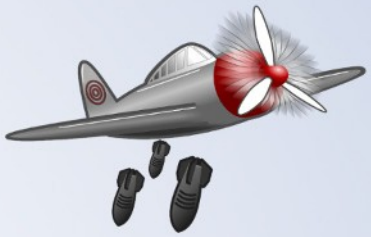
La Comédiathèque



Save Our Savings

Jean-Pierre Martinez





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Save Our Savings

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Translation by the author

Six mysterious strangers are stranded on an island by a ferry strike.
Each has a compelling reason to reach the mainland as quickly as possible.
They board a fishing boat captained by a most unlikely smuggler.
But the price of their crossing will prove far higher than they imagined...
A darkly comic fable about the failings of our society.

Characters

Max

Diane

Yvonne

Charles

Sergio

Amanda

Marie

7 performers
Maximilian (or Maximiliana) and Sergio (or Sergia)
may be played by men or women, with the necessary adjustments to the dialogue.
Possible casts: 3 men/4 women, 2 men/5 women, 1 man/6 women.

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Scene 1

The deck of a fishing boat. A helm at the back, and a lifebuoy bearing the boat's name, Enterprise. Two deckchairs at the front. Max, wearing a captain's cap, unfolds a chart and studies it. He is holding it upside down. He turns it the right way up and looks around, trying to get his bearings. Diane arrives, elegantly dressed for business, pulling an expensive wheeled suitcase. After a moment's hesitation, she approaches Max.

Diane – Did you check the marine forecast this morning?

Max hastily folds the map.

Max – Yes. They're forecasting fog.

Diane – What a stupid password...

Max – Passwords usually are.

Diane – The question is... why a password?

Max – These days, people would sell their own families to get off this island. Are you sure no one followed you?

Diane – I don't think so...

Max – Good. Keep your voice down, all the same. Sound carries a long way across a harbour. And someone may be watching us...

Diane – Don't you think you're overdoing it a bit?

Max – I'm responsible for the safety of everyone aboard. You know the saying: after God, the captain is master of his ship. And I'm not much of a believer...

Diane looks around.

Diane – So you're the... captain of this boat?

Max – That's right. But please, call me Maximilian.

Diane – Maximilian? That name rings a bell...

Max – Or Max, to my friends.

Diane *(coolly)* – Diane Swindlemore.

Max – Diane. Very good.

Diane – You were talking about a yacht... I wasn't expecting... this.

Max – Unfortunately, I had to leave my yacht in dry dock for maintenance. A friend lent me this one. But I assure you...

Diane – It looks remarkably like a fishing boat.

Max – My friend is a fisherman, indeed. Well... big game fishing, of course. Tuna... or swordfish.

Diane – Tuna? Judging by the smell, it seems more like cod fishing...

Max – It must be from the harbour... Once we're out at sea, all you'll smell is the refreshing sea breeze.

Diane – And you're sure this old tub is seaworthy?

Max – We're only about thirty kilometres from the mainland... We can't really talk about high seas.

Diane – Fine. Needs must. How long is the crossing?

Max – I'd say about an hour, no more.

Diane – Okay...

Max – Two at most, if the wind is against us.

Diane – Headwinds? Don't tell me it's a sailboat... You're charging me enough for diesel as it is.

Max – Don't worry, it's definitely a motorboat.

Diane – Can I see my cabin?

Max – Your cabin?

Diane – Oh, okay.

Max – There are two berths down below. But I must warn you, it's quite basic.

Diane – Please tell me there are toilets, at least...

Max – Oh yes, definitely.

Diane – Good...

Max – I told you, it's just a one or two-hour crossing. We're not going to spend the night. *(Lowering his voice)* Well, I hope not...

Diane – Sorry?

Max – No, I was just saying... If you want to relax a bit on the deck while waiting.

Diane – I'm not sure I can relax that easily. I suppose you don't serve cocktails either.

Max – Sorry, the bartender took the day off. But please, have a seat in this deck chair.

