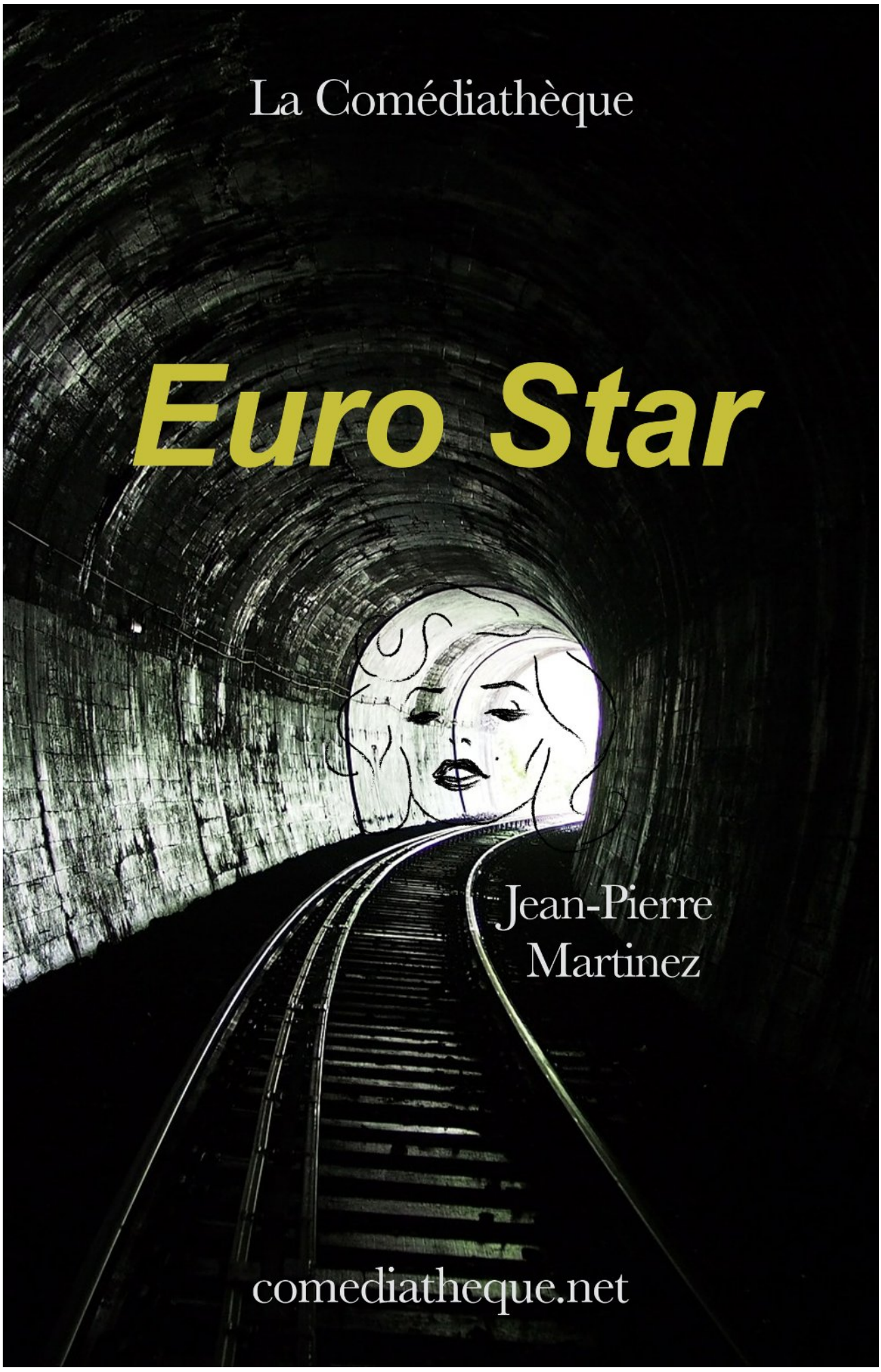

La Comédiathèque
Euro Star
Jean-Pierre
Martinez
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# Euro Star

## Jean-Pierre Martinez

A celebrated film director and an ambitious actress find themselves sitting opposite each other on the Eurostar to London, where she is due to audition for his next film. Determined to land the role that could make her a star, she is prepared to go to any lengths. He is captivated, but hesitates to go any further... Then the train stops in the middle of the Channel Tunnel. Is it a breakdown, or something more sinister? In this game of deception, he is not the man she takes him for — and she may not be the woman he thinks she is...

**Characters**
Arthur
Marilyn

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# Act 1

*Two seats face each other in a Eurostar carriage. A suitcase rests on one seat. The fourth wall, facing the audience, serves as a window through which the characters sometimes look out. Arthur enters carrying a travel bag. Ideally he is in his thirties or forties, although he may be older. He is casually dressed and can look a little unsophisticated. As he passes the seats, he seems to recognise the suitcase and is about to sit down when his phone rings. He answers, rather hurriedly.*

**Arthur** – Yeah, Fred... No, I'm on the train... I promised to take my wife to London for our wedding anniversary. I'm not much for anniversaries, and I can't stand England, but you know how it is... Marriage means compromise! London is where Karen and I met. I've booked a room in the same bed and breakfast where we spent our first night together. Romantic, isn't it? Lucky I didn't meet her at a luxury resort in the South Pacific. Two first-class train tickets are still cheaper than a trip halfway round the world... Anyway, thank goodness we arrived early. You know I'm claustrophobic, and travelling through a tunnel under the sea makes me nervous. But flying scares me even more, and I thought the train would be quicker than a ferry. You should see the security checks, though! It took us forty-five minutes to get through. I'd have been better off swimming. I've never seen so many border formalities. I even got searched by a little tyrant in uniform. I thought he was going to check every last part of my anatomy for weapons of mass destruction... He had me so flustered I nearly got on the train without my trousers and shoes. Imagine arriving in London in my underwear, on our anniversary! Anyway, here I am on the Eurostar. I can finally relax a bit... Karen? I haven't the faintest idea where she's got to. I stopped to change some money into pounds, and we agreed to meet on the train, but I can't see her anywhere. Her suitcase is here, though. I don't understand... Oh, hang on, that's her calling now. I'll ring you back, Fred... Bye.

