did it intentionally?

Joe – Not at all…

Mary – Then let's get back into our cryogenic chambers.

Joe – If that alien eats us on the way home, just remember that you're the only woman I've ever truly loved. Even if I did sleep with a few others back on Earth…

Mary – Thanks, that really warms my heart…

They share a kiss.

Joe – Here we go.

Mary – See you on Earth in nine months.

They exit.

Blackout.

The sound of a rocket taking off is heard, followed by a strange noise indicating a malfunction, and ominous flashes of light.

Joe returns to the command centre, still a bit sleepy. He is followed by Mary, in the same state. They take their seats.

Joe – Everything all right?

Mary – I'm freezing…

Joe – Nine months at minus 200 degrees… It's enough to catch a cold.

Mary – Do you think we stop ageing while we're in these cryogenic chambers?

Joe – What's certain is that we stop living.

Mary – You're right, we don't see time passing. I feel like we left yesterday.

Joe – Luckily we slept through the journey. Imagine counting the kilometres all the way back to Earth. Seventy-eight million kilometres… That's seventy-eight million times the distance from our flat to the bus stop. I worked it out.

Mary – Only if the bus stop is exactly one kilometre away. How long did that calculation take you?

Joe – What, isn't that right?

Mary looks at him.

Mary – You, at least, haven't changed at all.

Joe – Thank you.

Mary – You're still an idiot.

Joe – Well, you haven't changed either, and you still have a fresh complexion… You're even a bit frosty…

Mary – Maybe on Earth, we should consider sleeping in a freezer.

Joe – We spend half our time sleeping. We'd live twice as long.

Mary – Surprisingly, my belly hasn't grown at all…

Joe – I hope the baby is okay…

Mary – I feel like I can sense it moving.

Joe – Nine months it's been in there… And it'll have to wait another nine months.

Mary – What do the instruments say about our return?

Joe stands in front of the window, gazing out into space.

Joe – Here we are, already in orbit around Earth…

Mary joins him by the window, sharing the view.

Mary – It's a relief to see home again.

Joe – Feels like a horse that can smell its stable from miles away…

Mary – We've been smelling like a stable for months in this flying tin can. Are the toilets still blocked?

Joe – Yeah, and it doesn't smell like a bouquet of roses…

Mary – I can't help but wonder in what condition we'll find Earth…

Joe – Is our planet still hospitable?

Mary – Do you think…?

Joe – If there was a nuclear war…

Mary – It's hard to tell from up here.

Joe – From space, Earth appears unchanged, but down there…

Mary leans over the instruments, noticing something odd.

Mary – That's strange…

Joe – What is it?

Mary – According to the dashboard, we're not…

Joe – Don't tell me this planet isn't Earth?

Mary – No, this planet is indeed Earth, but we're not…

Joe – Come on, tell me. Get it out… Sorry, bad choice of words.

Mary – According to the computer, we're not in the year 2074…

Joe – Would a few more months have brought us straight to 2075?

Mary – I'd prefer you see this for yourself…

He leans over the screen.

Joe – 7074… Is this some kind of joke?

Mary – I'm not sure clocks have much of a sense of humour.

Joe – It might just be malfunctioning…

Mary – My watch shows exactly the same date. To the second.

Joe checks his own watch.

Joe – Mine too…

Mary – How is that possible…?

Joe – It shouldn't be.

Mary – And yet… Take a closer look at Earth… Don't you notice anything…?

Joe – No more ice at both poles…

Mary – It couldn't have melted completely in nine months.

Joe – The planet is now just a vast ocean.

Mary – Yes… There's hardly any land visible.

Joe – What could have happened?

Mary – Time travel… That only happens in books, doesn't it?

Joe – The hypothermic chamber… Maybe there was a malfunction.

Mary – Anyway… Were we supposed to remain frozen for five thousand years?

Joe – Then it wouldn't really be time travel.

Mary – We would've simply been asleep for five millennia.

Joe – And we'd have been orbiting Earth for five thousand years?

Mary – Someone would have noticed us, don't you think?