Diane – Thank you, I'll stand. When do we set sail?

Max – It's a motorboat.

Diane – Yes, I know. "Set sail" is just an expression.

Max – Well... we'll set off as soon as everyone is here.

Diane – Everyone? What do you mean, everyone?

Max – The others.

Diane – Ah, because there are other passengers?

Max – With the unexpected strike of the ferry company, many people are stranded on this island. They're all desperately looking for a way to get back to the mainland. At any cost...

Diane – So you've improvised as a smuggler...

Max – I'm only trying to do people a favour.

Diane – For a very generous fee...

Max – You didn't have to accept... By the way, if you don't mind, I'd prefer to be paid in advance. And in cash...

She rummages in her bag and hands him a few banknotes.

Diane – Here's your money... *(Ironically)* Captain...

Max – Thank you.

Diane – This feels like a cheap remake of a Hollywood film noir.

Max – You think so?

Diane – To Have and Have Not, for instance. Except you're nothing like Humphrey Bogart.

Max – And you're no Lauren Bacall... I'll start the engine. If you need me, just whistle. You do know how to whistle, Diane?

He leaves without waiting for a response. Diane's phone rings and she answers it.

Diane – Yes, Director, the contract has just been signed. I was about to call. But I'm having trouble getting back to the mainland. The ferry crews are on strike. Even tax havens aren't immune to industrial action. Don't worry, I'll be in Paris for tomorrow morning's board meeting. With the signed contract, of course. I know your re-election to the board depends on it, and that the shareholders expect results. I won't let you down, Director...

Amanda arrives, looking like a starlet or call girl, dressed in a sexy but rather vulgar manner. She carries a suitcase, too, but it's more ordinary and worn out, like a backpack covered in stickers evoking countless travel destinations. Diane, completely engrossed in her phone conversation, doesn't notice her arrival.

Diane – Yes, I'm also bringing back all the funds that were in the secret account you asked me to close. In cash, yes, as agreed... In the hidden compartment of my suitcase, that's right... So in a way, it's true that if we can avoid customs... Listen, I found a spot on some sort of trawler. It's quite picturesque... That's it, I'll tell you about it. Have a good day, Director.

She puts away her phone.

Amanda – Hello. Have you checked the weather this morning?

Diane finally notices her presence.

Diane *(still distracted)* – No, why?

Amanda – Sorry, I thought...

Diane – Oh yes, well... Excuse me... I think they're forecasting a storm.

Amanda – I thought it was fog, actually...

Diane – Fog, thunderstorms... Who cares?

Amanda – Are you the madam?

Diane – The madam?

Amanda – I've booked a place on this trawler. So where's the pimp?

Diane – The pimp?

Amanda – The captain!

Diane – Oh, the captain... I think he's getting the engine ready.

Amanda – I'll wait here, then. *(Offering her hand)* I'm Amanda. And you?

Diane *(without shaking the offered hand)* – Diane Swindlemore.

Amanda – It's a stroke of luck we managed to find this taxi, otherwise, we'd be stuck here like seals on an ice floe. A surprise strike, just like that, without notice. It shouldn't be allowed.

Diane – Well, if they had given notice, it wouldn't be a surprise strike anymore...

Amanda – You're a clever one... So you're desperate to get away too?

Diane – Sorry?

Amanda – I mean, you're also eager to leave.

Diane – Yes. You could say that...

Amanda – Do you have an urgent appointment? Or do you have something to hide... I would also much rather avoid customs...

Diane – You certainly don't have to make small talk with me, you know.

Amanda – We're going to spend three or four hours together, we might as well chat a bit. It'll pass the time, won't it?

Diane – Three or four hours? The captain told me it's just a little over an hour!

Amanda – He told me half a day, I think.

Diane – In that case, it's about time to leave. If we want to arrive before nightfall. I don't know what he's waiting for.

Amanda – Probably, the other passengers, I guess.

