



La Comédiathèque

THE COSTA MUCHO CASTAWAYS

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Translation by the author

Peter and Mary were strangers until their cruise ship, the Costa Mucho, was shipwrecked. After washing up on a deserted island, they realise that, as the lone survivors, they must overcome their differences in order to survive.
Life is a shipwreck ... and the afterlife is an offshore tax haven.

Characters

Peter

Mary

Day 1

Sound of waves and seagulls. As the sound fades, light gradually illuminates a small island. Some rocks are visible in the background (with access to backstage on either side). A bit of sand. Two scrawny palm trees. A lifebuoy marked Costa Mucho hangs from one of the palm trees. Several scattered objects are on the shore (towards the audience, representing the ocean). These props, hidden behind rocks or buried in the sand, will only become visible when the characters discover them. A man and a woman in summer attire lie unconscious on the ground, he with a very casual appearance and she more sophisticated. A cell phone rings. The man wakes up. The ringing stops. He looks around, seemingly not knowing where he is. He gets up and walks around the island, briefly disappearing (exiting stage left and reentering stage right). Still disoriented, he spots the cell phone on the ground and picks it up. He observes it with curiosity for a moment and then dials a number.

Peter – Yes, Emily, it's me. Listen... I just woke up, and... I don't understand... I'm on some kind of beach... I don't know if... We had a scheduled stopover or... But where are you? Well, call me as soon as you get this message...

He hangs up the phone and notices the woman still lying down, as if sleeping. He looks at her, intrigued.

Peter – Excuse me, I... *(He raises his voice.)* Hey, can you hear me? *(She still doesn't react, so he shakes her.)* Hey, wake up! Damn, she's dead drunk. *(Pause)* Or maybe she's actually dead...

He looks around again, astonished. Then he walks around the island, disappearing behind the rock. Meanwhile, the woman regains consciousness and stands up in a dazed state. The man returns and comes face to face with her. He startles.

Peter – Oh, shit! You scared me...

Mary – Oh, really?

Peter – Have you seen my wife by any chance?

Mary – Your wife?

Peter – Yes, my wife. Emily.

The woman looks around as well.

Mary – But where are we?

Peter – Apparently, on an island. Well, more like a small islet.

Mary – An island?

Peter – Yes. A deserted island.

Mary – And have you seen anyone?

Peter – I'm telling you, it's a deserted island! Besides you, I haven't seen anyone...

Mary – So, what do we do now?

Peter – I was kind of counting on you to tell me...

The woman gazes at the man for a moment.

Mary – But I recognise you...

Peter – Oh, yeah?

Mary – You were also on the Costa Mucho!

Peter – I was on a cruise with my wife, celebrating our wedding anniversary. Well, it was mostly Emily's idea because, personally, I'm not a fan of cruises...

Mary – Emily! That's right, I remember... A plump woman with an orange blouse. We were sitting right across from each other at the captain's party last night.

Peter – The theme was Halloween, but she thought pumpkins didn't flatter her... So she came up with the idea of dressing in orange...

Mary – That's it, yes... The captain asked me to dance... And after that, I don't remember anything...

Peter – It's strange, I don't remember anything either...

Mary – How did we end up here?

Peter – No idea... Where is the ship?

Mary – It might be on the other side.

Peter – The other side?

Mary – The other side of the island!

Peter – I've already been around twice. And believe me, it takes no time at all.

Mary – Do you think we shipwrecked?

Peter – Shipwrecked?

Mary – Why would they deliberately leave the two of us stranded on this islet?

Peter – I have no idea.

Mary – Maybe it's a game... *(He gives her a puzzled look.)* To entertain the passengers during the crossing.

Peter – Like "Temptation Island," you mean?

Mary – Are you really sure we're on an island?

Peter – A piece of rock surrounded by water everywhere... What do you call that?

Mary – I don't know... Maybe it's only an island at high tide...

Peter – What do you mean, at high tide?

Mary – Like Mont Saint-Michel.

Peter – This doesn't look anything like Mont Saint-Michel...

Mary – It happened to me once, near Saint-Malo.

Peter – Just now, it was Mont Saint-Michel...

Mary – It's the same thing. We went to see Chateaubriand's tomb, my mom and I.

Peter – At Mont Saint-Michel?

Mary – In Saint-Malo! You do know "Memoirs from Beyond the Grave," don't you?

Peter – You're a teacher, right?

Mary – A French teacher, yes. How did you know that?

Peter – I don't know, just a hunch...

Mary – Anyway, we walked there with my mom. It was a nice walk. We took some photos of that great man's tomb, wandered around a bit. When we wanted to go back, we realised we were surrounded by water.

Peter (*lost in thought*) – No kidding...?

Mary – We forgot about the tide! We had to wait four hours before we could return to the mainland. Four hours, can you imagine?

Peter – Four hours?

Mary – Until the sea receded, and we could walk back to the coast!

Peter – Oh, I see...

Mary – The worst part was that we had to catch the train back to Paris that evening. We had to go to the hotel to pick up our luggage... When we arrived at the platform, the station master had already blown the whistle for departure.

Peter (*sarcastic*) – What an adventure...

Mary – I hope we don't have to wait four hours on this island.