Joe – If a nuclear war had recently erupted, maybe there's no life left on Earth… or the few survivors can't manage to build a rocket anymore.

Mary – Either way, we can't stay here orbiting forever. And, just to jog your memory, I'm pregnant.

Joe – Five thousand years… Now we can truly talk about the longest pregnancy in history.

A pause.

Mary – What will we find down there?

Joe – Did humanity survive its flaws?

Mary – Has all of this evolved for the better or for the worse?

Joe – And if what we call progress turns out to be a disaster…?

A pause.

Mary – What do you mean by that?

Joe – No idea. It just came out. Must have read it somewhere.

Mary – In some depressing science-fiction novel, perhaps…

Joe – We see no signs of life.

Mary – One thing's for sure, no one is waiting for us.

Joe – What if we're received as potentially dangerous extraterrestrials?

Mary – Yeah… Except we're all alone, and we don't have another planet to go back to if we're not welcomed here…

Joe – Five millennia… Considering how the world changed in our last ten years on Earth…

Mary – Picture a prehistoric man landing in the world we left behind? Could he really adapt?

Joe – Conversely, what if humanity had regressed to a primitive state?

Mary – And imagine if dinosaurs were roaming again…

Joe – It certainly wouldn't be any simpler. I wonder which scenario I'd prefer…

Mary – Anyway, everyone we once knew is gone, and we've been completely forgotten.

Joe – Or perhaps history remembers us as the first people to set foot on Mars.

Mary – Imagine how big the history books must be after five thousand years…

Joe – They'd need several volumes…

Mary – I wouldn't want to have to go back to school in 7074.

Joe – Clearly.

Mary – If Earth has become a living hell, the people of the future will probably judge us very harshly.

Joe – We'll be perceived as monsters.

Mary – We'll be held accountable for crimes against humanity.

Joe – We might end up in prison.

Mary – Or perhaps we'll be viewed as sideshow attractions.

Joe – They could confine us to a zoo.

Mary – Or a laboratory. As guinea pigs for analysis.

Joe – We might even end up stuffed and put in a museum.

Mary – Or preserved in a jar of formaldehyde.

Joe – And if humans have become cannibals…

Mary – We might just end up in a cooking pot…

Joe – Anyway, we don't have a choice…

Mary – No… This child won't spend its life in a space cabin.

Joe – And neither will we…

Mary – Let's start the landing procedure. Whatever happens, happens…

They begin the preparations. Joe leans over the control screens.

Joe – Wait a moment…

Mary – What?

Joe – A spacecraft is approaching…

Mary – Really…?

Joe – At the very least, it suggests there are still humans on Earth, and they haven't regressed to prehistoric times…

Mary – I see it now…

Joe – I can even make out the name of the spacecraft on the hull…

Mary – No way… Aprilflower!

Joe – Brian! What on earth is he doing here?

Mary – Apparently he's jumped into the future too.

Joe – Or perhaps he was frozen for five thousand years, like us…

Mary – Both ships were constructed on the same model. If one of the hypothermic chambers malfunctions, it's no surprise the other does too…

A doorbell rings.

Joe – Who could that be?

Mary – Who do you think? It can only be him!

Joe – Already?

Mary – Well, go open the door!

Joe – Maybe he can shed some light on what happened…

Joe steps out and returns with Brian, who has grown a long beard and is wearing a loose robe. He resembles a hippie… or an old painting of God.

Mary – Brian? What happened to you?

Brian – I let my beard grow.

Joe – For five thousand years?

Brian – Well actually… I arrived here six months ago.

Joe – So, you didn't stay on Mars?

Brian – After a year on Mars, I had to go back. Nobody was buying the tickets, Mars Mission was bankrupt, and Earth was on the brink of nuclear war.

Mary – And what about the others? The missionaries…

Brian – They remained on Mars… The first colonists had just joined them on the Mayflower…

Joe – And you left them there…?

Brian – We had several breakdowns. Only one of our three ships could make the return journey. I planned to come back with spare parts, but when I woke from hibernation, just like you, I discovered that five thousand years had passed…

Mary – You left after us and arrived before us?