Diane – Do you know how many of us there are exactly?

Amanda – Around ten, I suppose.

Diane – But come on, that's not possible! We'll never fit ten people on this boat!

Amanda – You've obviously never squeezed onto a commuter train at rush hour.

Diane – You may find this surprising, but I've never taken a commuter train.

Amanda – Do you work somewhere out of town?

Diane – No, but I only travel by car with a chauffeur.

Amanda – I see... And what do you do for a living?

Diane – I work in finance. I won't ask what you do...

Amanda – You can! I have nothing to hide, you know...

Diane – You mean... in your line of work, you have nothing to hide?

Max returns and notices Amanda.

Max – Ah! You must be Amanda.

Amanda – Yes... How did you recognise me?

Max – I don't know... Male intuition, perhaps. Your name seems to suit you.

Amanda – Thanks... And what's your nickname?

Max – Max.

Amanda – Ah, yes... That suits you well too.

Max – Oh yeah? And why is that?

Amanda – You certainly seem to do everything to the max, Captain.

Diane – Well, now that we've introduced ourselves, could we please weigh anchor?

Max – I know that's an expression, but you don't drop anchor in a harbour. You moor the boat to...

Amanda – The first stiff post you can find on the quay.

Max – Exactly. So, in a harbour, you don't weigh anchor. You cast off the mooring lines.

Diane – Let's get one thing straight, Captain. I didn't come here for a sailing lesson. If I'd had a choice, I'd have flown. So when are we taking off?

Max – As soon as the last passengers arrive, I promise you...

Diane – And when will they arrive? I don't have all day for this! I'm expected in Paris tomorrow morning.

Max – Ah, right on time, here they are.

Yvonne arrives, a very elegant lady, accompanied by Charles, a sort of gigolo or handsome older man, who carries both their suitcases.

Yvonne – Is this the Enterprise?

Max – Not quite the password, but perhaps we can dispense with that detail...

Yvonne – I booked earlier. In the name of Crook.

Max – Crook, of course. A code name, I presume. Rather amusing, I must say.

Yvonne – No, it's not a code name, why?

Max – Mr and Mrs Crook. Very well.

Amanda – They don't exactly look like crooks, do they?

Yvonne – That's his name, not mine.

Charles – We're not married. Not yet...

Amanda *(to Yvonne)* – I can see why you're in no hurry to become Mrs Crook.

Max – In any case, welcome aboard!

Yvonne – Do we need to check in our suitcases?

Diane – Be careful, he might charge you for excess baggage.

Max – This isn't a budget airline. We'll call it hand luggage.

Yvonne – Charles, you can put the suitcases over here.

Charles – Right away, my love.

He places the suitcases in a corner.

Max – He wasn't on the passenger list, I'm afraid. Or at least, no one has paid his fare.

Yvonne – Just count him as carry-on luggage too...

Max – I'm not sure if...

Charles – Come on, darling, I'm not a suitcase.

Yvonne – True. Although there's such a thing as carrying excess baggage... I'm joking, Captain. I'll pay for us both. As usual.

Diane – Since we're all here, we can go. We can do the introductions later.

Max – I'm still missing one passenger. But never mind. I think he won't come anymore. He was actually my first client. It was even for him that I chartered this boat in the first place.

Diane – That's right... He should have been on time. And if we could get things started quickly...

Max – *(His mobile rings.)* Hello... Yes... We were just about to leave, actually... In five minutes, really? Alright... And do you remember the password? That's it... and I think they're announcing rain... Okay, then we'll wait for you, but hurry up...

He puts away his phone.

Diane – What now?

Max – This will be the last one, I promise. He's coming right now. We can't leave without him: he paid in advance...

Marie, a young woman, rather reserved, wearing a crucifix around her neck and visibly pregnant, arrives out of breath.

Marie – Are you going to the mainland?

Max – Yes... But technically, we're full...

Marie – As you can see, I'm pregnant.

Diane – All the more reason not to board with us! Can you imagine if she gives birth during the crossing?