Peter – Why, do you have a train to catch?

Mary – No, I don't think so...

Peter (*annoyed*) – A tomb... Damn it, you're going to bring us bad luck...

Mary – Why would you say that?

Peter – This islet will be our tomb if no one comes to rescue us!

Mary – I'm telling you, maybe it's only at high tide...

Peter – You're starting to annoy me with your tide talk!

Mary – It's just a hypothesis...

Peter – Yeah, well, it's a stupid hypothesis! And what makes you think it's high tide, anyway?

Mary – I don't know... I'm trying to be a little optimistic...

Peter – Optimistic? Yeah... Because if it's low tide instead... In four hours, we'll have to climb up a coconut tree...

Mary – They don't look very big...

Peter – And do you see a coastline nearby?

Mary – No...

Peter – If we were on an islet like Mont Saint-Michel, we would see the coastline.

Mary – Yes, obviously...

Peter – Chateaubriand... I could really go for one. Because I'm starting to get hungry... If only we had shipwrecked after dinner...

She suddenly looks at him suspiciously.

Mary – This isn't a set-up, is it?

Peter – A set-up?

Mary – The breakdown trick, I've had that pulled on me before, but the shipwreck trick... I don't feel like myself... Did you make me drink something? Did you drug me?

Peter – Are you out of your mind or what?

Mary – Yeah, well, I know men...

Peter – It's not that obvious, if I may say so... Besides, I'm not even sure I would have been interested, you know.

Mary – Fine, whatever... There's no need to be rude either.

Peter – And I remind you that I'm married! By the way, where is Emily?

The woman suddenly freezes.

Mary – Mum!

Peter – Oh no! You're not going to call your mother now!

Mary – Mum, she was also on the Costa Mucho!

Peter – Oh really...? Oh shit...

Mary – Oh my God! Do you think they're all dead?

Peter (*lost in thought*) – All of them?

Mary – All the other passengers! The ones who were with us on the cruise ship!

Peter – I don't know anything... I don't understand...

A pause.

Mary – Maybe we're in Greece.

Peter – In Greece? Why Greece? Five minutes ago, you were betting on Mont Saint-Michel.

Mary – It was a Mediterranean cruise, right?

Peter – Greece is much bigger than that.

Mary – There are many islands in Greece. Some of them are probably very small.

Peter – Well, considering the mess here... It could be Greece...

Mary – I went there a few years ago with my mum... But I don't recognise it at all.

Peter – Anyway, if we're in Greece, we can forget about walking back to the coast at low tide.

Mary – Why is that?

Peter – Because in the Mediterranean, there are no tides!

Mary – Oh yes, that's true.

Peter – Well. I may not know... Chateaubriand, but at least I know there are no tides in the Mediterranean.

Mary – Well, there are some, but... they have very small tidal ranges.

Peter – Yeah, that's right... Very small.

Mary – Yes, exactly.

Peter – A shipwreck... I can't believe it... With the money it cost me, that damn cruise on the Costa Mucho...

Mary – Do you really have to use the word "damn" at least once in every sentence?

Completely disoriented, he doesn't even hear this remark.

Peter – Oh damn... What were you saying?

Mary – Nothing, I... I was wondering if...

Peter – It's really scary, isn't it? What could have possibly happened?

Mary – I don't know... The Titanic was because of an iceberg.

Peter – Icebergs are very rare in the Mediterranean.

Mary – Especially in summer...

Peter – Well, maybe it's a reef...

Mary – A reef? Are there reefs out in the open sea? In the middle of the Mediterranean?

Peter – There are indeed islets! Like the one we just ran aground on.

Mary looks towards the sea, in the direction of the spectators.

Mary – Can you imagine? The ship might be right there, just beneath us, a few meters deep. With all its passengers on board...

Peter – Do you think we're the only survivors?

Mary – I don't know.

Peter – It must have been a reef like this one, but without palm trees to indicate its presence.

Mary – But for reefs, there are maps. Maritime maps. It's like when you travel by car, there are maps to show you where the mountains are and the roads to cross them. Without risking crashing into them...

Peter – Maps... You still have to look at the maps! And know how to read them... Just by looking at the captain's face... We should have been suspicious.

Mary – Why is that?

Peter – He looked more like a tango dancer than an old sea wolf, that's why!

Mary – Okay, he wasn't wearing a sailor's sweater, he didn't have a beard, and he didn't smoke a pipe... But still, to be the captain of a liner like the Costa Mucho... You have to study.

Peter – You're kidding... Nowadays, any idiot can drive an oil tanker! He was an Argentine, right?

Mary – Italian.

Peter – Anyway, before becoming a captain, he had probably taken more ballroom dance classes than sea navigation lessons.

Mary – You seem to know a lot... And what do you do for a living?

Peter – I'm a truck driver.

Mary – Oh, I imagine that makes you a great expert in maritime navigation.

Peter – I'm just trying to understand what the hell we're doing here, that's all.

A pause.

Mary – Still, he had class... In his white uniform, with his visor cap... And believe me, even if he wasn't an Argentine, he danced the tango very well!

Peter – The famous captain's Gala...

Mary – I have to admit he had quite a handsome appearance.