Brian – Six months earlier, yes… It's bizarre…

Joe – If only that were the bizarre part of this story…

Brian – I thought I was the sole survivor of this Martian mission… I'm relieved to see you.

Mary – So, you've been orbiting Earth for six months?

Brian – I descended… and then ascended.

Joe – Is it that bad?

Brian seems embarrassed.

Mary – You can share everything with us, you know… In any case, we'll find out sooner or later…

Brian – There's no one left on Earth…

Joe – No one?

Brian – It seems humanity became extinct, too, after wiping out most other species.

Joe – So we're the last survivors…

Mary – But what happened?

Brian – Hard to say… There are no more traces or historical records.

Mary – And when you left Earth? You told us things were pretty bad…

Brian – A nuclear world war had just begun when I left. Half the planet was already uninhabitable because of radiation and rising seas. Things can hardly have improved.

Joe – And now, what's happening down there?

Brian – Only a small part of the planet has become habitable again, on one of the few patches of land left above water.

Mary – Some kind of Garden of Eden.

Brian – Yes… But without Adam and Eve…

Joe – And you? Why stay here? In orbit.

Brian – Down there, none of the things we took for granted would be left. Restaurants, heating, air conditioning, hairdressers… Even flushing toilets!

Mary – Yes, all right. We get the picture.

Brian – I couldn't face playing castaway on a deserted island. After five thousand years in space, the ship felt like the last remnant of civilisation, with a few modern comforts still working.

Joe – I see…

Brian – I stayed in orbit… Observing the world from afar… Like God…

Mary – God…?

A pause.

Brian – But come to think of it, since you're here, you could be the new Adam and Eve!

Joe – Pardon?

Brian – Your own Garden of Eden awaits. You could repopulate Earth. Start again, and build a more humane civilisation.

Mary – Repopulate Earth all by myself…? Do you think I'm some kind of rabbit?

Joe – I'm rather in favour of stopping at one child.

Mary – And there's something about the Bible I've never understood. Were Adam and Eve's children supposed to have children with their brothers and sisters?

Brian – One of the many mysteries in that book. And not the only inconsistency…

Mary – Regardless, a decision needs to be made. We can't keep orbiting Earth for the rest of our days…

Joe – Either we crash headlong like kamikazes to finally put an end to humanity once and for all, or…

Brian – While you think it over, do you mind if I use your toilet? Mine has been clogged for five thousand years.

He exits. The other two exchange a worried look.

Joe – He's even more cracked than before…

Mary – He thinks he's God! And he takes us for Adam and Eve…

Joe – So what do we do?

Mary – We can't stay in orbit forever, especially with a baby on the way…

Joe – And with that dangerous melodramaniac.

Mary – You mean megalomaniac?

Joe – Isn't that what I said?

A pause.

Mary – I don't fancy living on a deserted island either.

Brian returns.

Joe – Feeling any better?

Brian – Apparently, your toilets are clogged too…

Mary – Sorry, I forgot to mention it.

Joe – Yes. We're really up to our necks in it.

Brian – So, what have you decided?

Joe – Uh… yes…

Brian – And I take it you're not particularly enthusiastic…

Mary – The two of us repopulate the planet while you stand there watching?

Brian – If you insist, I could contribute a little seed of my own…

A pause.

Joe – I have an idea…

Mary – You're scaring me.

Joe – What if we went back to Mars? Perhaps the first settlers built a civilisation there.

Mary – The passengers of the Mayflower…

Brian – I thought about it, but I didn't feel like making the trip alone… My ship had some malfunctions, and I'm not an engineer either…

Mary – Maybe we can help you fix it, right Joe…?

Brian – The last thing I ever managed to repair was a scooter, but we can try.

Mary – Since we don't want to be Adam and Eve, you can't spend eternity circling the Garden of Eden and waiting for life to appear by magic.

Brian – Well… OK…

Joe – Go ahead. I'll grab my toolbox and join you…

Brian – I'm heading out…

Brian departs. Joe and Mary exchange a perplexed look.