*He switches to the other call.*

**Arthur** – Karen? Where on earth are you? At the newsstand? The train's about to leave! Look, if they've run out of your fashion magazine, just buy another one. They're all much the same, aren't they? (*Lowering his voice*) Yes, I've got the pounds. A thousand should be enough for a few days in London. I don't like carrying that much cash, but apparently the exchange rate is worse over there... While you're there, could you pick up a sports magazine for me? Football, not cycling! No, they're not the same thing... Look, just take whatever they've got, but hurry up! Try the next newsstand if you have to. For heaven's sake! All right, see you in a minute. (*More tenderly*) Love you too...

*He puts away his phone.*

**Arthur** – Oh, this trip is off to a wonderful start... (*He puts his bag on the seat beside him, sits down and stares straight ahead.*) Forty kilometres beneath the sea. I get nervous enough in an ordinary road tunnel. What a nightmare! (*He takes a swig from a hip flask.*) Good thing I brought something to steady my nerves...

*Marilyn enters, pulling a small wheeled cabin suitcase. She may be in her twenties or thirties. She is not necessarily a conventional beauty, but is dressed rather provocatively. She passes Arthur, glances at him and appears to recognise him. Arthur pays her no attention and takes another drink just as Marilyn turns back.*

**Marilyn** – Excuse me, but I think your suitcase is sitting in my seat...

*Arthur, surprised, hastily puts his alcohol flask in his pocket without closing it.*

**Arthur** – Oh... Sorry... I thought... No problem... I'll move it right away.

*He stands and moves the suitcase to free the seat. As Marilyn turns her back to put her own suitcase away, she presents him with a rather distracting view. He pretends to look out of the window to banish his improper thoughts. She sits opposite him and stares at him with a foolish smile. Embarrassed, he tries to look composed. A silence, broken by an announcement.*

**Voice** – Eurostar train 3212 to London St Pancras is about to depart. Please stand clear of the automatic doors...

**Arthur** (*to himself*) – Oh no... This can't be happening...

*He looks anxiously out of the window at the platform. Marilyn also looks outside as the platform begins to slide past.*

**Marilyn** (*smiling*) – I made it just in time...

*He smiles politely before nervously dialling his wife's number again. It's clear she's not answering.*

**Arthur** – This is a nightmare...

*Marilyn continues to stare at him. He senses her gaze but pretends not to notice. Embarrassed and vaguely flattered, he finally looks up at her.*

**Marilyn** – I'm sorry for staring at you like that, but... I recognised you right away...

*Completely caught off guard, he is left speechless with his eyes wide open.*

**Marilyn** – I'm terribly sorry... I promise I didn't arrange any of this. It's a complete coincidence... (*Joking*) Unless it's fate...

**Arthur** – Fate...?

*She reaches out her hand and introduces herself.*

**Marilyn** – Marilyn Millar... I'm an actress...

*Surprised, he shakes her hand.*

**Marilyn** – I'm going to London for the casting of your new film. But I never thought I would be sitting in front of you on the train...

**Arthur** – Neither did I...

**Marilyn** – I absolutely love the script... And I'm not saying that to flatter you! I'd be prepared to kill every other candidate to get the part...

**Arthur** – Really...?

*Arthur's phone starts ringing, but he is slow to answer.*

**Marilyn** – I don't want to bother you... I think I'd better go to the bar to calm down a bit. Anyway, we're on this trip together... Can I get you a coffee...?

**Arthur** – Why not...

**Marilyn** – I'm so excited... I'm not sure that a coffee is exactly what I need to calm down, but hey... Do you want it with sugar?

**Arthur** – What was that?

**Marilyn** – Your coffee... With or without sugar?

**Arthur** – Uh... Without, thank you...

**Marilyn** – I thought so. No sugar. You don't sugar-coat anything... Just like in your films!

*He smiles without responding. She starts to walk away. He calls out to her one last time.*

**Arthur** *(gaining confidence*) – Uh... Can I have a glass of water with my coffee...?

*She smiles and goes on her way. He watches her, still stunned. His phone is ringing. He finally comes to his senses and answers.*

**Arthur** – Karen? Where the hell are you? Oh no, you can't be serious! I told you to hurry! I didn't care whether it was a football magazine or a cycling magazine! I only wanted something to read on the train. What are we supposed to do now? Catch the next train and I'll wait for you in London? Fine... What else can we do? Yes... All right, call me back...

*He puts away his phone.*

**Arthur** – I didn't have a good feeling about this pilgrimage to London...

*His phone rings again.*

**Arthur** (*to himself*) – Already? (*He answers.*) Oh, Fred, it's you... No, no, it's Karen. You won't believe it, but she's missed the train! Our train, I mean. I'm not joking, unfortunately... Yes, assuming she can get another ticket. We booked three months ago... Can you imagine? I'm on my way to London alone to celebrate our wedding anniversary! Well, when I say alone... (*His tone becomes playful.*) Something else unbelievable has happened. A woman has sat down opposite me, in Karen's seat, and she thinks I'm a famous film director! Which one? I have no idea. She wouldn't let me get a word in, so I couldn't tell her she was mistaken. Now she's gone to get me a coffee! She's practically worshipping me. I'm wondering whether to play along... Three hours on this train is a long time, especially with my fear of tunnels. At least it'll take my mind off things... Yes, she's an actress. Not bad looking, actually, and extremely keen! I have the feeling I've seen her somewhere before... An advert, perhaps. Stop it, I'm a married man! Yes, well, I'm perfectly sober at the moment... And I don't know how long I can keep this up. I hardly ever go to the cinema. Twice a year, if that. Anyway, here she comes. I'll call you later. Bye...