Marie – I was planning to take the ferry today. I'm expected at the clinic over there, on the other side. There's no proper maternity ward here, you understand?

Yvonne – Tax havens are rarely known for the quality of their public services.

Max – The thing is... I have safety regulations to follow.

Marie – In the name of the Lord! Please...

Charles – Perhaps we can bend the rules a little. Given her condition...

Marie – I have money. I'll pay you.

Max – We can't leave this woman to give birth on the quayside.

Marie – Thank you! God will reward you. What's your name, Captain?

Max – Maximilian.

Marie – If you get us safely to the other side, I promise to call my child Maximilian if it's a boy, or Maximiliana if it's a girl.

Max – I'm truly flattered. But don't forget to settle the fare for the crossing as well.

Marie – Of course. How much is it?

Max – Five hundred euros per person.

Marie – Per person?

Amanda – You're not going to charge her for the bun in the oven, are you?

Max – No, of course not. The baby travels free. It's five hundred euros for you.

Marie – Ah, well... That's quite a lot, isn't it?

Max – It's for the fuel.

Charles – I didn't think petrol was that expensive in tax havens.

Sergio, a handsome and mysterious figure like a mafia member, arrives.

Sergio – Good morning, Captain. Sergio. I just phoned you.

Max – Sergio, of course. Is that your only bag?

Sergio – Yes, I'm used to travelling light. But I didn't know there would be other passengers... *(Greetings to the group)* Ladies and gentlemen...

Max – While we're at it, I thought it would be a shame not to let them enjoy the trip too. With this strike...

Charles – Hello, sir. But I believe we've already met, haven't we?

Yvonne – Be quiet, you fool.

Charles retreats and steps back.

Charles – I must have mistaken you for someone else...

Sergio – It happens to me all the time. People confuse me with someone else. It's the story of my life...

Max – Please, take a seat... Sorry, I didn't plan enough deck chairs for everyone.

Sergio *(pointing to Marie)* – I suggest we reserve one for this lady. Due to her condition...

Diane – That's right... And the rest of us can take turns sitting down.

Sergio – I would gladly give up my seat if you wish, dear lady.

Diane – Thank you... There's at least one gentleman on this boat.

Max – There are also two bunks downstairs... but I must warn you, it smells a bit fishy.

Sergio – Now that everyone is here, we can get going.

Max – Very well. Please excuse me. I'll return to my post.

Marie *(crossing herself)* – All right... By the grace of God!

Max takes his place behind the helm and seems a bit uncertain of what to do next.

Max – All ahead full!

Sergio – But discreetly, if possible. I remind you that normally, before leaving this very welcoming island to return to the mainland, we're supposed to go through customs...

Charles – Very welcoming for the wealthy, in any case...

Yvonne – Perhaps it's time they invented a female equivalent of "patrimony". When the fortune is mine, why shouldn't it be "matrimony"?

Diane – The last thing we need is to be stopped by the coastguard as we reach France. Not that I have anything to hide...

Yvonne – Of course... No one here has anything to hide, right?

Max – Don't worry, we'll slip away unnoticed. *(He pulls a lever, accidentally sounding the ship's siren.)* Sorry. That wasn't what I meant to do...

Charles – Well, for a discreet departure, it's quite a success...

Marie – Are you the only one piloting this ship, Captain?

Max – It's only a small boat. One person at the helm is quite enough.

Marie – Usually, there's a co-pilot.

Amanda – At least in planes, that's how it is. If the pilot has an attack, the co-pilot takes over the controls.

Max – But we're not in a plane. What could happen to us?

Amanda – That's probably what people said aboard the Titanic.

Max – And look! We can see the coast from here.

The others look out towards the sea.

Charles – I can't see anything...

Yvonne – Neither do I...

Sergio – Well, they did forecast fog.

Diane – As long as it's not a storm...

Sergio *(whispering)* – Or a tsunami...

