

La Comédi@thèque

Critical but stable

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English translation by Anne-Christine Gasc

Raymond is in a deep coma following an accident on a Boris Bike. His long lost relatives are called to his bedside to decide what to do and avoid prolonged therapeutic interventions. But this collective decision becomes even more difficult when the patient turns out not to be who everyone thought he was. And is the keeper of a secret that could make everyone very rich...

Characters

**Quentin: Raymond's brother (or sister)
Beatrice: Raymond's sister (or brother)
Peggy: Raymond's partner
Doctor Killhem: the doctor
Nurse Diggold: the nurse
Detective McManigal: the police officer**

6 characters (male or female)

A hospital room. The body of a patient lies on a hospital bed, slightly reclined, with an IV drip and several machines and monitors. His face is covered by a sheet. Since this isn't a speaking part, a mannequin will be used. Doctor Killhem (male or female) and Nurse Diggold (male or female) enter the room, both wearing white coats.

Killhem – Hospitals are always overheated. Makes me want to open a private clinic just for the air conditioning.

Diggold – No wonder germs thrive in hospital environments.

Killhem – They always go on about the cost of health care. Maybe if they stopped heating hospitals during the summer it would help.

Diggold – And it would reduce the chances of getting one of those hospital-acquired infections, Doctor Killhem.

Killhem – Actually, I think I may be incubating a nice little MRSA myself. Or maybe a tropical disease. You, on the other hand, Nurse Diggold, look like a picture of health.

Diggold – Thank you, Doctor. I've been eating carrots, for the carotene. I'm not too orange, am I?

Killhem – Not at all, my little bunny. So, what do we have here?

She hands him a medical file.

Diggold – Raymond Mariani, forty years old. He's in a deep coma following an accident on a Boris Bike.

The doctor glances at the file.

Killhem – Helmets should be mandatory for push bikes.

Diggold – Actually, he was wearing a helmet. Unfortunately, it didn't help when he was hit by a bus and met the pavement at forty miles per hour.

The nurse lifts the sheet and we can see the patient's head in a full-face helmet.

Killhem – But now the only danger is falling off the bed, so why is he still wearing his helmet?

Diggold – It's such a mess inside... We didn't dare remove it for fear brain matter would spill all over the pillow.

Killhem – Hmm, then there's little chance he'll wake up soon ...

Diggold – Respiratory arrest most likely triggering loss of oxygen to the brain.

The doctor looks at the file again.

Killhem – I see... Flat EEG... probably brain dead. Shouldn't we ease his suffering?

Diggold – It would free up a bed for sure, but...

Killhem – You’re right, we should speak to his relatives first. Did you contact his family?

Diggold – Yes, they should be here soon.

Killhem – Perfect.

Diggold – No other recommendations for this patient, Doctor?

Killhem – Let me think... Leave the visor closed so the flies don’t get inside.

Diggold – Oh, Doctor Killhem, you’re really something else...

Killhem – Something else! Exactly! That’s why I will soon join the two-tier medical system my dear. The public sector doesn’t have the means to pay me what I am worth... Would you like to join me in my new private clinic, as head nurse?

Diggold – I would follow you to the ends of the Earth, Doctor Killhem... Even the university hospital in Scarborough if you wanted me to. So a nicely air conditioned private clinic in Belgravia sounds even better.

Killhem – I can feel we’ll do great things together, Nurse Diggold... I just need to find some generous donors to fundraise for my project!

Diggold – I think I have an idea...

Killhem – Really? You’re wonderful, Nurse Diggold.

She pulls the sheet over the helmet.

Killhem – Why cover his face with the sheet? When I came in I thought he was dead.

Diggold – Sometimes he opens his eyes. Must be a nervous reflex. It’s to protect them from the light.

Killhem – It’s true, strip lighting is so harsh on the eyes... In our private clinic I’ll have them install pearlescent lighting. It’s much more flattering on the complexion.

Diggold – Especially for those getting end of life care.

Killhem – Don’t worry, my private clinic will only admit patients that are credit-worthy and in perfect health. I’m thinking of transitioning to plastic surgery.

Diggold – The rich are also entitled to have access to medical care to solve their little problems... No one is perfect. (*Looking down at her chest*) In fact I was thinking of a bit and nip and tuck myself.

They make their way out.

Killhem – I’ll take a closer look later, Nurse Diggold. A very close look. Who’s the next patient?

Diggold – A homeless man that was found last night in an alcohol-induced coma. He probably won’t wake up either.

Killhem – In this heat we shouldn't keep him here long, or he'll stink up the place... Do they have room in the kitchen freezer? They could tuck him in behind the processed meats, that'd keep him cool.

Diggold – Oh Doctor, you're too much! You make everything so funny... I'm the one who's going to die of laughter!

Killhem – With the jobs we have, if we can't laugh a little...

They leave the room. Immediately, Quentin (or Quentine), a boho chic man (or woman), enters with a mobile phone glued to their ear.

Quentin – Listen, I don't know everything yet. I just got to the hospital, but I went to the wrong room. I found some poor guy suffering from hypothermia who didn't smell very nice. But now I've found him, I'm standing right in front of him...

He notices the patient on the bed.

Quentin – He doesn't look too well either, actually... He's got tubes and wires everywhere... Like a mini substation. Actually, I'm not entirely sure it's him. His face is covered by a sheet... Yes, I know, it's not a good sign... Well, the doctor will be here soon, I'll find out more...

Beatrice, a Sloane Ranger type, arrives.

Quentin – Sorry, I have to go. My sister just came in. Ok, I'll call you when I know more, but don't wait for me for lunch... Love you too...

He puts his mobile phone away and greets his sister (hugs or kisses).

Beatrice – Hi Quentin.

Quentin – Hello Beatrice.

She notices the patient with the sheet over his face.

Beatrice – Oh my God! Don't tell me I'm too late... Is he dead?

Quentin – I think if he was dead they'd have unplugged all of this.

Beatrice – Are you sure it's him? I got the wrong room at first...

Quentin – You too? I don't know why they have a room 13 and a 13 a...

Beatrice – Maybe it will bring him luck.

Quentin – What will?

Beatrice – Number 13!

He looks at the chart at the foot of the bed.

Quentin – Raymond Mariani. Yes, that's him.

Beatrice – Maybe we could remove this sheet from his face, no?

Quentin – It does look a little like a shroud, but... I don't know if...

Beatrice – You're right. It's best not to touch anything until the police arrive.

Quentin – You mean the doctor...

Beatrice – I bumped into him in the hall, he said he would be here shortly.

Quentin – What an unbelievable story... It's been so long since I heard from him... To see him again today, like this... in this state... And you? How are you?

Beatrice – I'm ok.

Awkward silence.

Quentin – Do you still live in Windermere?

Beatrice – I've never lived in Windermere.

Quentin – Really?

Beatrice – I live in Windsor.

Quentin – Oh, that's right...

Another awkward silence.

Beatrice – Are you still working for that ad company?

Quentin – I'm in finance.

Beatrice – Oh, that's right...