*He puts away the phone. Marilyn approaches with the coffee.*

**Marilyn** (*beaming*) – There you are... I got so excited I ended up soaking wet...

*He looks at her, surprised.*

**Marilyn** (*hastily explaining*) – I spilled your water all over myself when the train jolted. Sorry... Shall I fetch another glass?

*He shakes his head no with a gracious smile.*

**Marilyn** (*handing him the coffee*) – I managed to save the coffee. I spilled half of it on a gentleman's jacket, but there should be a mouthful left...

**Arthur** – Thank you...

*He takes a sip. They exchange embarrassed smiles.*

**Arthur** – So, you're an actress...?

**Marilyn** – Yes, I know... You'd probably prefer a better-known face for the leading role, but you'll see. I'll surprise you in London...

*He looks puzzled.*

**Marilyn** – At the audition, I mean!

**Arthur** – Ah yes, of course...

**Marilyn** – You are Arthur Monro, the film director, aren't you?

**Arthur** – If you say so...

**Marilyn** (*delighted*) – I can't believe it!

*He gives her a mysterious smile.*

**Marilyn** – And how do you see that awful woman? (*He looks startled.*) The heroine of your film! She's a nasty piece of work, isn't she? What she does to that poor man... Oh, forgive me, I shouldn't ask about the part. I promised not to be nosy. And it wouldn't be fair to the other actresses... But I'm so excited! Arthur Monro sitting opposite me for three whole hours! I have to make the most of this... (*He smiles.*) May I ask you something?

**Arthur** – Go ahead...

**Marilyn** – Do you really sleep with all the leading ladies in your films?

**Arthur** – Good thing you promised not to be indiscreet...

**Marilyn** – Oh, that question isn't about the audition, so it doesn't count.

**Arthur** (*playing along*) – Are you asking if an actress has to sleep with the director to get a part? Of course not. Although sometimes it might help...

**Marilyn** – You see!

**Arthur** – Talent comes first, obviously.

**Marilyn** – Men are such hypocrites. Famous men date supermodels, but when you ask them why, they say it's for their inner beauty... By the way, which hotel are you staying at?

**Arthur** – The Hilton, I think. My assistant arranged it. The idiot was supposed to join me on this train, but managed to miss it...

**Marilyn** – So we get the journey all to ourselves...

**Arthur** – Yes... And you?

**Marilyn** – Me...?

**Arthur** – Where are you staying?

**Marilyn** – I can't afford the Hilton. But I have a friend in London... Just a friend, mind you. He's a model...

**Arthur** – Oh, I see...

**Marilyn** – I mean, we're not a couple...

**Arthur** – Oh...

**Marilyn** – Besides, he's gay.

**Arthur** – Oh, good! I mean...

**Marilyn** – And are you staying in London long? After the audition...

**Arthur** – Er... no...

**Marilyn** – I only ask because your suitcase is enormous...

**Arthur** – Oh, that... It's full of applications. For the audition. Weighs a ton...

**Marilyn** – You received mine, then?

**Arthur** – Oh yes, I'm sure we did. But there are so many... Many are called, only one is chosen...

*An awkward silence. He looks her up and down.*

**Arthur** – Did they make you take your clothes off too?

**Marilyn** – Sorry?

**Arthur** – At security! Before boarding...

**Marilyn** – Er... no...

**Arthur** – Right...

**Marilyn** – And will we have to undress for the audition?

*Arthur looks as though he might faint.*

**Arthur** – Well, I haven't decided yet. I suppose it depends on the actresses... Would you be willing?

**Marilyn** – The script is quite... Well, I know some actresses won't do nude scenes. I just wanted you to know that I wouldn't have a problem with it...

**Arthur** – I'll bear that in mind...

**Marilyn** – Would you like to see my book?

**Arthur** (*wrong-footed*) – You've written a book as well?

**Marilyn** – My photo book!

**Arthur** – Oh, a picture book... More my sort of thing...

*She takes her portfolio from her suitcase and shows him the photographs. He looks impressed.*

**Arthur** – Ah yes... I'm sure you're very talented...

**Marilyn** – I can tell you're about to compliment me on my inner beauty...

*They are interrupted by a call on Arthur's phone, which he answers mechanically, while still looking at Marilyn's photos, most likely half naked.*

**Arthur** (*distracted*) – Hello? Who is it? Oh, Karen... Sorry, with the noise of the train I didn't recognise your voice... (*He covers the phone and speaks to Marilyn.*) Sorry, it's my assistant... (*He gets up and moves away.*) Karen, what's the matter? No, I'm not making light of it, but let's not turn it into a tragedy... What? No tickets for another month?

*While Marilyn is alone, she takes the opportunity to check her makeup, looking at herself in an imaginary window towards the audience. When she sees Arthur coming back, she puts her makeup bag in her purse and pretends to look at the scenery outside the window..*

**Arthur** – All right, I'll call when I arrive. But I can't promise anything. It might not be easy to get a ticket back to Paris straight away... No, of course I'm not enjoying this! Can you imagine being stuck alone in London for the entire weekend? You've got something important to tell me? Now you're scaring me... (*He sees Marilyn.*) Look, I have to go. We're about to enter the tunnel... Why did I say 'we', and why am I whispering? Because I'm not alone in the carriage! First class doesn't mean a private compartment like on the Orient Express... Oh, so now it's my fault? You were the one who missed the train! (*He hangs up, returns to Marilyn and smiles.*) Sorry, just a little problem to sort out... Now, I'm all yours...