Joe – I can't help but wonder what awaits us on Mars…

Mary – If people survived there for five thousand years, they may have built an entire civilisation. That's as long as the gap between the earliest pyramids and the first Moon landing.

Joe – True. So, why wouldn't they have resettled Earth?

Mary – Initially, the planet was uninhabitable due to radiation. And perhaps, later on, they lacked the technological means for the journey.

Joe – Let's go back to Mars. We'll discover what lies in store for us there…

Blackout.

New rocket engine sounds.

New flashes.

Joe and Mary arrive, still half-asleep. They look out the window.

Joe – If this is Mars, the red planet has undergone quite a transformation in five thousand years. It's blue!

Mary – It's so confusing…

Joe – Mars has turned blue… Hang on. That doesn't make sense.

They glance outside again.

Mary – It's not Mars…

Joe – It's still Earth!

Mary – There must have been an engine failure…

Joe – So, we haven't moved!

Mary checks the control panel.

Mary – In space, no…

Joe – Another leap forward?

Mary – More like a significant leap backward this time.

Joe looks at the indicators as well.

Joe – More than seven thousand years back! We're just months away from the birth of Jesus.

Mary – So it wasn't a fault in the cryogenic chambers. We really have travelled through time.

Joe – In this case, a journey back into the past.

Mary – Maybe that experimental engine is causing all these jumps through time…

Joe – One small step for a man, one giant leap backwards for humanity…

Mary – At least, this time, we know what to expect if we land on Earth… It's all in the history books.

Joe – Anyway, no need to go back to Mars. We're in the time of the Roman Empire… There's still no one there.

Mary – And what about Brian?

Joe – Who knows…

Mary – We have no choice. We have to land…

Joe – Regardless, the ship is no longer in a state to lift off. All the indicators are flashing red.

Mary – Let's go for it. What do we have to lose…?

Joe – Initiating descent…

He works on the controls.

Mary – The ship is spiralling out of control; I can't predict our landing spot…

Joe – As long as we touch down in one piece… but it's not guaranteed…

Blackout.

New rocket engine sounds.

New flashes.

Joe and Mary slump in their seats, appearing visibly shocked. This time, Mary sports an enormous belly.

Joe – Are you okay?

Mary – I'm fine… But something feels strange…

Joe – Please don't tell me we've time-travelled again…

Mary looks at her belly.

Mary – About eight months, apparently.

Joe examines the control screens.

Joe – Exactly 243 days forward. We're now only a few weeks away from the birth of Jesus.

Mary *(placing her hands on her belly)* – I'm not sure I can make it a few more weeks… The landing was quite rough, wasn't it…?

Joe looks again at the control screens.

Joe – I don't think the Marsflower will take off again. The dashboard looks like a Christmas tree. Every light is flashing.

Mary – Where did we land?

Joe – No idea…

He turns to her and finally notices her enlarged belly.

Joe – But… your belly is huge!

Mary – Nine months have passed. And this time we weren't in hibernation in our cryogenic chambers…

Joe – Nine months without food and water, logically, we shouldn't have made it…

Mary – You're right, it's not logical…

Joe – I think at this point, we'd better stop looking for logic in this story.

Mary – Here we are on Earth. Just before the beginning of the New Testament…

Joe – To think that, initially, we set out to colonise Mars…

Mary – We should go outside to see what's happening.

Joe – And where we might have landed.

Mary – Landing on Earth during Roman times… I feel even more uneasy than when setting foot on Mars for the first time…

Joe – On Mars, at least, there was no one there to welcome us. We weren't at risk of being lynched…

The doorbell rings. They are petrified.

Joe – Someone's at the door…

Mary – Yes, I heard it.

Joe – What should we do?

Mary – We can't remain confined in this non-functional ship with no communication with the outside world…

Joe – I'll go and see who it is…

He goes out and comes back with Brian.

Mary – Brian? You again? What brings you here?

Brian – I arrived a few days before you…

Joe – So you're aware of our location.