Quentin – How about Raymond, were you in contact?

Beatrice – No more than you... The last time I saw him was at Dad's funeral. Which you didn't attend, if I remember correctly.

Quentin – Something came up at the last minute. But you have to admit that our family... doesn't really have a sense of family.

Beatrice – It's awful... He never had any luck.

Quentin – No... Poor Raymond... Just his first name...

Beatrice – What about it?

Quentin – Don't you think it's strange that he's named Raymond?

Beatrice – Plenty of people are called Raymond.

Quentin – Not people like us. And not his age.

Beatrice – That's true ... And to my knowledge we don't have any grandparents or uncles that he could be named after.

Quentin – I don't know... Maybe he was adopted...

Beatrice – It would explain a lot...

Quentin – He always was the ugly duckling...

Beatrice – That's true... He doesn't even look like us.

Quentin – There's something Asian about him, don't you think?

Beatrice – Asian?

Quentin – Just a touch, mind you.

Beatrice – You think he's adopted and they let him keep his first name?

Quentin – I don't think there's a lot of Asians called Raymond...

Beatrice – No...

A beat.

Quentin – On the bright side, if it turned out we weren't from the same family, if he needed a kidney we wouldn't be compatible...

Beatrice – There's that.

Quentin – Speaking of which... Here's the doctor... (*Quietly to Beatrice*) And given his name, I'd be surprised if he brought good news...

The doctor and the nurse arrive with appropriately gloomy faces.

Killhem – Doctor Killhem. And this is Nurse Diggold.

Beatrice – Hello Doctor.

Quentin – Nurse...

Beatrice – We came as soon as the hospital contacted us.

Killhem – You're the patient's brother and sister, am I right?

Quentin – Yes, well...

Killhem – I am sincerely sorry for what happened to your brother.

Beatrice – Is it that bad?

Killhem – I won't lie to you, his condition is extremely worrying. He's in a critical state and we don't know which way it'll go.

Beatrice – You think there's still hope?

Killhem – Mr Mariani suffered a catastrophic head trauma and unfortunately the skull has been severely damaged. He is currently in a deep coma, and is on life support. We are going to do more tests but it would seem he is already brain dead.

Quentin – You mean he's a vegetable...

Killhem – I studied medicine for 14 years. I wanted to give you some context and more information to justify my astronomically high salary. But yes, that's what he is. A vegetable.

Beatrice – So there's no chance he'll ever wake from his coma?

Killhem takes the x-ray that Diggold took out of a file, and shows it to them.

Killhem – This is an x-ray of Mr Mariani's skull. As you can see, there are numerous lesions and several fractures.

Quentin and Beatrice look at the x-ray pretending they understand what they are looking at.

Beatrice – Indeed, it's not pretty.

Quentin – But the skull looks intact... the curve is perfect...

Killhem – That's not his skull, that's his helmet.

Beatrice – His helmet?

Diggold – The skull is so damaged that we chose to leave the helmet to keep the brain in place.

Killhem – At least what's left of it...

Quentin – Do you mean that without the helmet...

Killhem – Imagine spaghetti in a broken colander, in a saucepan. We felt it was safer to keep the saucepan under the colander so the spaghetti didn't spill in the sink.

Quentin – Oh, now I understand.

Killhem puts the x-rays away.

Killhem – I am very sorry to have to ask you this so bluntly, but... Do you know whether Mr Mariani had made any provision for continued care and organ donation, particularly in the case where he would need to be kept artificially alive?

Beatrice – I don't know... We never had the chance to discuss that particular subject... We didn't see each other very often, you see... *(To Quentin)* Did he mention anything to you?

Quentin – No... The last time I saw him was at your wedding. I imagine he didn't think the circumstances were ideal to bring it up. Although... Who hasn't considered assisted suicide during the Birdie Song? Honestly?

Killhem – I don't want to rush you of course. But you'll need think about it now.

Diggold – And if it becomes relevant, there's also a decision to be made regarding organ donation.

Quentin – Organ donation? Oh no, but... We need to tell you, Doctor... We have reason to think that Raymond is our adopted brother... Therefore we wouldn't be compatible for an organ donation...

Diggold – I think Doctor Killhem was talking about donating Raymond's organs...

Quentin – Raymond's... Of course... Yes... Personally I am totally in favour, of course. If it can help save another life...

Killhem – In any case, we would also need Mrs Mariani's agreement. She just called, she'll be here soon.

Beatrice – Mrs Mariani...

Diggold – His wife. Your sister-in-law.

Quentin – Of course...

Killhem – I will leave you with your brother... You can talk to him, of course, but we're not sure he can hear you.

Quentin – Thank you Doctor.

Killhem – Let me know if you have any other questions... And if you need anything you can ring and a nurse will come... or a priest.

The doctor and the nurse leave the room. Quentin and Beatrice turn toward the patient.

Beatrice – Did you know he was married?

Quentin – No...

Beatrice – He could have at least told us. I don't know that I would have gone to his wedding but you know... Don't you think?

Quentin – I don't know why but I can't picture him with a wife.

Beatrice – Yeah... I'm curious to see what she looks like...

Quentin – According to the doctor it won't be long before we find out...

At that moment, Peggy, Raymond's presumed wife, arrives. The character can be played by a woman who looks and moves in an unfeminine way, or by a man dressed as a woman.

Peggy – Oh my God! Raymond!

Quentin and Beatrice glance at each other, intrigued.

Peggy – Don't tell me I'm too late?

Quentin – Don't worry, he's still alive. Well, so to speak...

Peggy – Peggy. I am Raymond's partner. Who are you?

Quentin – I'm his brother...

Beatrice – And I'm his sister...

Peggy – Strange... He never mentioned either of you...

Quentin – He never told us he was married either...

Peggy – He always was very discreet. I mean... He's still very discreet.

Quentin – For sure, in his condition, he couldn't be more discreet.

Peggy – Did the doctor say whether there was still any hope?

Beatrice – He wasn't very reassuring, actually... We are just as distraught as you are... Do you have children?

Peggy – Not yet, unfortunately... I would have had something left of him...

Beatrice – Of course.

Peggy – But they are going to fix him, aren't they?

Quentin – I think they asked us here to see whether we were in agreement about putting him out of his misery...

Peggy – Putting him out of his misery?

Beatrice – Raymond is unfortunately in a deep coma following this accident.

Peggy – His accident? What happened, exactly?

Quentin – That's true... What happened, exactly?

Beatrice – We forgot to ask...

Quentin – A traffic accident, maybe.

Peggy – Raymond didn't drive.

Quentin – Regardless, I think that Doctor Killhem is waiting for the greenlight to unplug him...

Peggy – Unplug him? This isn't a toaster you're talking about! Raymond is your brother!

Beatrice – To be honest, it's been years since we last saw him...

Quentin – I even wonder why they asked us to come.

Beatrice – We are his only family, apart from you, but to ask us to make such an important decision...

Quentin – I'm not a believer so I don't have anything against euthanasia... In fact, don't you think it's a sign?

Peggy – A sign?