Peter – Nevertheless, it's probably because of that gigolo that we're stranded here.

Mary (*singing and doing a dance step*) – Besame, besame mucho... I remember, that's what the orchestra was playing just before the ship sank.

Peter – You remember the shipwreck?

Mary – No... I only remember being in the arms of the captain. He was the one dancing with me, actually. My heart still flutters...

Peter – Besame... We can definitely say they fucked us over.

Mary – Please, there's no need to be vulgar!

Peter (*also singing*) – Cuestame, cuestame mucho... If instead of dancing with these ladies at the captain's gala, that old pimp had stayed at his post to hold the joystick...

Mary – What joystick?

Peter – Well, the rudder, if you prefer.

Mary – Yes, because the joystick...

Peter – Nevertheless, if we shipwrecked, it's definitely because that idiot handled it like a moron!

Mary – Whether we like it or not, the captain is the sole master on board after God.

Peter picks up a sailor's cap from the floor.

Peter – Well, it seems that God is dead...

He puts on the cap. She looks at him, dismayed.

Mary – No...

Peter – At least, he left me his cap. Because with this heat...

Mary – But it's dreadful... Do you think Mum is dead too?

Peter – I don't know... Could she swim?

Mary – No...

Peter – Well, unless there's a miracle...

Mary – And your wife, could she swim?

Peter – In a pool, yes... Anyway, in case of a shipwreck, you know... After a few hours, it doesn't make much difference.

Mary – So now, you're probably a widower.

Peter – Yeah... And you're an orphan.

Mary – Is that all it means to you?

Peter – The worst is never certain... Neither is the best, for that matter... Until we receive the funeral announcements...

Mary – Would you mind taking off that cap?

Peter – Why?

Mary – I don't know... It's a bit indecent, isn't it?... If that poor man sank with his ship.

Peter – Fine... If you prefer me to get a sunstroke...

He reluctantly takes off his cap.

Mary – Oh my God... To think that I invited my mother to go on this cruise... It was her 60th birthday gift...

Mary seems on the verge of tears.

Peter – Oh no, please don't start crying... And let me tell you, we don't know for sure... It could be us who fell off the ship, you know.

Mary regains hope.

Mary – Or maybe they're on another islet, like this one.

Peter – Or maybe they're packed in a little rubber dinghy, like boat people.

Mary – It's dreadful. Just thinking about it... I get stomach cramps.

Peter – Yeah, me too... But for me, it's mostly because I haven't eaten anything since last night.

Silence.

Mary – Why did it have to happen to us?

Peter seems to notice something on the ground.

Peter – I don't know.

He bends down and discreetly picks up something from under one of the two palm trees.

Mary – Do you believe in fate?

Peter – Fate?

Mary realizes his gesture.

Mary – What is it?

Peter – A Bounty.

Mary – So that's all we have to survive until help arrives? A Bounty for two.

Peter – For two?

Mary – We'll share it, right?

Peter – I'm the one who found this Bounty... *(She glares at him.)* Okay, we'll share.

Mary – Maybe it's better to save it for when we're really hungry.

Peter – But I'm really hungry!

He unwraps the Bounty, cuts it in half, gives her one piece, and eats his own.

Peter – Oh damn, it's good...

She watches him with a offended look, then resigns herself to eating her half.

Mary – If they find us, they'll call us the Bounty castaways.

He looks at her with incomprehension.

Mary – Ah, you don't know either?

Peter – What?

Mary – The movie! The Bounty castaways!

Peter – A movie?

Mary – If we have to spend a lot of time together on this island, I wonder what we'll talk about...

Peter – I'm not forcing you to talk.

She remains silent for a moment, chewing her Bounty.

Peter – By the way, the movie isn't called the Bounty castaways, it's *Mutiny on the Bounty*...

Mary – So you do go to the movies from time to time...

Peter – Yeah... They shipwreck and end up eating each other.

Mary – Now you're mixing it up with The Raft of the Medusa...

He gives her an annoyed look but doesn't respond.

Mary – It's quite foggy, though...

Peter – What, this story?

Mary – The weather! It's foggy, isn't it?

Peter – Even in fog, now you can avoid the reefs. There are radars.

Mary – No, I mean if there was a coastline nearby, we wouldn't necessarily see it.

Peter – I don't know... I lost my glasses in the shipwreck...

Mary – Ah, you too...

Peter – So maybe it's not the fog that's making it hard to see...

A pause.

Mary – I'm going to go around the island to get an idea for myself.

Peter – Okay.

Mary – Aren't you coming with me?

Peter – Even without your glasses, you won't get lost. Why would I come with you?

Mary – To keep me company...

Peter – Earlier, you thought I lacked conversation... Are you scared?

Mary – Not at all!

Peter – Yeah... You still need me, but you don't want to admit it.

Mary – Fine, stay here, I'll go...

Mary disappears behind the rock.

Peter – Stay here... Where else would I go anyway...

A pause. He spots something on the ground again. He picks up another Bounty, checks if she's not there, and eats it. Mary returns with a suitcase.

Peter – Are you going on a trip?

Mary – You're very funny.

Peter – What's that?

Mary – A suitcase.

Peter – Yes, thank you. Even without my glasses, I can see that it's not my wife.