*She answers with a promising smile.*

**Marilyn** – Me too...

*Blackout.*

# Act 2

*Arthur and Marilyn are still sitting face to face. She is looking out the window.*

**Marilyn** (*excitedly*) – We're in the tunnel now!

**Arthur** – Oh, really...?

**Marilyn** – It's my first time on this trip, and to be honest, it's a bit creepy... Don't you think so?

**Arthur** – No, not really... I travel on the Eurostar at least once a month, so you know...

*She continues to look out the window, very excited.*

**Marilyn** – Can you believe it? We're underneath the English Channel!

**Arthur** (*forcing himself to show interest*) – Yes...

**Marilyn** (*disappointed*) – But we can't see anything, after all...

**Arthur** – What did you expect to see? Fish?

*She smiles. Arthur's phone rings again, but he doesn't react.*

**Marilyn** – Aren't you going to answer that?

**Arthur** – If I answered everyone who called me, I'd never get any peace.

*She sits back down in front of him.*

**Marilyn** – I have to confess something to you, Arthur. Do you mind if I call you Arthur?

**Arthur** – Not at all...

**Marilyn** – It's not entirely by chance that I'm sitting here, in front of you...

**Arthur** – Really...?

**Marilyn** – I walked past you earlier. I recognised you and... since the seat was free... Actually, mine is in the next carriage. In second class...

**Arthur** – I had a feeling that was the case... It should have been Karen sitting there... I mean, my... my assistant... The one who missed the train...

**Marilyn** – I can go back to my seat if you want...

**Arthur** (*magnanimous*) – It takes nerve to succeed in this business... You can stay here...

**Marilyn** – Thank you! I know I've still got a lot to learn, but one day I'll be staying in a luxury hotel in Cannes and walking up the red carpet at the Film Festival in a dress worth a fortune...

*He smiles indulgently.*

**Marilyn** – Tell me, what is Cannes really like?

**Arthur** – Oh, you know, when you have to go there every year... it quickly becomes a chore...

**Marilyn** – Still...

**Arthur** – What is Cannes, really? A gigantic fair. Have you ever been to an agricultural show?

**Marilyn** (*surprised*) – Once, with my father... A very long time ago...

**Arthur** – Well, Cannes is much the same, except that instead of cows competing for a prize, you have celebrities competing for the Palme d'Or...

**Marilyn** – You're saying that because you're jaded.

**Arthur** – I love it when I haven't got a film in competition and can stay at home. Everyone else is at the Festival, my phone stops ringing for a week, and I can work in peace...

*Just then, Arthur's phone rings again.*

**Marilyn** – It must be one of those stars bothering you to get the leading role...

**Arthur** – I thought the phone wouldn't work in the tunnel, but it does... Even under the Channel, there's no way to get some peace...

**Marilyn** – I'll leave you alone for five minutes. I don't want to be indiscreet... If it's one of your many conquests...

*He's about to answer. Before she disappears, she turns back to him.*

**Marilyn** – I'm willing to do anything to get this role, you know?

*Clearly troubled, he remains stunned. The insistent ringing of his mobile phone brings him back to reality. He finally answers.*

**Arthur** – Yes, Karen... No, it's just that... I couldn't find my phone... So...? Oh, maybe you can find a ticket...? But of course, I'm happy, what are you talking about...? It's our anniversary, after all! OK... Alright... And what was that news you had to tell me? Listen, I can hardly hear you now... We're in the tunnel... It's a miracle the communication has been so good between us up to now... (*A braking noise is heard.*) Hello...? Hello...?

*Marilyn returns.*

**Arthur** – We got cut off... (*Concerned*) But what's going on?

**Marilyn** – I don't know... It's like the train has stopped.

*A voice is heard over the loudspeakers.*

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, the Eurostar has temporarily stopped after a passenger activated the alarm. We are trying to identify the cause of this incident as quickly as possible. Thank you for your understanding.

**Arthur** – I never should have taken this tunnel, I knew it...

**Marilyn** – It's just a little stop... We'll probably start again soon...

**Arthur** – I should have taken the boat.

**Marilyn** – Even boats sink, you know. Look at the Titanic: fifteen hundred dead, but twenty million cinema tickets sold. Quite a box-office hit, wasn't it?

**Arthur** – I've already sunk half my savings into Eurotunnel stocks, and now I'm the one who's going to be sunk at the bottom of the Channel... Do you think they'll keep us informed?

**Marilyn** (*getting up*) – I'm going to see what's happening.

**Arthur** – Please don't leave me alone!

**Marilyn** – I'll only be a minute. I'll come straight back, I promise...

*She gets up and walks away. He's left there, completely anxious.*

**Arthur** – I can feel water running down my leg already... I haven't wet myself, have I? (*He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out his hip flask.*) Damn, I left the cap off. (*He tries to drink, but nothing comes out.*) Not a drop left... (*He takes out his phone and dials.*) And no signal. This is the end... I won't even be able to tell my wife I love her before the carriage fills with water... (*A pause.*) And that woman who missed the train. Perhaps that's what's saved her life. Female intuition, I suppose. As if she knew...

*Marilyn comes back.*

**Arthur** (*anxiously*) – So...?

**Marilyn** – They said it was a passenger-related incident. But you know how vague those announcements can be... On the underground it often means someone has jumped in front of a train, so who knows what it means here? There are several kilometres of water above us. They just don't want to frighten the passengers...

**Arthur** – Like on planes just before a crash... Oh my God! What if it's a terrorist attack?

**Marilyn** – Unfortunately, that's not impossible... If it is, at least I'll have had the pleasure of meeting you before being burned or drowned to death.

**Arthur** – It's a divine punishment, I assure you... Do you remember that tower talked about in the Bible?

**Marilyn** – You mean the Twin Towers were in the Bible?

**Arthur** – The Tower of Babel! We should never have dug that tunnel! It's against nature. England should remain an island.

**Marilyn** – Can you smell something? Like fuel... or some strong spirit?

**Arthur** – Does the Eurostar run on aviation fuel?

**Marilyn** – Or methylated spirits, perhaps...

**Arthur** – No, that's just whisky. I left the cap off my flask and it leaked into my pocket... (*He takes out the empty flask.*) I won't even get to tell her one last time that I love her...

**Marilyn** – Who?

**Arthur** – Karen!

**Marilyn** – Are you in love with your assistant?

**Arthur** (*looking at the empty bottle*) – What if I slip a farewell message to her in this bottle... At least she might have a chance to make it back to the surface... Do you have a pencil and paper?