Quentin – Euthan-asia.

Beatrice – We think that Raymond might well have come from Asia.

Quentin – I think it's a sign.

Beatrice – Maybe you should be the one to make the decision. After all, you knew him much better than we did...

Peggy starts sobbing in an unconvincing manner.

Peggy – No, I am not ready to... to unplug him... Not just yet anyway...

Beatrice – We totally respect your decision. Don't we, Quentin?

Quentin – Of course... (*He glances at his watch*) Actually, I have to go soon... Since we can't do anything for the moment...

Beatrice – Me too... I have guests for dinner tonight and...

Quentin – Actually, I don't think that our presence makes a big difference, the state he's in...

Peggy – I'll stay with him, if that's ok with you...

Beatrice – But of course... You are his wife after all...

Quentin and Beatrice are about to leave but the nurse comes back.

Diggold – Oh, you must be Mrs Mariani...

Peggy – Yes... Could you give me some more information on Raymond's condition?

Diggold – We are waiting for the latest results, but to be honest we are not very optimistic.

Peggy – Is he getting worse?

Diggold – No, not really. His condition is stable.

Peggy – In that case maybe there's still hope.

Diggold – Unfortunately, my dear, in this instance stable isn't a positive.

Quentin – A vegetable is also in a stable condition.

Diggold – Mr Mariani is indeed in a vegetative state. There are very few chances of his condition improving.

Peggy – Are you sure?

Diggold – Unfortunately. I think you should start thinking about what would be best for him.

Beatrice – Do you think he's in pain?

Diggold – Hard to tell, but... kept alive in this sort of state, that's not much of a life, don't you think?

Beatrice – The nurse is right, Peggy. I understand your pain, but we can't leave him like this...

Diggold – Your sister-in-law is right. Of course the departure of a loved one is one of our Lord's greatest tests, but at some point you must start the grieving process, get a move on and face things head on. There's lots of paperwork to fill in. And the inheritance of course. There's no need to drag things on.

Quentin – Inheritance?

Beatrice – But of course... the inheritance... We'd forgotten about that...

Quentin – Who are the beneficiaries?

Diggold – Well, typically... *(To Peggy)* You're his wife, aren't you?

Peggy – Yes, well, yes, I mean ...

Diggold – If your husband came to die, you would inherit... Actually, since you're the patient's spouse I would need to get you to sign some forms while you're here...

Peggy – Well... Actually, we weren't married yet...

Diggold – Oh... And you didn't have any children either?

Peggy – No...

Diggold – In that case, it's his brother and sister who are the beneficiaries... But I don't think that's your main worry right now.

Quentin *(dreamily)* – No, of course not...

Diggold – I'll let you talk it over as a family...

The nurse leaves the room.

Peggy – Sorry, nature's calling.

Peggy leaves for the bathroom.

Quentin – So we're the beneficiaries...

Beatrice – We are his only family if he isn't married...

Quentin – That's crazy...

Beatrice – Yes...

Quentin – Do you think he had a lot of cash?

Beatrice – I doubt it, but... Who knows... We hadn't seen him for years.

Quentin – I don't even know what he does for a living.

Beatrice – I'm going to guess he's on benefits.

Quentin – I don't know... maybe he does work.

Beatrice – Well, I doubt he makes it past the income tax threshold.

Quentin – We should ask his wife... I mean, Peggy... She would know...

Peggy comes back.

Beatrice – Feeling better?

Peggy seems to be looking for something.

Peggy – I'm ok... Do you know where they put his belongings?

Beatrice – His belongings?

Peggy – Didn't he have a suitcase when they brought him in?

Quentin – If he was hospitalised following an accident, I wouldn't have thought he'd had time to pack a suitcase...

Beatrice – It's not as if he was heading for a stay in the maternity ward...

Quentin – Why do you want to know if he had a suitcase? I don't think he's going to need one for a while...

Peggy – No, of course... I'm sorry... I'm not myself...

Quentin – As you were living with him... could you tell us a little about his life? I mean, since we hadn't seen him for a long time...

Beatrice – Yes, how were things going for him?

Peggy – What do you mean, things?

Beatrice – Business... Did he have a job?

Peggy (*distracted*) – A job? Raymond?

Quentin – I knew it...

Peggy seems preoccupied by something else.

Peggy – I'll go ask the nurse if they stored his suitcase somewhere...

She leaves the room.

Quentin – She seems rather upset, doesn't she?

Beatrice – That's understandable.

Quentin – In any case, apparently he didn't have a fortune... So for the inheritance...

Beatrice – He may not have earned a fortune... but three years ago when Mum died, he would have inherited his share of Mum and Dad's estate.

Quentin – Shit, you're right...

Beatrice – We could at least get that back... I mean, it makes sense that it should come to us. We're his family after all.

Quentin – Especially since Raymond may not have actually been part of the family. If he was adopted from Bangladesh. Or even Birmingham.

Beatrice – I wouldn't mind some money right now. We've just bought property in Provence, right next to Cliff Richard's place...

Quentin – No, really? Provence is stunning. The light. The lavender...

Beatrice – The thing is there really is a lot of work to do before it looks like Cliffy's house. Right now even Lulu wouldn't take a summer holiday there.

Quentin – I see. And since he's lying here like a vegetable...

Beatrice – Unplugging him would be the compassionate thing to do.

They are lost in thought for a moment.

Quentin – What if he'd already blown it all?

Beatrice – You think?

Quentin – This is Raymond we're talking about...

Peggy returns.

Peggy – Apparently he didn't have a suitcase...

Beatrice – But other than that, everything was good? He didn't have any financial troubles?

Peggy – Financial troubles?

Quentin – I think he recently came into a small inheritance. I hope he would have managed the money sensibly.

Peggy – Sensibly? Raymond?

Beatrice – Oh, that's right...

The nurse comes back.

Diggold – So? Have you been able to have a family discussion about the best course of action for your loved one?

Quentin – Well, actually...

Beatrice – We haven't made a decision yet.

Quentin – And we're not necessarily in agreement...

Beatrice – Peggy isn't quite ready for...

Peggy is still looking for something.

Peggy – So, he didn't have a suitcase when he arrived?

She even looks under the bed.

Diggold – Having said that, if Mr Mariani wasn't married, it's up to his brother and sister to decide what's best for him.

Quentin – Actually... we would like a little more information.

Diggold – On his medical condition? Well, as I was telling you earlier...

Quentin – We were thinking more in terms of the finances.

Diggold – Don't worry about that. Euthanasia is not covered by the NHS yet but we consider this medical procedure a charitable and Christian act that we perform without charge. However, if you insist on making a donation, Doctor Killhem is considering creating a foundation in Belgravia for...

Beatrice – We were thinking more about the inheritance aspect of the finances.

Diggold – The inheritance. I see. Well, of course.

Quentin – Did you know whether Mr Mariani was a man of means?

Diggold – He was comfortable enough to have a subscription to Boris Bikes... But you should really ask his most recent partner...

Peggy wasn't paying attention but reacts when she hears her name.