Mary – I found it on the other side, on the shore. Didn't you see anything earlier?

Peter – Maybe it just washed up. Anyway, it's not my suitcase. I guess it's not yours either.

Mary – No, unfortunately... What should we do?

Peter – What do you mean, what should we do?

Mary – Should we open it or not?

Peter – Why wouldn't we open it?

Mary – It's not ours, this suitcase.

Peter – So what?

Mary – I wouldn't like it if a stranger went through my suitcase.

Peter – The person who owns this suitcase is probably being eaten by fish right now, so...

Mary – You really believe that?

Peter – There's probably just clothes and a toothbrush in there, but you never know.

Mary – A toothbrush and some spare clothes wouldn't be bad.

Peter – Yeah... Well, I'd prefer something to eat.

Mary – Is eating all you think about?

Peter – Damn it, go ahead, open that damn suitcase! Let's get it over with!

Mary – Fine... *(She hesitates.)* Why me?

Peter – Why not?

Mary – I don't know... It's when you said... let's get it over with.

Peter – So what?

Mary – It could be a booby-trapped suitcase.

Peter – Earlier, you accused me of kidnapping you to subject you to the last outrages. Now it's a booby-trapped suitcase. You're quite paranoid.

Mary – I'm cautious about the human race in general, and men in particular, that's all.

Peter – Okay, you're right. I understand everything now. Terrorists abandoned us on this deserted island with a suitcase so we could blow ourselves up by opening it. Without risking collateral damage...

Mary – And why not?

Peter – It's a bit twisted, isn't it?

Mary – Those people are often quite twisted.

Peter – Still.

Mary – Well then, go ahead. Open it, then!

Peter – No problem.

He prepares to open the suitcase, with a slight apprehension. But the lock resists.

Mary – So?

Peter – It's locked.

Mary – Let me see.

She takes out a hairpin, bends it, and picks the lock, surprising Peter. The suitcase opens.

Mary – There you go.

Peter – Looks like you've been doing this your whole life...

Mary – My mum taught me how to do it.

Peter – Really? Funny, I always pictured your mother knitting rather than picking locks...

Mary – You can do lots of things with knitting needles... I always carry one with me...

He looks at her with a slightly worried expression.

Peter – So, what's inside that suitcase?

Mary looks inside.

Mary – You won't believe it.

Peter – What?

He approaches and looks inside the suitcase.

Peter – No way...

Mary – A suitcase full of banknotes!

Peter – That's crazy...

Mary – It's enough to pay off Greece's debt.

Peter – That wasn't the first thing that came to my mind, but it's true, that's a huge amount of money.

Mary – It must be from the ship.

Peter – Who would go on a cruise with a suitcase full of banknotes?

Mary – Especially when we were on an all-inclusive package.

Peter – Except for the duty-free shop.

Mary – I can't imagine someone bringing a suitcase full of 500-pound notes just to rob the duty-free shop...

Peter – Well... Shall we split it?

Mary – I'm the one who found it...

Peter – I gave you half of my Bounty.

Mary – Anyway, what can we do with all this money on a deserted island? Do you see any duty-free shops around here?

Peter – Yeah, you're right...

Mary – On a deserted island, 500-pound notes... They're worth no more than Monopoly money.

Peter – Yeah... It would have been better if the suitcase was full of sausages.

Mary – A suitcase full of sausages... Like in *The Crossing of Paris*. That's for sure, we wouldn't take all night to cross this island...

Peter – What?

Mary – *The Crossing of Paris*... The French film featuring Bourvil and Gabin... Does that ring a bell for you either?

Peter – If we're going to spend the rest of our days together on this islet, you'll have to stop with your silly quotes, okay? This isn't school!

Mary – Right. I'm sorry...

Silence.

Mary – It might be dirty money.

Peter – Of course, it's dirty money! What did you think? That it was pocket change?

Mary – I can imagine the scenario...

Peter – You watch too many movies...

Mary – Those bills were meant to pay for a drug delivery. And the exchange was supposed to take place on the cruise ship...

Peter – Yeah, because a senior's cruise ship is such a discreet place for cocaine traffickers.

Mary – Senior? Thank you.

Peter – I was referring to your mother. Let's admit that the average age on that ship was quite high, right? And all those retirees didn't look like they were into sniffing coke.

Mary – Oh my God! What if those traffickers want to retrieve their suitcase?

Peter – Come on, your story doesn't make sense. Drug traffickers on a cruise ship...

Mary – Do you have a better explanation?

Peter – I don't know... An old retiree who wanted to stash their savings in a tax haven during a stopover. (*She closes the suitcase.*) What are you doing?

Mary – This money doesn't belong to us. We'll return it to its rightful owner if we ever manage to get out of here.

Peter – But what if all the passengers are dead, including the owner?

Mary – We'll leave it at Lost and Found, and if no one claims it in a year and a day, this suitcase full of money is ours.

Peter – Is this a joke?

Mary – What do you suggest? That we both straddle this suitcase and paddle to Greece using 500-pound notes as oars?

Peter – Maybe rescuers will eventually spot us...

Mary – Sure... And if we're found one day? Can you imagine us getting into the police helicopter with a suitcase full of banknotes?