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, we have stopped in the tunnel because an unattended bag has been reported. Our security team is checking whether it contains an explosive device. I need hardly explain the potentially disastrous consequences of an explosion at this location... Please remain seated and do not panic. We will keep you informed...

**Arthur** – Oh no, this can't be happening... Why aren't they hurrying to get us out of this tunnel, this bunch of lunatics! Instead of leaving us stranded here waiting for it to blow up...

**Marilyn** – Maybe they're afraid the movement of the train could set it off. Like in The Wages of Fear — the lorry full of nitroglycerine. One wrong bump and... Boom! What a film!

**Arthur** – We're going to die, I'm sure of it...!

**Marilyn** – And we'd never achieve our dreams. You'd never make the film that would crown your career, and I'd never walk the red carpet at Cannes as its leading lady...

**Arthur** – Oh, damn it... Just shut up... You're going to jinx us...

**Marilyn** – What would you do, Arthur, if you knew you had only ten minutes left to live?

**Arthur** (*devastated*) – I'd... pack my bags?

**Marilyn** – Imagine it. Ten minutes before certain death, and no tomorrow to face the consequences of what you do. What would you choose?

**Arthur** – I don't know... maybe rob a bank...?

**Marilyn** – In only ten minutes, you wouldn't have time to spend the stolen money.

**Arthur** – On the other hand, if I get caught, I'm sure not to spend more than ten minutes in jail...

**Marilyn** – As for me, the prospect of death excites me... You know... Eros and Thanatos...

**Arthur** – Eros and what...?

**Marilyn** – Ten minutes, Arthur. Maybe less. Enough to fulfil one last fantasy... one last desire. (*Provocatively*) Have you ever made love in the toilets on the Eurostar?

*He stares at her like a rabbit caught in the headlights.*

**Arthur** – Ten minutes...?

**Marilyn** (*taking his hand*) – Believe me, Arthur, it wasn't chance that brought us together in this tunnel today... It was fate...

*She drags him towards the end of the carriage...*

*Blackout.*

# Act 3

*Arthur and Marilyn are once again sitting opposite each other in the stationary Eurostar. Arthur, dazed, leans towards the window.*

**Arthur** – I think I see a light at the end of the tunnel... Do you think we're already dead?

**Marilyn** (*sighing*) – Ten minutes, and no big bang...

**Arthur** – I'm sorry... But the prospect of dying first burned and then drowned at the bottom of the Channel doesn't excite me at all.

**Marilyn** – I meant the bomb. Ten minutes have passed and the train hasn't exploded. Perhaps it was a false alarm... (*With a disturbing undertone*) Which means we may have to face the consequences of our actions after all...

**Arthur** (*continuing his thought*) – And then this idea of filming our last frolics with my phone, it didn't really help me much either...

**Marilyn** – Don't like being filmed, Arthur? That's funny, coming from a director... How does it feel on the other side of the camera?

**Arthur** – By the way, I'd like to get my phone back now...

**Marilyn** – What?

**Arthur** – My phone...

*They are interrupted by an announcement on the loudspeakers.*

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, we have identified the owner of the unattended suitcase in carriage eight. According to its label, it belongs to Mrs Fernandez, whose address is in the Paris area. If she is aboard the train, would she please contact a member of staff immediately to reclaim her luggage? Otherwise, the security team will have to remove the suitcase for disposal before the journey can continue...

**Arthur** – Damn! Karen's suitcase...!

**Marilyn** – What?

**Arthur** – It's my suitcase! Well, my assistant's... She must have put it in the wrong carriage before getting off to buy those magazines...

**Marilyn** – And missed the train... I wonder if it wouldn't be more practical to change your assistant...

**Arthur** – I must get Karen's suitcase back! I left her on the platform in Paris. If I let the security team blow up her entire wardrobe, she'll kill me!

*He jumps up to leave when Marilyn's gaze lands on the suitcase placed on the seat next to them.*

**Marilyn** – So whose suitcase is this one then?

*Arthur freezes.*

**Arthur** – Shit, you're right...

**Marilyn** – For all we know, the bomb could be in this one. It has been here unattended since we left Paris... (*Dramatically*) I suggest you sit down very gently and try not to sneeze...

*Arthur sits down, paralysed with fear.*

**Arthur** – Oh my God... We have to notify the police...!

**Marilyn** – True, but then we'd be stuck down here for another hour, and we have an audition to get to... (*She stands.*) Oh well. You only live once!

*Marilyn firmly grabs the suitcase.*

**Arthur** – Are you crazy? What are you doing?

**Marilyn** – You told me that to succeed in this business, you need a pair of balls, right?

**Arthur** – Did I say that?

*She abruptly opens the suitcase, under Arthur's terrified gaze.*

**Arthur** – No!

*There is no explosion.*

**Marilyn** – See, there's nothing to fear...

**Arthur** – I wasn't that worried either... (*Intrigued*) What's in there?

*Marilyn examines the contents of the suitcase. She takes out a hairdryer and aims it at Arthur like a gun, frightening him all over again.*

**Marilyn** – Well, that doesn't look like a bomb to me...

*Arthur is still not very convinced. Marilyn keeps searching and pulls out a bound document from the suitcase.*

**Marilyn** – Look at this! (*She leafs through a bound document.*) It's the script for your new film!

**Arthur** – What film are you talking about?

**Marilyn** – Your film. What else could it be? Because this suitcase is yours... Or rather, your assistant's.

**Arthur** (*confused*) – Oh, really...?

*Marilyn continues to search and pulls out some sexy lingerie from the suitcase.*

**Marilyn** – Look at this! It seems like you don't get bored with your assistant during your business trips to London...