Brian – Yes… And you won't believe it…

Mary – We don't have time for riddles right now…

Brian – We're in Bethlehem… in the ancient land of Palestine.

Joe – How did you find us?

Brian – I saw a streak of light in the sky, like a spacecraft entering the atmosphere. So I came looking for you.

Mary – Like the Three Wise Men, then. What did you do with the other two?

Brian – They're waiting outside.

Joe – Seriously?

Brian – But… you're pregnant?

Mary – Yes. And I think the baby is about to arrive. I'm having contractions…

Brian steps outside to leave them alone.

Blackout.

Mary is seated, exhausted after giving birth. Joe stands beside her, holding the newborn wrapped in cloth.

Mary – Can I hold the baby?

Joe – Of course.

He passes the baby to her. She cradles the child like a figure in a nativity scene. Joe looks even more exhausted than she does.

Mary – Are you okay? You look pale… Will you make it?

Joe – It's the first time I've delivered a baby.

Mary – Yes… Same here…

Joe – Turns out, it's not that complex.

Mary – If you say so…

Brian arrives.

Brian – Well?

Joe – The baby's here!

Brian – Congratulations… And what's his name, this divine child?

Mary – We don't know…

Joe – We haven't decided yet.

Brian – Anyway, you're not going to have him baptised…

Joe – Why not?

Brian – You can't exactly have him baptised yet…

Mary – Oh yes, that's true…

All eyes turn to the child. Blissful smiles.

Brian – What if we call him Jesus?

Joe and Mary turn to him, puzzled.

Joe – Jesus? Why Jesus?

Mary realises what Brian is getting at.

Mary – So, you haven't given up being God…?

Brian – I believe it's my destiny. And we can't be here by chance. Think about it! A unique opportunity to change history. We're in Bethlehem, just before the birth of Christ. That's a sign, surely?

Joe – A sign? A sign of what?

Mary – I think I might have an idea…

Brian – What if we produced a new messiah a few weeks before Jesus is born? The one history remembers would be completely overshadowed…

Joe – Do you really think so?

Brian – If someone had landed on the Moon before the first famous astronaut, no one would remember him or his historic words.

Mary – You want my son to become the saviour of humanity?

Joe – The other saviour didn't do such a brilliant job, did he? The centuries after him were filled with massacres.

Brian – Many of which were fuelled by religious wars…

Joe – Not to mention the Church, which has always sided with tyrants…

Brian – And has always supported the most reactionary positions.

Mary – Especially against women…

Joe – So, what's your plan now?

Brian – I wanted to build a new civilisation on Mars. Instead, we travelled through time. But we still have a chance!

Mary – So you still think you're on a mission…

Brian – To save humanity. Now that fate has given us this opportunity, why not rebuild the world on more humane principles?

Mary – By founding a new religion?

Joe – Just another one…

Brian – If our prophet is better than the competition and our religion is kinder and more tolerant, we'll win the whole market!

Mary – You already promised us the moon with Mars…

Joe – Not to mention that we never got paid.

Mary – Understand that we might be a bit sceptical.

Brian – This time it'll work. I can feel it…

Moment of hesitation.

Joe – It can't be worse. Humanity survived for millions of years, then managed to destroy itself barely two thousand years after the birth of Jesus.

Mary – You think you can prevent climate catastrophe and nuclear war by replacing Christianity before it even begins?

Brian – We can at least make an attempt, can't we?

Joe – After all, what do we have to lose?

Brian *(to Mary)* – You don't seem enthusiastic, do you?

Mary – I'll remind you that Jesus ended up on the cross…

Brian – We'll try to avoid that. But if we arrive in ancient times in a spaceship wearing spacesuits, we don't have many other options…

Joe – Either we claim to be messengers from heaven, or they'll burn us as messengers from hell.

A moment.

Mary – It's true that, by being the parents of the Messiah, at least initially, we'll probably be safer.

Brian – Look at it positively! The future of this child will be exceptional anyway! And being the parents of the Messiah is not an opportunity everyone gets…

Mary bends over the baby.