Peter – I don't know... We can bury the suitcase. And come back for it later...

Mary – Bury it?

Peter – Like in *Treasure Island*! You see, I also read books in my youth...

Mary – Let me remind you that you'll have to bury your wife, if the sharks haven't eaten her already. And me, my mother...

Peter – Your mother, your mother...

Mary – What about my mother?

Peter – I have a feeling your mother was suffocating you a bit, wasn't she?

Mary – Oh really? You don't even know her!

Peter – Admit that at your age, going on a cruise with your mother...

Mary – And how old do you think I am?

Peter – I have a principle of never commenting on such questions. But regardless of our respective ages, if we're not found soon, I don't think we'll ever get old.

Mary becomes despondent.

Mary – How long do you think we can hold on like this?

Peter – I don't know...

Mary – We can go without eating for several days... A little diet from time to time....

Peter – Yeah, sure... Let's say we're starting Ramadan today...

Mary – Please... I hate xenophobic jokes.

Peter – As a last resort, one of us can eat the other to survive a bit longer...

Mary – Are you joking or...?

He leaves the doubt lingering.

Peter – Anyway, we can't go without drinking for more than a day or two. Especially in this heat. I could really go for a good beer.

Mary – We should try to alert the rescue team. Do you have a mobile phone?

Peter – There's one over here. I thought it was yours. *(He takes the phone.)* No signal.

Mary – We could light a distress fire to signal our presence?

Peter *(sarcastically)* – Great... Do you have matches? I'll go find some wood...

Mary – Maybe we can get a better reception on the other side. Give me that phone.

She disappears behind the rock. He notices something on the ground, sticking out of the sand, and picks it up. It's a beer can. He opens it and drinks. She returns with a folded parasol. He quickly hides his can.

Peter – Well?

Mary – No signal over there either. But I found a parasol. There are also two beach chairs. The currents must have brought them to the island.

He steps out. She unfolds the parasol and sets it up. He returns with two beach chairs, which he sets up. They sit under the parasol.

Peter – We almost feel like we're on vacation...

Mary – If only we had something to drink...

He takes a sip from the can. She gives him a surprised and envious look.

Peter – Look in the sand over there.

She rummages through the sand and finds a can of Coca-Cola. She sits back down and drinks her can.

Peter – Apparently, on the Costa Mucho, even in the event of a shipwreck, it's an all-inclusive package.

Mary – All of this is getting stranger and stranger.

Peter – We need to look on the bright side of life. Take it easy, baby.

Mary *(offended)* – Baby?

Peter – If we're going to spend the rest of our days together on this deserted island, I think we'll eventually reach a certain level of intimacy.

Mary – A certain level of intimacy? What do you mean by that?

Peter – We won't have much choice, that's all.

Mary – That's very gallant of you to say.

Peter – It's a fact. It's just the two of us. We won't have a choice. Like Adam and Eve...

Mary – Choice? It seems you see love as a sort of well-stocked store.

Peter – Oh, come on... At least I was on the Costa Mucho cruise with my wife. Not with my mother...

Mary – Right... Give it a try then... I'll teach you what you can do with knitting needles...

The mobile phone starts ringing. They both freeze in surprise.

Peter – Well, answer it!

She rushes to the phone and answers the call.

Mary – Yes...? The suitcase... Oh no, I'm sorry, I... I wasn't listening to the radio... No, no, it's not important... Yes, thank you, you too...

She remains still for a moment, holding the phone. Peter looks dismayed.

Peter – What did they ask you?

Mary – They asked me... if I knew the amount in the suitcase.

Peter – The suitcase?

Mary – Yes... The suitcase.

Peter – What suitcase?

Mary – This suitcase, I suppose.

Peter – Is this a joke?

Mary – It's a radio contest, haven't you heard of it?

Peter – I didn't realize teachers like you listened to these kinds of games on the radio...

Mary – It's actually about a suitcase filled with money. Every morning, the radio host reveals the amount of money inside. They randomly call a listener and ask if they know the amount.

Peter – If they know what?

Mary – How much money is in the suitcase!

Peter – And...?

Mary – If they know, they get to keep the money. If they don't know, more money is added to the suitcase.

Peter – What did you tell them?

Mary – Well, I said I didn't know... because I wasn't tuned in to the radio.

Peter – A radio station calls us, with millions of people listening, and you don't take the opportunity to let them know we're stranded on this island in the middle of the Mediterranean after a shipwreck?

Mary – I understand what you're saying... I'm sorry, I was caught off guard. I usually listen to this game on the radio every morning. I never expected them to call me one day. And today, of all days, when I hadn't been listening... I'll call them back immediately...

Peter – Give me that phone! I'll call them back...

He takes the phone and presses the redial button.

Peter – Damn it, no signal...

Mary – It's incredible... I was just moments away from getting my hands on that suitcase full of money...

Peter – But we already have that damn suitcase! If you want to know how much it contains, just count the bills!

Mary – You're actually right... Do they usually ask for the amount before sending the suitcase? It's odd, isn't it?

Peter – Is that the only thing you find odd?

They both remain silent for a while.

Peter – You know what?

Mary – What?

Peter – I wonder if my wife is cheating on me.