*Arthur is stunned but doesn't have time to answer. They hear a muffled explosion.*

**Arthur** (*terrified*) – That's it! It's the end! Did you hear the explosion?

**Marilyn** – That's nothing... It's probably Mrs. Fernandez's suitcase that the police just blew up.

*Arthur jumps up in terror.*

**Arthur** – No!

**Marilyn** – Don't worry. It's not yours... Well, I mean it's not your assistant's. (*Urging him to sit*) Everything's fine... Calm down... (*Pointing to the suitcase on the seat*) Your suitcase is here. (*Looking out the window*) Look... It seems like we're moving...!

*Desperate, he tries to react. She looks at him smiling.*

**Marilyn** – In just an hour, we'll be in London. Relax...!

*He tries to calm himself.*

**Arthur** – You're right. It's only a suitcase. Airlines lose luggage all the time...

**Marilyn** – Of course!

**Arthur** (*to himself*) – I'll have to tell Karen...

**Marilyn** – Do you want to watch the video?

**Arthur** (*trying to sound casual*) – They show films on the Eurostar now? Like on planes? What next — airline meals?

*Marilyn takes Arthur's phone and puts it in front of his face.*

**Marilyn** (*mischievously*) – I'm talking about the film I shot on your phone earlier. (*Coyly*) You haven't forgotten it already, have you?

**Arthur** – I don't know how it could have happened... I'm so sorry... It's the first time something like this has happened to me.

**Marilyn** – That's what all men say. Don't worry. A little performance problem can happen to anyone...

**Arthur** – No, that's not what I mean! I meant... I don't usually jump on strangers in train toilets...

**Marilyn** (*amused*) – Stranger...?

**Arthur** – You convinced me that I was going to die in ten minutes, otherwise, you know... I would never have thought of having sex with you...

**Marilyn** – I'm not sure how to take that...

**Arthur** – I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you...

**Marilyn** – Well, we've already done a screen test together. (*She watches the video.*) It's an amateur film, of course, but the picture's surprisingly clear... Especially your face. You're completely recognisable...

*Arthur is upset.*

**Marilyn** – It'll be a nice souvenir of our journey together on the Eurostar...

*Arthur makes a move to take his phone back.*

**Arthur** – I think we should...

*She moves away to keep the phone out of Arthur's reach.*

**Marilyn** – Do you think your assistant would enjoy it? I could just forward this little film to her. My very first short film... I feel a great career beginning...

*He looks at her more and more worriedly, then he stands up and makes a gesture to grab the phone from her.*

**Arthur** – Give me the phone!

**Marilyn** – Sit down, or I'll scream, tear my clothes and accuse you of trying to rape me in the toilet...

**Arthur** – But...

**Marilyn** – Some filmmakers have been sued for less than that. And their careers came to a sudden halt.

**Arthur** – My career as a filmmaker, sure... But it's true that... I'd rather my assistant not find out about this little slip-up.

**Marilyn** – A little slip-up...? Believe me, you'll regret that this train didn't explode at the bottom of the Channel after all...

**Arthur** (*stunned*) – But who are you, exactly?

*Transfigured, she shoots him a withering look.*

**Marilyn** – Your worst nightmare...

*Totally thrown off balance, he remains speechless for a moment.*

**Arthur** – Okay, I'm not Arthur Monro...

**Marilyn** (*ironically*) – What a surprise! And you may laugh, but I'm not Marilyn Millar either...

**Arthur** – Is that so?

**Marilyn** – That's right, make fun of me, on top of everything...

**Arthur** – But I'm not making fun of you, I swear. Alright, I messed up a bit... I'm not...

**Marilyn** (*cutting him off*) – I know exactly who you are: a bastard!

**Arthur** – But what do you want, anyway?

**Marilyn** – I want that part!

**Arthur** – What role?

**Marilyn** – The leading role in your new film! The audition in London! I want it, and I intend to get it!

**Arthur** – I'm afraid that's not going to be possible...

**Marilyn** – Okay... (S*he is about to tap on her phone.*) I'll send the video to... your assistant.

**Arthur** – No, please, don't do that...

**Marilyn** – So you see, you really are Arthur Monro!

**Arthur** – I mean...

*She gives him a contemptuous look.*

**Marilyn** – You really don't remember me?

**Arthur** – Should I...?

**Marilyn** – It was in Cannes. Remember? (*Imitating him.*) 'Just like an agricultural show!' I suppose you took me for a turkey!

**Arthur** – You must be mistaken, I assure you...

**Marilyn** – I'd gone to the Cannes Film Festival hoping to meet a director, like so many young, naive actresses. I spotted you after a screening at an exclusive club. I only got in because I knew the doorman...

**Arthur** – Honestly, a girl like you... I would remember...

**Marilyn** – I soon realised that to get a part in a film, I first had to get into the Martinez...

**Arthur** – The Martinez? I thought you said my name was Monro...

**Marilyn** – The Hotel Martinez, in Cannes! Your suite, that year...

**Arthur** – Ah yes, of course... The Martinez Hotel...

**Marilyn** – But instead of a grand hotel, you dragged me to a cheap budget hotel at five in the morning. Were you ashamed of me?

**Arthur** – Of course not! And budget hotels aren't so bad... I often take my wife... I mean, my assistant, to one...

**Marilyn** – Oh, I wasn't that naive. It's known that in this profession, as you said earlier, you must be willing to do anything if you want to succeed...

**Arthur** – Some men also sell themselves to get what they want, you know...

**Marilyn** – What I can't forgive is that you never called me afterwards. You didn't even offer me a small part in return for my sacrifice...

**Arthur** – Sacrifice... It wasn't me who jumped on you earlier...

**Marilyn** – What do you imagine? That was just the second round...

**Arthur** – The second round?

**Marilyn** (*holding up the phone*) – A trap! I needed something I could use against you this time. Besides, you weren't much use to me in the toilet, darling. You were rather more impressive the first time...

**Arthur** – But I swear to you...

**Marilyn** – We can drop the formalities now, can't we? We're intimate enough by this point. I still can't believe you didn't recognise me when I approached you at the station...

**Arthur** – Because I'm telling you I'm not Arthur Monro! I'm not a director. I don't even like films. I hardly ever go to the cinema, and I only watch television when there's a football match...