Peggy – Pardon?

Diggold – You need to know that in accepting your brother's inheritance you agree to take on his potential debts as well as his assets. That includes his hospital fees...

Beatrice – You're kidding...?

Quentin and Beatrice consider for a moment the patient and all the medical apparatus that surrounds him.

Quentin – Private rooms costs a packet, right?

Diggold – A fortune, indeed. His care is covered under the NHS but by rights if he hasn't got private healthcare he should have been out on the ward with the rest of the great unwell.

Beatrice – Did Raymond have private healthcare?

Diggold – I'll have to check with accounts... But if you're not sure you can always refuse the inheritance and make Doctor Killhem's foundation the beneficiary...

Quentin – But of course... I see...

Diggold – In any case, with regards to the life support decision, I would advise you to carefully weigh the pros and cons... Because he could stay in a coma for years and who knows how much that will end up costing.

Beatrice – In that case we may have to put him quickly out of his misery. What do you think, Quentin?

Diggold – I'll give you a few more minutes to decide...

She leaves the room.

Beatrice (to Peggy) – What do you think?

Peggy – Isn't there a small chance that he could wake from his coma?

Quentin – After all, if we renounce the inheritance, whether he lives or dies...

Beatrice – True, we don't need to rush his death. It's not very Christian...

Quentin – I need to talk to my solicitor, but I wonder if the hospital bills aren't the family's responsibility even if we turn down the inheritance.

Beatrice – But we hardly even know Raymond!

They move close to the patient.

Quentin – You think he can hear us?

Peggy – Go figure...

Beatrice – What about the organ donation, what do you think about that?

Quentin – Donating his organs?

Beatrice – What? You want to sell them?

Quentin – I don't know... How much do you think we could get for them?

Beatrice – It could go towards the hospital bills... I'm kidding, my nerves are shot.

Quentin – Are you sure he can't hear us?

Beatrice (to Peggy) – Do you know where he stood on organ donation?

Peggy – No...

A beat.

Beatrice (to Peggy) – Would you consider marrying Raymond, before we unplug him?

Quentin – And before we remove his organs, naturally.

Beatrice – That way you could have his name. Think of it as a souvenir.

Quentin – Since you don't have children.

Beatrice – Post-mortem artificial insemination would be one step too far.

Quentin – I'm not sure you can marry someone in a coma... That's another question for my solicitor.

Peggy – Yeah, right. I see what you're up to... A few minutes ago I wasn't part of the family and now you want me to marry him so I can foot the hospital bills.

Beatrice – That's such a negative way to see things...

Doctor Killhem enters the room.

Killhem – So, everything good in here? I mean... Given the circumstances. Did someone offer you a coffee? Or a danish? Oops, I forget I'm still working for the NHS. A rich tea and a Nescafe perhaps?

Beatrice – Oh, Doctor! Perfect timing, we need your advice.

Killhem – Please, we are here to help.

Quentin – It's about Raymond's private health care.

Killhem – Unfortunately, your brother didn't have private healthcare. And I don't want to worry you but some sort of admin error means that he was placed in a private room and has already incurred some considerable expenses.

Beatrice – It's ok, we're already pretty worried anyway...

Killhem – I understand... Seeing your brother... Or your life partner in such a state... It's difficult to comprehend, I know.

Peggy – But you think there's a chance he might talk again one day?

Killhem – Talk? Dear God... A miracle is always possible, but you'll have to send the request much higher than me (*looks skyward*). And while miracles are not guaranteed to work they are free... euthanasia on the other hand is a dead cert but not covered by the NHS.

Beatrice – Thank you for these comforting words, Doctor...

Killhem – Oh, before I forget, the police are waiting at reception.

Peggy – The police?

Killhem – I told them the patient wasn't able to answer questions, but they are keen to talk to friends and family. I told the officer to come to the room... Anyway, if you change your mind about coffee and danish there's always Deliveroo.

The doctor leaves.

Quentin – The police? Why are the police here?

Beatrice – Maybe they're investigating the circumstances of the accident... it would make sense...

Quentin – Of course. Actually, we still don't know anything about this accident.

Beatrice – The nurse said something about a Boris Bike...

Quentin – You don't know what happened, do you?

Peggy – Well... I... No, not really.

Beatrice – Maybe this police officer will be able to tell us more.

Quentin (*seeing Peggy very uncomfortable*) – You don't want to find out?

Peggy – Look, I don't have time to explain, but please, don't tell the police about me, ok?

Quentin – Why not?

Peggy – I... I'm not Raymond's wife... I mean, I'm not his life partner either.

Beatrice – Really? So who are you?

Peggy – I'm his partner... His business partner.

Quentin – Business partner? What kind of business?

Beatrice – The kind of business that the police shouldn't know about, apparently...

Someone knocks on the door.

Peggy – I'll tell you later. I'll go and hide in the bathroom until they leave.

Detective McManigal (man or woman) comes into the room.

McManigal – Detective McManigal (*wiping his brow*) It's hot in here, isn't it? You must be the family, I presume...

Quentin – His brother and sister, yes.

McManigal – I am investigating the case your brother is involved in.

Beatrice – A case? There's more to this than an accident with a Boris Bike? Did he fail to return it within the two-hour limit?

McManigal – It's a little more complicated than that, actually...

Quentin – Really?

McManigal – I thought you already knew... Your brother is in a coma following an armed robbery.

Beatrice – An armed robbery?

McManigal – The Post Office next to where he lived.

Quentin – I see. Raymond never did like banks.

Beatrice – Either that or he was picking up his benefits.

Quentin – He was riding by on his bike and was hit by a stray bullet, is that it?

Beatrice – Deep down I’m not surprised.

Quentin – Our brother never had any luck...

McManigal – Actually, that’s not what happened... Your brother is involved in the armed robbery... he was the robber.

The other two are dumbfounded.

Beatrice – Raymond? He robbed the Post Office?

McManigal – Yes, he did. With an accomplice.

Quentin – Armed robbery... That’s so unlike him.

Beatrice – An armed robbery on a Boris Bike? With a full helmet?

Quentin – Actually, that is more like him.

McManigal – Did you know anything about his illegal activities?

Beatrice – Of course not. It’s been years since we last saw him...

Quentin – On a Boris Bike... That must be grounds for an insanity plea, no? Either that or an award for inventing the eco-friendly robbery.

Beatrice – So it’s not a traffic accident?

McManigal – Yes and no... Your brother got hit by a bus after a police chase through London.

Quentin – A police chase? He was on a Boris Bike! What were the cops riding? Roller skates?

McManigal – This isn’t a joke, Mr Mariani. We’re talking about an armed robbery.

Beatrice – No one is taking this more seriously than we are, Detective. I will remind you that our brother is between life and death...

McManigal – I am genuinely very sorry... Especially since his accomplice escaped and he could have given us her name.

Quentin – Her name? So it’s a woman...

McManigal shows them a piece of paper.

McManigal – This is her e-fit. Have you seen this woman before?