Mary – Why would you say that?

Peter – I don't know, she's been a bit distant lately.

Mary – No, I mean, why are you telling me this right here, right now?

Peter – I don't know, who do you want me to tell? Do you see anyone else on this island I can talk to about this?

Mary – But I don't care if your wife is cheating on you or not. Do you realize the situation we're in? So whether you're being cuckolded or not... do you really think that's the problem right now?

Peter – If we can't talk about anything...

Silence.

Mary – And shouldn't your wife be the one feeling jealous? You being alone on a deserted island with a charming young woman and all!

Peter – Alright, I'm all ears. What do you want to talk about?

Mary – I'm not sure... We should make some plans and get organized.

Peter – Organized?

Mary – To survive. Completely self-sufficient. Have you read "Voluntary Castaway" by Alain Bombard?

Peter – You're not starting that again...

Mary – Sorry... Do you know how to fish?

Peter – With a fishing rod, yes.

Mary – Apparently, the currents bring a lot of things around here. We can always hope they wash up a state-of-the-art fishing rod on our private beach.

Peter – Or better yet, that a tin of sardines in oil or white wine mackerels washes up on our private beach from time to time.

Silence.

Mary – Our private beach... It's true, after all. When you think about it. This island is ours.

Peter – Ours?

Mary – If it's not listed on any map, in international waters.

Peter – Oh, really?

Mary – Legally, I think we could declare our independence and establish a state.

Peter – That's small for a country, isn't it?

Mary – It's big enough for a tax haven.

Peter – Well, that's not a bad idea... (*Pointing to the suitcase*) And we already have the starting capital.

Mary – If they ask us to return this money, we'll say we haven't signed any extradition agreement.

Peter – Perhaps this money is actually the payment made by the passengers for that overpriced cruise on this cursed ship that ended up sinking.

Mary – You're right... In the end, it's only fair if all comes back to us...

Silence.

Peter – It feels like we're slowly going under...

Mary – That's undeniable. If we stay here much longer, we'll end up losing our minds.

Peter – No, I mean, we're literally sinking.

Mary – Are you certain?

Peter – I'm not sure... Earlier, it seemed like the beach was larger...

Mary – It could be due to climate change.

Peter – Or the tide... Even in the Mediterranean, there's a slight tide.

Mary – Visibility is decreasing, isn't it?

Peter – Eventually, nightfall will come.

Mary – How should we organise ourselves for sleep?

Peter – You're really keen on organisation, aren't you?

Mary – Which side are you taking?

Peter – We don't have a bed!

Mary – I meant which side of the island!

Peter – It's better if we stick together, right?

Mary – Stick together? What exactly you mean by that?

Peter – I mean, being united... I mean, supporting each other...

Mary – Okay...

Peter (*putting a hand on her shoulder*) – Look, I think we started off on the wrong foot, both of us... Since we're going to be stuck here for a while, we might as well try to stay positive, right?

Mary (*reluctantly*) – Well, we're not going to bed right away either. Are you feeling tired?

Peter – You're right, let's admire the sunset...

He sits down beside her.

Mary – Are you flirting with me?

Peter – Absolutely not!

Mary – Sorry, I thought you were.

Peter – One should not believe in what one sees, as it often resembles what one hopes for too closely.

Mary – So you're also succumbing to the temptation of quoting.

Peter – I didn't realize it was a quote...

Mary – Thinking you're Don Juan, are you?

Peter – And what about you? A femme fatale, perhaps?

Mary – Okay... We did say we should stick together... By the way, I don't even know your name.

Peter – It's Peter.

Mary – Peter? Oh yes, that suits you well.

Peter – Thank you... And you?

Mary – Mary. I know, it suits me well too...

Peter – I'm no Don Juan, that's for sure.

Mary – Don't underestimate yourself either. You're not that bad.

Peter – You think so?

Mary – Don't get carried away now...

Peter – You, on the other hand... You have all the qualities of a femme fatale...

Mary – Oh really?

Peter – With just the two of us on such a small island... It was inevitable that we would meet.

Mary (*to cut it short*) – Well, I'm going to sleep. Maybe we'll wake up tomorrow and this nightmare will be over...

Peter – Do you think so?

Mary – Do you have a better suggestion?

They lie down on the sand and drift off to sleep. Unbeknownst to them, the mobile phone begins to ring, but they remain oblivious to its sound. Meanwhile, the distant sounds of a bustling crowd trapped in a confined space grow louder, gradually intensifying. As the noise reaches its peak, the light starts to fade, creating an atmosphere of fading tranquility.

Blackout.

Day 2

The light returns. Peter and Mary wake up. They look at each other and glance around.

Peter – Apparently, it wasn't a nightmare.

Mary – Or maybe the nightmare continues... *(Pause)* What were your dreams as a child?

Peter – My dreams?

Mary – What did you dream of becoming, for example?

Peter – I dreamed of driving a truck.

Mary – So, in a way, you're a fulfilled man...

Peter – Do you think I didn't set the bar high enough?

Mary – Maybe you're the one who's right after all. In life, if you don't want to be disappointed, it's better not to aim too high. Is it nice to drive a truck?

Peter – Why? Are you considering getting your commercial driver's license?