Diane – Do you have any specific information about that?

Sergio – No, no, not at all...

Max pulls another lever, and this time an engine rumbling sound is heard.

Max – Alright! This time, we're off!

Blackout.

Scene 2

Max is still at the helm. Sergio hasn't let go of his briefcase. Diane and Amanda are dozing off on the deck chairs. Charles, Yvonne and Marie are sitting on their suitcases, waiting patiently.

Yvonne *(to Charles)* – You shouldn't be sitting on that suitcase, it'll damage it...

Charles – But Yvonne...

Yvonne – Could you stop arguing with everything I say? It's annoying!

Charles – I'm sorry... *(He takes a deep breath and stands up.)* Anyway, the weather is beautiful.

Yvonne – Yes... We'll get some sun. *(To Marie)* It'll do you good, my dear, as you look a bit pale... How are you feeling?

Marie – How long have we been sailing?

Charles – A little over two hours, right?

Yvonne – And we still can't see the coast...

Charles – But look over there!

Yvonne – Ah yes, perhaps...

Marie – I'm starting to feel seasick.

Yvonne – You do know it’s not advisable to travel by sea when you’re pregnant?

Charles – Bless her heart... We can't always do what we want. *(Trying to be kind)* Do you know who the father is?

Marie gives him a disapproving look.

Yvonne – Charles, those are not the kind of questions to ask a respectable woman...

Charles – I'm sorry, I misspoke. I meant... The father will be delighted! Is it a boy or a girl?

Yvonne – Charles, the father is always a boy! Even with same-sex marriage, that won't change. You still need the little seed...

Charles – I was talking about the child, my dear. A boy or a girl... That's usually what we ask in these cases, right?

Yvonne – A boy or a girl... Of course... I was joking, obviously. Poor Charles... So, is it a boy or a girl then?

Marie – I don't know... I prefer to be surprised.

Yvonne – Quite right. I didn't want to know either. In my day, of course, we didn't have that choice. We took whatever came along.

Marie – Children are a gift from God.

Yvonne – Yes... He gave me seven. All girls. *(Lower, to herself)* If I could have drowned one or two... But in the end, it was my husband who died. Drowned, as it happens. Otherwise, I don't know how many more girls the Good Lord would have given me... Believe me, my dear, in those days, widowhood was the best form of contraception...

Charles – Oh yes... It was a different time... There was no internet yet. The television was black and white, but the world was already in colour.

Yvonne – What a world... Soon we'll be able to choose a child's sex, hair colour and IQ. *(To Marie)* Do you think that's right? *(Marie does not answer.)* Well?

Marie – It makes me want to vomit.

Yvonne – Believe me, if in our time we could have chosen our children, today the whole world would be populated with tall blonds with Einstein's IQ.

Charles – As the Nazis wished.

Yvonne – Yes... And you probably wouldn't be here to talk about it, my poor Charles.

Charles – Fortunately, we were the ones who won the war.

Yvonne – You won the war, Charles? You can't even kill a mosquito in the bedroom, and you expect me to believe you could have defeated the Nazis?

Charles – And you, Mr. Sergio, what do you do for a living?

Sergio – Sergio.

Charles – Sergio?

Sergio – Sergio. That's my name. I come from Corsica.

Charles – Ah, delighted. I'm Charles. And what do you do, Sergio?

Yvonne – Don't be so nosy, Charles. The gentleman has just answered you: he's from Corsica... They say Corsicans are economical with words. And even more economical with work...

Diane and Amanda wake up from their doze.

Diane – Sorry, I dozed off a bit.

Amanda – I think you even snored at the beginning...

Diane – That didn't stop you from sleeping, apparently. Are we there yet?

Amanda – They would have woken us up, I suppose.

Diane – Captain! Are we still far away?

Max – Don't worry, we're getting closer.

Amanda – But we still can't see the coast...

Diane *(looking at her watch)* – This is ridiculous! We've been at sea for two hours and there's still no sign of land!