Quentin – Unfortunately I don’t have my reading glasses... (*He pretends to have difficulty reading*) You know what it’s like when you get older...

McManigal (*to Beatrice*) – And you?

Beatrice – Who? Me? Oh you know... I'm terrible with faces... It's very simple: I can't tell people apart. I once went to a swinger's club on the Kingsland Road and came home with my own husband. It was only when he took the dog out the following morning the penny dropped.

McManigal – I see...

Quentin – Lucky you...

McManigal steps closer to the bed.

McManigal – I spoke with the doctor earlier... According to him there's little chance that Mr Mariani will wake from his coma any time soon.

Quentin – If he wakes up he'll go to prison... That's hardly a great motivator to step away from the light.

Beatrice – What will he get?

McManigal – If he were to give us the name of his accomplice, return the money and show remorse, the judge might be lenient...

Quentin – How much?

McManigal – Well, the gun was fake but that doesn't make any difference. In theory, up to twenty years.

Quentin – No, I meant the money... How much?

McManigal – Three million.

Quentin – Three million pounds?

Beatrice – I see.

Quentin – And there I was thinking Raymond didn't have any ambition... I'm almost impressed...

Beatrice – And you say you still haven't found the money?

McManigal – Witnesses have confirmed that it was your brother who was holding the suitcase after the robbery... But when we found him after the accident, the suitcase had gone...

Quentin – So what happened, exactly?

McManigal – After the robbery, the two suspects split to make it harder to follow them. We lost her but your brother was later spotted near King's Cross station.

Beatrice – Spotted...

McManigal – A bloke on a Boris Bike with a full helmet is easy to spot...

Quentin – Obviously not enough for the bus driver who ran him over...

McManigal – Regardless, before his accident he had time to get rid of the suitcase.

Beatrice – The suitcase...

McManigal – You know something about the suitcase?

Beatrice – No, no, nothing...

McManigal – In any case, know that your brother is under arrest. In principle I should stay here and stand guard in case he wakes up, but...

Quentin – The state he's in, he's not going to run away...

McManigal – And to be honest with you, hospitals depress me...

Quentin – I know what you mean... And they say they're full of germs that resist all antibiotics these days.

Beatrice – Quite. There's that saying about hospitals: you might know what you come in with but God only knows what you're taking home.

Quentin – Same if you're just visiting... I refused to attend all three of my children's births for that very reason.

McManigal – Really?

Beatrice – Absolutely, in terms of germs and viruses, hospitals are one big, petri dish playpen.

Quentin – And you know the tropical disease ward is right next door. Doctor Killhem was just telling us that just last week they had the first case of malaria in over a century.

Beatrice – Didn't he say ebola?

Quentin – Possibly...

McManigal – He told you that?

Beatrice – Just between us, I think this hospital is on the verge of being quarantined. Apparently, the nurses are dropping like flies.

McManigal now seems in a hurry to leave.

McManigal – Right, in that case I'll leave you to it... I'll come back to check on him once in a while...

Quentin – Thank you for your kindness, Detective.

Quentin holds out his hand that he can't refuse to shake.

McManigal – Do you mind if I wash my hands before I leave?

Beatrice – Where?

McManigal – In the bathroom!

The other two are dismayed.

Quentin – Well, I mean...

Beatrice – No, no problem at all...

McManigal enters the bathroom. The other two exchange worried looks.

Quentin – We'll just say that she threatened to kill us if we said anything...

Beatrice – With her fake gun?

Quentin – We didn't know that then!

McManigal returns.

McManigal – You know, I've been feeling a little peaky since I've arrived. I hope I haven't caught something nasty... You'll let me know if your brother wakes up, won't you?

Beatrice – Of course we will, Detective...

McManigal leaves.

Beatrice – How did she do that?

Quentin – Maybe she hid behind the shower curtain. They do that in horror films all the time.

Quentin – Well, I think that we can forget about the inheritance. If Raymond was reduced to robbing the Post Office on a Boris Bike, he obviously wasn't flush.

Beatrice – But there's the loot...

Quentin – Right... The suitcase...

Beatrice – That's why Peggy didn't want to unplug Raymond before he told her what he did with the money...

Quentin – Now I understand why she was so intent on finding out whether Raymond had any luggage when he arrived...

Peggy returns.

Peggy – Thank goodness the bathroom is shared between both rooms.

Quentin – The patient next door wasn't surprised to see you?

Peggy – He's in a coma, too...

Beatrice – Oh that's right, room 13a...

Peggy – I overheard everything.

Beatrice – So?

Peggy – Yeah, ok, I'm the accomplice.

Quentin – No kidding... Actually the e-fit is a perfect likeness.

Beatrice – It's going to be difficult to convince the Detective that we didn't recognise you if he finds out we saw you here...

Peggy – Thank you for your discretion...

Quentin – We could still be in real trouble...

Beatrice – And what's in it for us?

Peggy – Ok, if you help me find the money we'll share. One million each...

Beatrice – We split it three ways?

Quentin – Now we just need Raymond to tell us where it is.

Peggy – In the state he's in...

Beatrice – Precisely. It's not going to be easy to get him to tell us what he did with the money.

Peggy – He might confide more easily if it's his family asking.

Quentin – And then?

Peggy – If we can get him to spill the beans, we can unplug him right after. Rather than let him live like a vegetable. And three million split four ways that's not a round number anyway...

Quentin – And he won't be tempted to shop you to the cops, right?

Peggy – It's my understanding that you weren't very close. It would also ensure you don't have to pay his medical bills for years to come...

Beatrice – I would really be more comfortable if I were sure he couldn't hear us...

Quentin – You think he could be faking?

Peggy – Faking a deep coma? Is that possible?

Beatrice – He was always a natural. Do you remember when we were kids? Sometimes he would sleep so soundly... in the morning we often thought he had fallen in a coma.

They all come around the bed.

Peggy – Maybe this little shit wants to keep the money for himself...

Beatrice – Raymond, can you hear us?

Quentin – The helmet isn't helping.

Beatrice – The doctor said that if we removed it, his brain may spill on the pillow...

Peggy – We could just open the visor.

She opens the visor.

Quentin – Raymond, this is your brother, Quentin...

Peggy shakes him a little roughly.

Peggy – Raymond? Raymond? Where the fuck is the fucking money?

Beatrice – Careful, you'll kill him!

Quentin – He opened his mouth...

Peggy – Shit, he did.

Beatrice – It looks like he wants to tell us something...

Quentin – Maybe it's a reflex...

Peggy – Look, it's... there's something in his mouth!

Beatrice – Yes there is...

Peggy sticks her hand through the visor.

Peggy – Spit it out god dammit!

Quentin – All right, gently.

Peggy – The fucker, he bit me.

Quentin – I hope for your sake he's not contagious.

Beatrice – So, what is it?

Peggy removes a key from Raymond's mouth which she holds for all to see.

Peggy – Fuck me! It's a key!

Beatrice – A key?

Peggy – It looks like a key to a train station locker... Maybe he had time to hide the suitcase in a train station somewhere...

Beatrice – And he tried to swallow the key knowing the police would catch him.