Mary – I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you. And you know, being a suburban teacher today... Sometimes it feels like driving a truck loaded with nitroglycerin down rocky paths...

Peter – The Wages of Fear...

Mary – Do you like it? I mean, compared to the idea you had of it when you were a kid...

Peter – At least I don't have a boss. In any case, I don't have to put up with one all day long. On the road, you're alone. It's peaceful. You don't think about anything.

Mary – Do you travel a lot?

Peter – I do international routes.

Mary – So you must know a lot of countries. More than me, at least. Because apart from Greece...

Peter – Yes. I know quite a few countries. Especially the gas stations...

She picks something up from the ground.

Mary – Do you want half a Bounty?

Peter – Where did you find that?

Mary – Under the coconut tree over there.

Peter looks towards his own palm tree.

Peter – There's one under mine too...

He picks it up. They each eat their Bounty bar with a pensive look..

Mary – How did these Bounties end up here?

Peter – Maybe Santa Claus. Since there's no Christmas tree, he left them under a palm tree.

Mary – Or maybe they fell from the tree.

Peter – Two transgenic coconut trees that directly produce Bounty bars...

Mary – Who knows? There are fewer and fewer things that surprise me these days.

They finish their Bounty bars.

Mary – Did you sleep well?

Peter – Like a log. How about you?

Mary – I had a bit of trouble falling asleep...

Peter – You should have counted sheep.

Mary – In the absence of sheep, I counted the money in the suitcase.

Peter – Oh really?

Mary – That way, if they call us back, we can give them the exact amount.

Peter – But we already have the suitcase!

Mary – Yes, but then it will truly be ours. Officially.

Peter – In my truck, I often listen to this radio game.

Mary – Really...?

Peter – I always knew the exact amount of the suitcase, down to the penny. Once, they called me. I had just picked up a hitchhiker. I had turned off the radio...

Mary – I hope it was worth it... I mean, with the hitchhiker.

Peter – Her name was Emily. Six months later, we were married.

Mary – Well... That's not a common way to meet your wife...

Peter – You think so?

Mary – It's very romantic... But based on what we see in movies, it's not the typical encounter between a truck driver and a hitchhiker...

Peter – I don't know what kind of movies you watch.

A pause.

Mary – When I was little, I was a princess. That's what my mother used to tell me, at least. When I realized there weren't many opportunities for that, I settled for being a teacher.

Peter – Ah yes, it's... It's not quite the same...

Mary – It's the best way I found to never leave school.

He looks at the ground.

Peter – Look, what's this now?

Mary – A bottle... Unfortunately, it's empty...

Peter picks up the bottle.

Peter – Ah, not quite. Look, there's a paper inside.

Mary (*approaching*) – No way... Do you think it's a message?

Peter – A message for us, you mean?

Mary – But we're the ones supposed to send bottles out to sea. To call for help. We're not supposed to receive mail.

He takes the bottle and extracts the paper.

Mary – So?

Peter (*reading*) – "My name is Mary, and I'm a student at the Immaculate Conception School in London. If you find this message, please send it back to me at this address..."

Mary – 13 Baker Street.

Peter – How do you know that?

Mary – I wrote that message, I remember now. I was six years old.

Peter – No way? That's incredible!

Mary – I was hoping that one day a prince charming would find this cry for help, send me his photo, and we would end up getting married.

Peter – You must have been quite desperate already...

Mary – Thanks for reminding me.

Peter – I'm sorry, that's not what I meant.

Mary – No, you're right. At my age, going on a cruise with my mother... Unfortunately, all these years, nobody found the bottle I had thrown into the Tames. And now, it's come back to the sender...

Peter – Not exactly...

Mary – What do you mean?

Peter – I was the one who found that bottle.

Mary – Apologies if this comes across as offensive, but you don't exactly match the image I had in mind for Prince Charming back then.

Peter – I can imagine...

Mary – Especially, my Prince Charming, I didn't imagine him already married. With Emily...

Peter – Actually, just before that infamous captain's gala, my wife had just told me she wanted a divorce.

Mary – After taking you on a cruise to celebrate your wedding anniversary?

Peter – She wanted us to end our story on a high note. That's what she told me, at least.

Mary – Maybe she had a crush on the captain...

Peter – At first, I thought it was a joke. But when I woke up here, if it was her who pushed me overboard.

Mary – I'm truly sorry. But you know what they say. There's plenty more fish in the sea...

He looks around.

Peter – Plenty? Are you sure?

Mary – Well, I meant... You'll surely find another one...

Peter – Yes... Maybe one...

The light gradually fades.

Mary – Do you think my mother could have pushed me overboard too?

Peter – Who knows? Maybe she had a crush on the captain as well...

Fade to black.

One fine day

The light gradually returns. A banner is stretched between two palm trees: Autonomous Republic of Costa Poco.

Peter – I think it's going to be another beautiful day.

Mary – Yes, just one more...

Peter – You've got a tan, haven't you?

Mary – You too. It suits you very well...

Peter – Thank you.

He looks at the banner.

Peter – Without my glasses, I can't read what you've written on that banner. Is it a distress call?

Mary – Rather a declaration of independence.