Max – It's a small boat, you know, and we're heavily loaded...

Diane – Whose fault is that? You overbooked to line your pockets!

Max – I just wanted to be helpful...

Yvonne – Sure... Taking advantage of the world's misery...

Max – The world's misery... Let's not exaggerate, shall we?

Yvonne – We're always someone else's poor, you know. Isn't that right, Charles?

Sergio – Are you sure this is the right way, at least?

Max – What do you mean?

Sergio – The mainland! Are you sure it's this way?

Max – Sure? Absolutely! What do you think? I have my compass!

Sergio – Considering the time we've been sailing, shouldn't we see the coast by now?

Max – Well... I can't quite tell... *(Lower, to himself)* It's my first time doing this...

Diane – What?

Max – No, I mean... It's my first time making this crossing with this boat! Usually, I use my yacht. The engine is much more powerful...

Yvonne – It looks like the weather is turning, doesn't it?

Charles – Yes, there's a storm brewing.

Max – It's just a bit of fog, don't worry.

Amanda – Did you check the marine forecast this morning?

Max – Yes, and they're forecasting fog.

Amanda – I'm not asking for the password! Did you actually check the forecast?

Max – Ah, uh... No... Why would I?

Marie – I feel seasick...

Amanda – You should have checked the weather, at least!

Max – Make up your mind! Everyone was in a hurry to leave, and now I should have checked the weather!

Sergio – Let me see that compass.

Max – I can see you have every confidence in me... I know how to read a compass.

Sergio takes the compass from Max's hand.

Sergio – Where is the coast?

Max – To the east. Well... north-east...

Sergio – East or north-east?

Max – Let's say north-east. But you know, the coast is vast. We won't miss it.

Sergio – Unless we've completely gone the other way...

Sergio moves around with the compass, orienting it in different directions.

Sergio – On a compass, the needle is supposed to point in the same direction, right? Even when you turn it around.

Max – Obviously.

Sergio – Then why does the needle turn whenever I turn the compass?

Diane – This is a joke! It's for a hidden camera, right?

Max – Let me see... *(He takes back the compass and turns it in all directions.)* Oh shit, you're right. It seems like the needle is stuck.

Sergio – So we don't know where we're going...

Max – Just before we left, it slipped from my hands and fell on the floor. It must be broken...

Diane – Tell me this isn't true!

Charles – We could have navigated using the sun, but with this fog, we can't see it anymore...

Marie – I think I'm going to throw up.

Amanda – Better do it over the stern. With this wind, otherwise it'll blow straight back into our faces.

Sergio – It's true, the wind is getting stronger.

Marie hurriedly exits.

Diane – You're crazy!

Max – I'm sorry... I really thought we were going in the right direction. But it's true that... I was also wondering why we couldn't see the coast yet.

Sergio – Do you have your licence?

Max – Yes, of course! Like everyone else...

Sergio – I mean your boating licence.

Max – Well, actually... I'm more used to sailing on my yacht.

Sergio – And...?

Max – On my yacht, I'm not the one usually piloting it. I have a crew for that...

Sergio – So you don't have a boating licence, and you know nothing about navigating at sea.

Max – I didn't think it was so complicated. On clear days, you can almost see the French coast from this tax haven...

Yvonne – Oh my God... We're lost... We're all going to die...

Max – Let's not be dramatic.

Marie returns.

Marie – Oh, I feel better now...

Charles – You think so?

Marie – What's going on? You all look worried!

Diane – The captain doesn't have his boating licence, and we're lost at sea, that's what's going on.

Charles – Oh, this time, I think I really see something on the horizon.

Marie – We're saved!

Yvonne – Are you sure?

Amanda – Oh yes... But it's strange, it looks like the coast is getting closer to us at a phenomenal speed...

They all look towards the back of the room, representing the horizon line.

Sergio – That's not the coast... It's an enormous wave!

Max – No... I've never seen anything like it...

Diane – The wave is coming straight at us.