Quentin – Great... It's not like there's only a couple of train stations with lockers in London...

Peggy – The detective said his accident happened near King's Cross station.

Quentin – Wow... Do you think that's where it might be? It's like we're in a whodunit movie.

Beatrice – Or a play...

Peggy – I can't go. The police are looking for me, and they have my e-fit.

Quentin – And a very lifelike one, too.

Peggy (*to Beatrice*) – You should go.

Beatrice – Me?

Peggy – Yes, you. In that stuck up yummy mummy garb of yours you'll blend right in.

Beatrice – Thanks a lot... What if I get arrested?

Peggy – Tell them it's for the kid's school fees.

Quentin – This is three million pounds we're talking about... Think about all the home improvements you'll be able to afford for your place in Provence.

Beatrice – Why don't we go together?

Peggy – That's right, so you can both leave with the money? Not a chance. (*She takes out a gun and points it at them*) He stays here with me.

Beatrice – Oh come on... The detective told us it was a fake gun.

Peggy – Alright, but screw me over and see what happens.

Quentin – And in any case, one of us should stay with Raymond, or it will be look odd.

Beatrice – I'm still not sure... You don't think we should call the police?

Peggy – And send me to prison?

Quentin – And there might not be anything in that locker. If we do find something we can work out a plan from there.

Beatrice – Yeah, well whatever we find if we keep it that's fencing...

Quentin – Just focus on what you could do with a million pounds.

Beatrice – Yeah...

Quentin – You could turn your wind mill ruin into a castle! With a swimming pool even bigger than Cliff Richard's!

Beatrice – Alright, I'm going.

She leaves. The other two exchange embarrassed looks. Quentin's mobile phone rings, he answers. Peggy steps closer to the patient.

Quentin – Yes... No, I'm still at the hospital... It's just that... Let's say it's more complicated than we thought... Listen, silver lining and all that, it might just be good news in the end... Raymond? Oh no, he's still in a coma... Listen, I'll tell you more... I can't talk now... No, no, don't wait I won't be home for dinner... OK, me too...

Peggy – Looks like he's breathing better since we removed the key from his mouth, don't you think?

Quentin – Maybe we saved his life...

Peggy – Let's not get carried away.

Quentin – Shouldn't we tell the doctor?

Peggy – So the cops can throw him in prison?

At that moment, the nurse shows up briefly.

Diggold – Everything ok?

Peggy – Well, it's... stable.

Diggold – Do call me if you need anything.

She leaves.

Quentin – Right, so what do we do?

Peggy – For now, we wait.

They each sit in a chair and start to doze off. We assume they fall asleep for a short while. Ellipse can be suggested by the changing of the light. Quentin's mobile phone rings again. He wakes suddenly. Peggy is still asleep.

Quentin – Ah, Beatrice... Did you find the locker? A suitcase! Wowzers... No, you're right, better not open it on the tube, it's full of pickpockets so if the suitcase is full of bank notes... Peggy? No, she's asleep here... Listen, I don't know if... I can't just sneak out, like that, without saying anything? We made a deal with her... True, robbing a robber isn't really robbing, but still...

Peggy wakes up and hears the last part of the conversation. Quentin notices and changes tone.

Quentin – I think you should come back here as soon as you can and we'll sort this out together. Ok? See you soon...

He puts his mobile phone away. Peggy looks at him suspiciously.

Peggy – You're not looking to double cross me, are you?

Quentin – Not at all! Beatrice has the suitcase! She's on her way...

The doctor returns.

Killhem – What lovely family scene... Raymond is very lucky to have such caring relatives... Sadly, it's not always the case you know...

Quentin – Yes, I... After all, you only die once, don't you?

The doctor studies the machines that surround the patient.

Killhem – Sadly, there is no change. The EEG is still flat.

Quentin – What control data are you using? I'm not sure that before his accident Raymond's brain showed more activity... I'm kidding.

Killhem – You're right. Joking helps one cope. It's like I always say to my patients in hospice care: we're all dying...

Quentin – You such a way with words, Doctor Killhem. I'm sure it makes them feel so much better...

Killhem – Why, thank you. It's not just a job but a God-given vocation... You know where to find me if you need me...

Peggy – Thank you doctor...

The doctor is about to leave. Beatrice returns with a suitcase and is face-to-face with the doctor. A moment of uncertainty.

Killhem – You went to get him some clothes. That's very nice of you. Although I'm not sure that in the state he's in... I'll tell you what, I'll leave you to it.

The doctor leaves the room. Beatrice puts the suitcase at the foot of the bed. They look at it, fascinated.

Quentin – So? Did you look inside...?

Beatrice – I wanted to wait to open it here, it's safer, isn't it?

Peggy – Good idea.

Beatrice – And there's a code...

Quentin – A code? What a shit... He must have been wary of thieves.

Beatrice – What are we going to do?

Peggy – Don't worry, I know the code.

Peggy takes the suitcase and enters the code.

Quentin – 007? So creative...

Peggy opens the suitcase. Deception on everyone's face. Beatrice calls out the contents of the suitcase.

Beatrice – A few pieces of clothing... A bathing suit...

Quentin – And a book to learn Dutch.

Peggy – This bastard tried to double cross me. He must have planned to escape to Holland with the money.

Beatrice – From King's Cross?

Peggy – Well the money isn't there...

Quentin (to Beatrice) – You aren't trying to double cross US, are you?

Beatrice – Me? But I didn't even have the code!

Peggy – Come on, let's keep calm... It's your sister you're talking about... And we're almost family now...

Beatrice comes close to the patient.

Beatrice – He opened his eyes!

Quentin – There's still hope.

Beatrice – To find the money, you mean?

Quentin – Yes, that too...

Peggy – Maybe it's a reflex?

Beatrice – Raymond, can you hear us?

Quentin – He blinked!

Beatrice – Maybe that means yes...

Quentin – You're right. That's how they talk to patients in a coma. I saw it in a film. Once for yes, twice for no. Or the other way around, I can't remember...

Beatrice – Raymond? Listen carefully and try to answer this question with either yes or no: is your name Raymond?

Quentin – That's a stupid fucking question...

Beatrice – It's just to check that he understands the code.

Quentin – Did he blink or not?

Peggy – It's not easy to see with the helmet on. Maybe we could try and remove it?

Beatrice – You want to kill him, is that it?

Peggy – Of course not!

Quentin – And it could be very messy...

The nurse comes into the room. Peggy slams the helmet visor shut.

Diggold – I just wanted to let you know that Detective McManigal was downstairs. He'll be here momentarily...

Beatrice – Very well, thanks for letting us know Nurse Diggold...

The nurse leaves.

Quentin – I think you should hide again.

Peggy – I'll take the suitcase with me, so he doesn't see it.

Beatrice – Why don't we put it under the bed?

She takes the suitcase and slides it under the bed. Peggy looks resentful.

Beatrice – Alright, go! What are you waiting for?

Peggy goes to hide in the bathroom. McManigal walks into the room. He is covered with either red blotches or spots.