Peter (*squinting*) – Autonomous Republic of Costa Poco. Ah yes, that's...

Mary – No more messages in bottles... I've decided to embrace optimism.

Peter – Very well... (*Pause*) A republic? Do you think so?

Mary – Would you prefer a kingdom?

Peter – That would imply you being my queen...

Mary – Let's go with republic.

Peter – We're both the only candidates and the only voters, so it won't be easy to achieve a majority.

Mary – Unless I can convince you to vote for me...

Peter – You're already the chosen one of my heart... If you also demand a plebiscite... Dictatorship is not far off...

Mary – Alright, we'll take turns in exercising power.

Peter – And what if we can't agree on a common program?

Mary – We can always secede.

Peter – We'll need new names for our two countries.

Mary – North Costa Poco and South Costa Poco?

A pause.

Peter – Do you think we're going mad?

Mary – It might be the beginning of wisdom.

Peter – Indeed... You're truly optimistic.

Mary – Let's consider that we're on vacation...

Peter – On vacation?

Mary – Aren't we happy here? Some people pay fortunes to buy an island like this and spend the rest of their lives here.

Peter – Well, it's true, we're not so bad off, after all.

Mary – The sea, the beach...

Peter – The Bounty bars falling straight from the trees...

Mary – Perfect weather.

Peter – No need to work anymore.

Mary – Money that we don't know what to do with.

Peter – That's an understatement... You can't buy anything with it...

Mary – No taxes.

Peter – No charges.

Mary – It's paradise.

A pause.

Peter – Do you think we're already dead?

Mary – Who knows...

Peter – I never thought that after I died, I would end up in a tax haven...

A pause.

Peter – It's strange, I tend to forget what happened before.

Mary – Before what?

Peter – Before what happened to us.

Mary – What happened to us?

Peter – Life is a shipwreck.

Mary – Maybe it's not such a bad thing after all, to forget the past a little.

Peter – I think I was married. To a woman.

Mary – You're right to specify.

Peter – But I can't remember her name anymore.

Mary – Emily.

Peter – That's it. Do you remember?

Mary – Emily. It's a name you don't forget.

Peter – And you, didn't you have a mother?

Mary – Everyone has a mother, right?

Peter – Yes, I suppose...

Mary – Would you like another Bounty?

Peter – Yes, please.

They each eat their Bounty.

Mary – I counted the money in the suitcase again.

Peter – And?

Mary – There's an extra 500-pound note every day.

Peter – Well, well...

Mary – Do you think it's the interest?

Peter – That's the way the suitcase works. As long as no one has found the exact amount.

Mary – In any case, they never called back.

Silence.

Peter – What if we started using our first names?

Mary – I am not sure... On such a small island... Keeping a certain distance... It's a matter of public health, isn't it?

Peter – You're right. It's just the two of us. It's important for each of us to maintain a bit of mystery.

Mary – See? You're turning into a philosopher as well.

Peter – You will always be a mystery to me, Emily...

Mary – I wasn't called Mary before, was I?

Peter – I doubt it.

Mary – Why?

Peter – Mary is a name you don't forget.

A pause.

Mary – I'm not quite sure anymore... Are we on vacation?

Peter – Retired?

Mary – Retired? Are we really that old?

Peter – It's been quite some time since we arrived here.

Mary – How old are we, by the way?

Peter – Well, you certainly don't look it.

Mary – Thank you.

Peter – Do you know what I'm thinking?

Mary – Didn't we say we should each keep a hint of mystery?

Peter – We were destined to meet.

Mary – True, we won't be meeting anyone else now.

Peter – We'll never part ways.

Mary – If we were to leave, we wouldn't know where to go.

Peter – In that case, there's only one thing left to do.

Mary – You're starting to frighten me, Peter...

He puts on his captain's hat and extends his hand to her.

Music – "Besame mucho."

Peter – Let's dance!

Mary – Is that an order?

Peter – The captain is the sole master on board after God...

She hesitates for a moment, then takes his hand.

Mary – After me, you mean.

They begin to dance a fiery tango.

Mary – I had no idea you were such a skilled dancer, Captain. You make me dizzy...

The dance abruptly stops as he leans her backward.

Mary – Tomorrow, it's my turn to drive!

Blackout.

The end.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez was first a drummer for several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then began a career writing television scripts before turning to theatre and writing plays. He has written close to a hundred scripts for television and as many plays, some of which have already become classics (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker*). He is one of the most produced contemporary playwrights in France and in other francophone countries. Several of his plays are also available in Spanish and English, and are regularly produced in the United States and Latin America.

Amateur and professional theatre groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his website La Comédiathèque (<https://comediatheque.net/>). However, public productions are subject to SACD filing.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

A Cuckoo's nest
A simple business dinner
All's well that starts badly
An innocent little murder
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Cheaters
Check to the Kings
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but stable
Four stars
Fragile, handle with care
Friday the 13th
Heads or Tails
Him and Her
In lieu of flowers
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Last chance encounter
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
Miracle at Saint Mary-Juana Abbey
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
One marriage out of two
Preliminaries
Quarantine
Running on Empty
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Joker
The Perfect Son-in-law
The Smell of Money
The Window across the courtyard
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!

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