Mary – Let's go with Jesus…

Satisfied smiles from everyone as they gaze at the child.

Brian – The other Jesus hasn't even been born yet, and he'll soon be forgotten. We can call our messiah anything we like. Besides, Jesus sounds rather old-fashioned, don't you think?

Mary – I feel like you already have a name in mind…

Brian – Why not Brian?

Joe *(to Mary)* – He's not the father, is he?

Mary – Who knows? People were never quite sure who Jesus's father was either…

Brian – That story about a miraculous conception isn't exactly the most convincing part of the scriptures.

Mary – And telling everyone Joseph had been cheated on wouldn't have been good publicity…

Brian – Let's say I'm the godfather, and we gave him my name because I'm a family friend.

Mary – Hmm…

Brian – Let's call him Brian Junior…!

Joe – Brian Junior…? For a messiah who is supposed to save the world…

Brian – In a manner of speaking, this child did come down from heaven…

A moment.

Mary – Do you think this plan could succeed?

Brian – We still have a lot of equipment on board. While we might not possess the ability to restore sight to the blind or turn water into wine, we can certainly perform some miracles…

Joe – My jet-powered spacesuit still works. Flying up to heaven at the push of a button would be far more impressive than walking on water.

Brian – We'll have to rewrite the Bible. Or at least the New Testament…

Mary – I suppose you'll call it The Gospel According to Brian…

The sound of a baby crying is heard.

Brian – Oh… I think Brian Junior already wants to convey a message…

Joe – Maybe the baby just needs changing.

Mary – I'll check on that…

Brian – There's character there. Charisma, even…

She starts to unwrap the baby, and her gaze freezes.

Mary *(to Joe)* – You did say it was a boy… right?

Joe – I was so shocked… I didn't think to check…

Brian – What's wrong?

Mary – It's just… she's a girl!

Moment of astonishment.

Brian – Well, if we're going to start a new faith, why shouldn't the messiah be a woman?

All eyes turn to the baby. Blissful smiles. Sacred music.

Blackout.

The End

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez first took to the stage as a drummer in several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then worked as a television screenwriter before returning to the stage as a playwright. He has written around a hundred scripts for television and 123 plays, some of which have become classics (*Friday the 13th, Strip Poker*). His plays have been performed in more than 100 countries and translated into around 50 languages.

Amateur and professional theatre groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his websites :

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

However, performance rights, which constitute fair compensation for the author's work, are a legal obligation. Whether you are an amateur or a professional, you must request authorization to perform the play and pay the corresponding royalties for the production.

Jean-Pierre Martinez is represented by the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers (SACD).

To get in touch with Jean-Pierre Martinez and request authorization to perform one of his works, please use the contact form on his websites.

Jean-Pierre Martinez recently returned to music, writing original songs inspired by his poems and plays.

With **Jean-Pierre Martinez Music**, he extends that creative universe through original songs: short stories in musical form, humorous or melancholy, in which each song sometimes becomes a miniature theatrical scene.

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

Comedies for 2

A Thwarted Vocation
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
Pentimento
Preliminaries
Running on empty
Russian Roulette at the Kremlin
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Dressing Gown
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
Cards on the Table
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Horizons
Ménage à trois
One small step for a woman, one giant leap backward for Mankind
The Ways 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
Hangover
Happy Hour
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
Requiem for a Stradivarius
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The Fishbowl
The Perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money
The Tourists
The Worst Best Man Ever

Comedies for 5 to 6

All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
Dead End Boulevard
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
The Castaways of New Year's Eve
The President's Draw
The Rebels
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
Such a lovely village
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Most Beautiful Village in France
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Blackouts
Don't panic!
Dramedies
Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
Every Colour under the Sun
For real and for fun
Funny Stories
Him and Her
Killer Sketches
Lockdown Shorts
Lost time Chronicles
Memoirs of a Suitcase
No Sense Off Limits
Now and then
Of Animals and Men
Open Hearts
Open Letters
Park Bench Shorts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays can be downloaded free of charge from his websites:

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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Play available for free download