**Marilyn** – Honestly, you disappoint me... I expected something more convincing. You don't think I believe all these stories, do you?

**Arthur** – But I...

**Marilyn** – This is the moment of reckoning, Arthur. I'm going to get my revenge, and avenge every other woman you've deceived. It'll be the role of my life!

**Arthur** – Okay. I lied to you and I'm willing to pay for it.

**Marilyn** – Well, we're making progress.

**Arthur** – But the only time I've ever been to Cannes was for a sales conference. I'm a sales representative for a drinks company!

**Marilyn** – And here we go again! (*She grabs the phone again.*) This time, I'm sending the video...

**Arthur** – No, wait...!

*She presses a button.*

**Marilyn** – You're lucky, we're still in the tunnel. There's no network. But not for long...

**Arthur** – I swear I can explain everything to you...

**Marilyn** – Really?

**Arthur** – It's true, earlier, I pretended to be the director you were talking about. Just for fun...

**Marilyn** – You're digging yourself in deeper...

**Arthur** – I mean... I wanted to impress you. To seduce you, perhaps. All right, maybe I was hoping to sleep with you too...

**Marilyn** – 'Sleep with me.' How delicately put. And I can tell you, you're not very good in bed...

**Arthur** – And I apologise... I mean for lying to you... But I'm not Arthur Monro, I assure you... (*With a big smile*) And I can easily prove it...

**Marilyn** – Oh really...?

**Arthur** (*reaching into his pocket*) – All I have to do is show you my identity card... (*He searches his pockets and his smile vanishes.*) Damn! It's in the suitcase!

**Marilyn** – What suitcase?

**Arthur** – The one that exploded!

**Marilyn** (*pointing to the suitcase on the seat)* – Your suitcase is right there.

**Arthur** – No... That's...

**Marilyn** – You're really pathetic...

**Arthur** – But I swear I'm telling the truth! Besides, where is that director? He must be on the train if his suitcase is here! (*He stands.*) I'll find him and prove I'm not him...

*She gives him a suspicious look.*

**Marilyn** – Fine. You've got ten minutes. You can't exactly jump off a train travelling at three hundred kilometres an hour... (*She brandishes the phone.*) And in ten minutes we'll be out of the tunnel...

**Arthur** – Out of the tunnel... God willing...

*A train announcement can be heard again.*

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, a reminder that the bar in carriage nine is open. Our staff will be delighted to offer you hot, cold or lukewarm drinks at absurd prices, a selection of sandwiches of questionable freshness, and a trolley of homemade desserts...

*Marilyn watches Arthur walk away, muttering to himself. He is so shaken that he looks distinctly unhinged.*

**Marilyn** – Of course...

**Arthur** – It must be my double. I should recognise him easily... Maybe he is in the bar carriage...

*Left alone, Marilyn smiles. Arthur's phone, which she holds in her hand, starts ringing. She answers the call.*

**Marilyn** – Hello? No, this is his new assistant. He's unavailable just now. Can I take a message? You're expecting his baby? I'll tell him. May I ask your name, in case he wishes to call you back? Karen? Perfect. Thank you...

*She hangs up the phone. She smiles again.*

**Marilyn** – And who said you couldn't get a signal in this tunnel? (*She picks up the phone again.*) Let's see... Karen... Return call... (*She presses a button.*) There we are. She'll love this little video. A lovely anniversary present...

*Blackout.*

# Act 4

*Marilyn is engrossed in the script. Arthur returns, looking defeated.*

**Arthur** – What are you doing?

**Marilyn** – Learning my lines! I'm going to get the part, after all. Aren't I? Unless you've found your double, of course... Well? Did you find him?

**Arthur** – I've walked the full length of the train, staring at every single passenger. They must think I'm mad. But I haven't seen anyone who looks even remotely like me...

**Marilyn** – Lucky for them...

**Arthur** (*starting to lose his mind*) – I don't understand... Maybe he missed his train too... I should call Karen to see if he's with her...

**Marilyn** – Enough games. I've been planning this for months. When I heard there was an audition in London, I knew you'd be on this train. I've thought of everything. (*She produces a contract and thrusts it under his nose.*) Even my contract for the leading role in your film...

**Arthur** – Oh yeah...?

**Marilyn** – You'll see my fee is perfectly reasonable...

*Arthur glances distractedly at the contract.*

**Arthur** – Two hundred thousand euros... What's that in pounds?

**Marilyn** – You just have to sign at the bottom of the page.

**Arthur** – It would be pointless, I assure you...

*Marilyn looks out of the window.*

**Marilyn** – Ah, we're out of the tunnel! I can send this video to your assistant *now*...

*As she pulls Arthur's phone out of her bag, it starts ringing. They exchange a look. Then Arthur decides.*

**Arthur** – Well, you just have to answer, after all! You'll see that it's not really my assistant calling me. And that I'm not really a film director...

**Marilyn** – Very well... (*She answers.*) Hello? Who? Who's calling? Sorry, you must have the wrong number...

*She hangs up.*

**Arthur** – So?

**Marilyn** – It was a certain Mrs. Fernandez who wanted to talk to her husband...

**Arthur** (*triumphant*) – Ah! You see!

**Marilyn** – Who is this Mrs. Fernandez? Your cleaning lady...?

**Arthur** – My cleaner? Not at all! She's my wife. We were going to London for our wedding anniversary. That's where we first met...

**Marilyn** – So, is it true that you're not Arthur Monro?

**Arthur** (*relieved*) – That's what I've been trying to explain to you. Do you believe me now?

*She looks at him coldly in the eyes.*

**Marilyn** (*furious*) – But you're a monster!

**Arthur** – Why do you say that?

**Marilyn** – So when we met in that club in Cannes, and I mistook you for a film director, you knowingly let me believe it so you could take advantage of me...

**Arthur** – But I swear I have never set foot in that nightclub! I would remember! Well, I think...

**Marilyn** – You're an impostor, a creep, a complete nobody! And you didn't even have a part to offer me... At least now I understand why you never called me back...