Quentin – Detective McManigal, how are you?

McManigal – Not very well to tell you the truth... I'm still having hot flushes...

Beatrice – Please, sit down...

McManigal – Actually, I came for a consultation with Doctor Killhem... You haven't seen him by any chance?

Quentin – I'm sure he's around. You should ask nurse Diggold, they seem very close.

Beatrice – Where do you get that from, that they're very close?

Quentin – I don't know... masculine intuition... And also when I arrived I walked in the wrong room and I thought I saw Doctor Killhem ploughing Nurse Diggold in 13a.

Beatrice – Disgraceful... Thankfully the patient in that room is also in a coma...

McManigal – And what about your brother, any change?

Beatrice – Not in the right way, to tell you the truth.

Quentin – If things continue the way they are we're going to have to have him put down...

Beatrice – And what about your investigation, any progress?

McManigal – We're not dealing with Bonnie and Clyde, here. I'm sure I won't surprise you if I told you that your brother had the IQ of a carrot. It would appear that his accomplice organised everything. She was the brains.

Quentin – A carrot?

Beatrice – Fitting for someone now in a vegetative state...

McManigal – She set him up knowing he had limited chances of escaping and hoping to get her hands on the money. Unfortunately for her... and for your brother, things didn't quite happen the way she planned.

Quentin – I see...

Beatrice – He never was the lucky one.

Quentin – Anything else?

McManigal – Witnesses say they saw Raymond drop off a suitcase in a locker at Kings Cross. We searched the lockers but didn't find anything...

Beatrice – Kings Cross... Maybe that will bring him luck...

McManigal – How do you mean?

Beatrice – Kings Cross! Protected by the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour!

McManigal – Yes... Well, I'll try and locate this Killhem doctor... (*wiping his brow with his handkerchief*) I'm feeling worse and worse by the minute... I'll let you know if I find anything else...

Quentin – Thank you Detective... And do take care of yourself...

McManigal leaves. The nurse enters.

Diggold – I don't want to rush you, but I'm going to need you to make a decision about your brother... We just received a request for a liver. He could save someone's life...

Beatrice – Alright... I promise we'll give you the answer you want to hear. Could you give us some privacy for a last goodbye with just the family?

Diggold – But of course...

She leaves the room. Beatrice loses it and shakes Raymond to wake him up.

Beatrice – God dammit Raymond, wake up! Do you really want to end up with just one lung?

The other two look at each other, a little worried.

Quentin – I think she said liver.

Peggy – Right, I'll leave you to it, you're his family after all... And I need to not be here when the cop comes back...

Quentin – Do you think he's playing dead to avoid going to prison?

Beatrice – And keep the money for himself!

Peggy – I can take the suitcase with me if you want. For you it doesn't represent anything, but for me it has great sentimental value...

Quentin – Sentimental value?

Peggy – This suitcase, it's... it's a gift from Raymond...

Beatrice – You've been after this suitcase from the very beginning.

Quentin – That's right, even before we had the code.

Beatrice – So you knew the money was inside...

Peggy – But you can see for yourselves that it isn't!

Beatrice – Maybe we didn't look carefully enough...

Beatrice tries to grab the suitcase from Peggy, who doesn't want to give it up. A tug of war ensues and the suitcase breaks in two pieces. Quentin comes closer.

Quentin – There's a false bottom...

Beatrice – And the money's inside.

Quentin – You knew it and you wanted to double cross us!

Peggy – Ok, so I did know... So what do we do now?

Beatrice – We split it, just like we said!

Peggy – Why should I share with you?

Quentin – I don't know... to ensure we don't report you to the cops? So that you don't leave this hospital to serve at Her Majesty's Pleasure for twenty years.

Peggy – Alright, you convinced me...

Quentin removes a few bank notes from the suitcase.

Quentin – Three million pounds.

Beatrice – I feel like I've just won the lottery...

Peggy – Can I remind you that this is still dirty money?

Quentin – Dirty, and in small used notes.

Beatrice – Just what I need to pay the renovations on my house on the black market...

The nurse returns with a syringe.

Diggold – Alright, I am ready...

Quentin – Ready?

Beatrice – Oh God, Raymond! He's still our brother after all...

Diggold (*with a scary face*) – Don't worry. I've never had a patient complain.

Black.

Peggy – What's going on?

Diggold – Power cut. I don't understand, the backup system should have kicked in... I'll go check ...

Quentin – Yes, please do. Because in the dark... You don't want to inject the wrong person...

The nurse leaves the room.

Beatrice – Well, we'll soon find out if he really needed all this equipment to stay alive...

Quentin – I'm not staying here in the dark with a living-dead. It gives me the heebie jeebies.

Beatrice – Me too.

Peggy – Let's go.

They leave the room.

We hear music on hold, Vivaldi's Four Season style. Ellipsis.

The lights come back on. Quentin, Beatrice and Peggy return to the room. Then the nurse.

Diggold (*very upset*) – Oh my God! The backup system also broke down. This shouldn't ever happen... We fixed it now, but...

Quentin – What?

Diggold – Your brother's life support depended on several machines... and they all need electricity...

Beatrice – And?

Diggold – And I'm afraid that the question of whether to unplug him or not doesn't need an answer any longer.

Peggy – He's dead?

Diggold – He hadn't been very much alive for some time, but now... I'm afraid he's completely dead. I'll check anyway...

She comes to the bed and checks the patient quickly.

Diggold – Yes, it's over... It didn't happen exactly the way we would have wanted but perhaps it's for the best after all? I'll leave you alone. The doctor will be with you in a moment.

She leaves. The others are stunned.

Beatrice – How awful...

Quentin – He was our brother after all...

Peggy walk to the bed.

Peggy – I think we can remove his helmet now.

Quentin – I'm not sure... It'll make a mess...

Beatrice – Well, we can't bury him with his helmet...

Peggy – At least we can open the visor... So we can say our goodbyes...

She opens the visor.

Quentin – Did he have green eyes?

Beatrice – He would be the only one in the family...

Quentin – Which is just another proof that he isn't actually part of the family...

Peggy looks as well.

Peggy – No!

Quentin – What now?

Peggy – This isn't Raymond!

Beatrice – This isn't Raymond? But a few moments ago it was Raymond.

Quentin comes closer.

Quentin – Yeah, well now it's not Raymond.

Beatrice – So who is it?

Peggy – This bloke looks a lot like the living-dead I saw in the room next door.

Quentin – That's right! I saw him too when I arrived at the hospital. It's him!

Beatrice – He didn't walk himself into this bed...

Peggy – So where's Raymond?

Quentin looks under the bed.

Quentin – Raymond isn't the only thing that's disappeared...

Beatrice – The suitcase! It's gone!

McManigal arrives.

McManigal – Doctor Killhem has decided to keep me in for observation and a checkup... You were right: hospitals, you know what you get admitted with...

McManigal turns and ends up face to face with Peggy.

McManigal – You look a lot like someone whose e-fit I have in my pocket.

Peggy – Did you grass me and hide the money too?