**Arthur** – Pretending to be someone else to abuse a woman? I've never done anything like that and I never will, I assure you...

**Marilyn** – Well, just a while ago, on this train, you pretended to be Arthur Monro...

**Arthur** – You practically invited me to believe it. I just played along...

**Marilyn** – That's right, now it's my fault! You made a fool out of me, didn't you? You're even worse than I thought.

**Arthur** (*to himself*) – I'm never going to get out of this...

**Marilyn** – If you stopped lying to me...

**Arthur** – Listen, I don't even know any more. Perhaps I went to that club. I can't remember. Maybe I was drunk. You know how much drinking goes on at conferences for sales reps in the drinks business. What exactly happened between us at that cheap hotel?

**Marilyn** – It was the Ibis! Do you really want the details?

**Arthur** – No, no, I believe you. But how can I make amends? I'm genuinely sorry. One thing is certain, though: I'm not a film director. Even if I wanted to, and believe me, I would, I couldn't give you that part...

**Marilyn** – And you said you were going to celebrate your wedding anniversary with your wife in London.

**Arthur** – Yes...

**Marilyn** – Then your wife is the one who'll get this video. She'll see what sort of man she's married... Trying to take advantage of a stranger in the Eurostar toilet after abandoning his wife on a platform in Paris, on their wedding anniversary! You disgust me...

**Arthur** – I assure you, I'm ashamed of myself... But... I'm a man...

**Marilyn** – Being a man doesn't mean you can do whatever you like. Well, Mrs Fernandez is about to find out whom she married...

*She takes out his phone.*

**Arthur** – No, please don't do it...! Especially on our anniversary... (*He searches his pockets and pulls out his wad of sterling notes*.) Here, I have a thousand pounds in cash. I'll give them to you...

**Marilyn** (*offended*) – Who do you take me for? Do you think I can be bought?

**Arthur** – I'm sorry, that came out badly. Think of it as money for your stay in London, for the audition. I'm sure you've got talent. You could land the leading role! With this, you can stay at the Hilton and meet the real director...

**Marilyn** – Do you think I'll have time to try my luck?

**Arthur** – I'm sure you're a wonderful actress. You've just proved it. And with your looks... and your determination...

*She hesitates, but finally takes the money.*

**Marilyn** – All right... But you're getting off lightly...

**Arthur** – I know...

**Voice** – Eurostar train 3212 will shortly be arriving at London St Pancras, the final stop. All passengers are asked to leave the train. The return service to Paris departs from the opposite platform...

**Arthur** – I think I'll take the connection... Can you please give me my phone back now?

**Marilyn** – All right. But I want one last thing, to make my revenge complete. It will also guarantee that you won't call the police the moment my back is turned and demand your thousand pounds back...

**Arthur** – I swear to you...

**Marilyn** – You'll understand that I can't trust your word completely...

**Arthur** – Alright... But what do you want?

**Marilyn** – Follow me to the toilets...

**Arthur** – Again?

**Marilyn** – Oh, and since this suitcase doesn't belong to you, I'll take it. I'll return it to Arthur Monro. It will be an opportunity to truly get to know him... Hopefully, he won't be a scumbag like you...

*Marilyn leaves the screenplay on a seat and takes the suitcase with her.*

*Blackout*.

# Act 5

*The same carriage. Empty. After a moment, Arthur returns alone, dishevelled... and in his underpants.*

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for travelling with Eurostar. We hope you enjoyed your journey. Before leaving the train, please check that you have not forgotten any belongings. We wish you a pleasant stay in London and hope to welcome you aboard again soon...

*Arthur looks devastated. His phone rings, and he answers it mechanically.*

**Arthur** (*flatly*) – Oh, Karen... So you managed to get another ticket... You'll be in London in half an hour. Right... No, everything's fine, I promise... The woman who answered my phone earlier? No idea... Yes, yes, it was my number. If you say so... Listen, I'll explain, all right? The film? What film? Oh, the video... That little... Look, I can explain everything, I promise. Or at least I can try... And what was the important news you wanted to tell me? You want a divorce? Let's talk when you get here, shall we? (*He holds the phone away from his ear as Karen shouts.*) Listen, I'll have to go. We're about to be cut off... I've run out of coins for the phone box...

*Like a zombie, he puts away his phone and collapses into his seat. The film script is still lying on the seat next to him. He picks it up and is about to open it when his phone rings again.*

**Arthur** – Fred? I'm in serious trouble... It's a long story. Tell me, do you remember going with me to an exclusive club in Cannes after that sales conference? You do? And I was completely drunk? Right... Do you remember seeing me with a woman called Marilyn...?

*Mechanically, he takes the script again and looks at the title.*

**Arthur** (*reading*) – Euro Star, a film by Arthur Monro... starring Marilyn Millar... No, no, I'm reading the title of the script. Arthur Monro, the director. Marilyn Millar... Does that name mean anything to you? No, nor to me... Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe? Yes, those names do sound familiar... So you think...? No, never mind. Thanks, Fred...

*He puts down his phone and opens the script to the first page.*

**Arthur** (*reading*) – Marilyn: 'Excuse me, but I think your suitcase is sitting in my seat...' (*He lets the script fall, utterly defeated.*) Oh yes... She's going to have a brilliant career...

*Blackout*.

# Epilogue

*The same carriage. A man is sitting in one of the seats, his face hidden from the audience behind a sports newspaper. Arthur Monro's suitcase is on the seat opposite him.*

**Voice** – Ladies and gentlemen, Eurostar train 3233 to Paris Gare du Nord is about to depart. Please stand clear of the automatic doors...

*Marilyn enters exactly as she did at the beginning, pulling her small wheeled suitcase. She passes the man, glances at him with curiosity, goes on, then turns back a few moments later.*

**Marilyn** – Excuse me for disturbing you, but I recognised you straight away...

*The man begins to lower his newspaper to answer her.*

*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 ...
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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