Beatrice – What? No!

Quentin – I assure you, Detective, we have no idea what she's talking about.

McManigal (*suspicious*) – But you told me earlier you didn't know her.

Beatrice – But we don't know her. At all. This is the first time we see her. Isn't it, Quentin? Actually, who is she?

Quentin – We're very upset, Detective, you can understand that.

Beatrice – And I would ask that you respect our family’s privacy at this difficult time.

Quentin – Our brother has just died.

McManigal – Well he won’t go to prison, but this one is coming with me. And as for you two, I’ll deal with you later. I am going to ask you to drop by the police station to make a statement. For now, I offer my condolences.

Beatrice – Thank you Detective.

McManigal (*to Peggy*) – As for you, as they say in Hawaii Five O, you have the right to remain silent, everything you say can and will be held against you...

McManigal handcuffs Peggy and they leave.

Quentin – I don’t understand.

Beatrice – What do you think happened?

Quentin – Do you think he could have faked being in a coma all this time?

Beatrice – And he would have used the power cut to put the homeless corpse in his bed so to make us believe he was dead so we would leave and drop the whole thing?

Quentin – Well, that would explain why his eyes were a different colour...

Beatrice – It would also explain why the money’s gone...

Quentin – Maybe Raymond wasn’t so stupid after all...

Beatrice – Yes... that’s why I don’t buy it.

Quentin – What colour were his eyes?

Beatrice doesn’t seem to know.

Beatrice – He was ginger I think... They don’t have green eyes...

Quentin – Raymond was ginger?

Beatrice – Wasn’t he?

The doctor arrives.

Killhem – I am so very sorry for what happened. I want to present the hospital’s and my own heartfelt apologies and of course our deepest sympathies for your loss.

Beatrice – Thank you...

Killhem – Since you were already considering helping your brother leave this world sooner rather than later, I do hope we can rely on you to not take this minor mishap any further... After all, we saved you from making a very painful decision.

Quentin – Don’t worry. We have enough troubles as it is...

Killhem – Consider it fate... Or even the hand of God...

Quentin – Hang on a minute. Are you saying it's the hand of God that cut off the electricity in the whole hospital?

Killhem – More like the workers' union... I think it's an unplanned strike.

Quentin – In exchange for our understanding, Doctor Killhem, perhaps you could agree that as a gesture of goodwill...

Killhem – A gesture of goodwill?

Quentin – In consideration of the hospital fees accrued by our dearly departed. Because if you had a '100% satisfaction or your money back' guarantee ...

Killhem – Yes, of course, we'll waive the fees. Consider it done.

Beatrice – We would also like to ask you, if possible, to spare our brother an autopsy. We feel he has suffered enough.

Killhem – Of course, thank you for your understanding and please come and see us soon. There will always be room for you here.

The doctor leaves, relieved. The siblings turn their head towards the bed.

Beatrice – At least, as far as he's concerned, all is well that ends well.

Quentin – But it's not him!

Beatrice – I know! That means he's not dead!

Quentin – You're right. And since the cops think he's dead they'll leave him alone.

Beatrice – And with his three million they won't find him any time soon.

Quentin – Shame, I was starting to like him...

Awkward moment. If desired, the song 'He ain't heavy he's my brother' by Neil Young can be played here: So on we go / His welfare is of my concern / No burden is he to bear / We'll get there...

Beatrice – Well, he double crossed us, this brother whose welfare is our concern.

Quentin – Yep... It's like they say: Only when the tide goes out do you discover who's swimming naked.

Beatrice – Quentin Tarantino?

Quentin – Warren Buffet.

Beatrice – Never heard of this philosopher...

Quentin – He's an American billionaire who earned his fortune playing the stock market... But aren't the kings of the finance world the philosophers of the 21st century?

Beatrice – Still. Ripping off his siblings. How ungrateful can you be...?

Quentin – I've told you, he never had any family values.

They make for the door.

Quentin – So where exactly is your house in Provence, the one next to Cliff Richard?

Beatrice – Bidet-sur-Mer

Quentin – Never heard of it.

They leave. The doctor and the nurse return. She pushes a small medical cart covered by white linen.

Diggold – Good, they're gone.

Killhem – At last. Can I see the baby?

The nurse uncovers the cart and we can see the suitcase full of bank notes.

Killhem – This is it! We can finally open our private clinic Nurse Diggold!

Diggold – Please call me Scarlet...

Killhem kisses her.

Killhem – Scarlet, you are my guardian angel! So you knew from the start he wasn't in a coma?

Diggold – I struck a deal with Raymond as soon as he was admitted. We reported he was in a coma so he wouldn't go to prison, and he would give us two thirds of the money.

Killhem – The helmet was a genius idea. It almost fooled me too, at first...

They laugh.

Diggold – But going to the train station that was too risky. So much better to get them to bring the cash to us!

Killhem – By dangling the locker key right under their noses ...

Diggold – Or rather, on Raymond's tongue!

Killhem – And what do we do about him now? I mean, the real Raymond, the one in the room next door...

Diggold – When he's feeling better, and when the police have forgotten about him, we can hire him as a gardener in our new plastic surgery clinic in Belgravia.

Killhem – And we'll give him a facial reconstruction for free, of course...

Diggold – He can be your first patient! You could use the practice...

Killhem – You're right. Especially since we promised him he'd be a majority stakeholder.

They laugh.

Killhem – And your suggestion to fake a power cut, that was brilliant. Have you ever thought of writing thrillers?

Diggold – Or plays!

Killhem – I told you, together we'll accomplish great things, Nurse Diggold.

Diggold – Please, call me Scarlet...

They kiss. Black.

Killhem – We don't need another power cut now, it's all over. You're overdoing it a little, don't you think?

Diggold – Doctor Killhem, I think this time it's a real power cut.

Killhem – Poor Raymond is still under respiratory support...

Diggold – Indeed... If the power doesn't come back soon... He won't even be claiming his share...

Killhem – In that case, we should just wait a little longer...

They kiss again. We hear Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

They leave the room.

Light.

For a happy ending, we can see Raymond with his helmet on (played by the actor playing Quentin, for example) in the room next door quickly poke his head through the bathroom and then run out in the corridor.

The author

Jean-Pierre Martinez is a French playwright and scriptwriter. He was born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise, France. He wrote 62 comedies, three of them (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker* and *Him and Her*), translated in English.

Jean-Pierre Martinez experienced first the stage as a drummer in various rock bands, before to become a semiologist in the field of advertising. He worked afterwards as television scriptwriter, and came back to the stage as a playwright. Today he is among the most played contemporaries playwrights in France, and several of his plays have already been translated in Spanish and English.

He graduated in Spanish and English literature (Sorbonne), in linguistics (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales), in economics (Institut d'Études Politique de Paris) and scriptwriting (Conservatoire Européen d'Ecriture Audiovisuelle).

Jean-Pierre Martinez made the choice to offer all the texts of his plays to free download on his website : comediatheque.net

Other plays by the same author in English

Friday the 13th
Him and Her
Strip Poker

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