Marie – If any of you know a prayer, now would be the time...

Blackout.

Scene 3

They are all there, huddled together, petrified.

Charles – I thought we were all going to perish.

Max – Yes, we almost got swallowed up.

Yvonne – But the wave passed under the boat without capsizing it.

Marie – It's a miracle! Thank God!

Diane – I was so scared! *(Under her breath)* I think I even had an orgasm...

Marie – For once, my seasickness is gone.

Diane – The last time I felt like that was with my boss. On a roller coaster at a fairground.

Yvonne – Fortunately, there were no more waves behind that one.

Sergio – And now the sea is calm again.

Charles – Then perhaps we still have a chance of getting out of this...

They start to relax a bit and separate from each other.

Marie – We mustn't give up hope.

Amanda – If we went in the wrong direction, we can simply turn back, right?

Sergio – Turning round at sea isn't quite like making a U-turn on a motorway.

Marie – The sky is clearing up. There's even a rainbow... It's a sign from God!

Sergio – Well, now that we can see the sun, we can try to orient ourselves. Since the sun sets in the west, we just need to go the opposite way.

Diane – Then what are you waiting for, you idiot?

Max – Unfortunately, it's not that simple...

Diane – And why is that? Don't tell me the rudder is defective too!

Max – No, but we're almost out of fuel...

Diane – What? But you collected money from all of us before we set sail to fill up the tank!

Max – We've already covered quite a distance... and I only filled the tank halfway.

Sergio – Halfway?

Max – I thought it would be enough for a two-hour crossing...

Diane – Is this a joke?

Max – I'm afraid not, unfortunately.

Yvonne – Here we are on a leaking fishing boat, with a captain who can't sail, and we're about to run out of fuel.

Sergio – Did I hear correctly... a leaky boat?

Yvonne – I went down to the hold earlier, looking for a restroom that I never found, by the way. And it seemed like there was a big puddle at the back.

Amanda – Captain...?

Max – It's just a small leak. Nothing serious.

Charles – What are you going to do, call a plumber?

Diane – What we really need is to call for help.

Max – Let's not panic too quickly.

Amanda – Because you think our situation doesn't deserve a little panic?

Diane tries to make a call on her mobile. Sergio exits.

Diane – There's no signal...

Amanda – Of course, there's no signal! We're lost in the middle of the sea!

Max – Lost... Let's not exaggerate.

Diane – I'm going to kill him.

Amanda – I suppose you don't have an onboard radio either?

Max – I haven't seen anything like that, unfortunately. There's just an old transistor.

Charles – Are you sure this wreck is really yours?

Max – Let's say I borrowed it from a friend... without quite finding the time to ask him.

Diane – And on top of everything, it's a stolen boat!

Sergio returns.

Sergio – Indeed, there's a leak at the back. If we don't start bailing out water immediately, the boat will sink within an hour or two.

Marie – This can't be true... Tell me it's a nightmare, and I'll wake up...

Sergio – We'll take turns bailing. Meanwhile, we'd better throw some unnecessary weight overboard.

They all look at each other with tension.

Max – Maybe we could start with the suitcases...

Yvonne – The suitcases?

Amanda – Are you kidding?

Sergio – That's out of the question.

Yvonne – Definitely not mine, anyway...

Diane *(to Max)* – How about we throw you overboard first, Captain...

Everyone turns threateningly towards Max.

Blackout.

Scene 4

They are all there except Max and Sergio, looking utterly dejected.

Yvonne – And to think I could be stretched out in the jacuzzi of my five-star hotel on that paradise island we just left, sipping an exotic cocktail, instead of dying of thirst aboard this wreck.

Charles – It's true... In the end, we weren't in a hurry to leave. There was nothing so urgent to do.

Yvonne – Speak for yourself! You never have anything to do. I had an appointment with my surgeon this morning...

Charles – Well, it's just a minor liposuction. Not open-heart surgery...

Yvonne – A minor liposuction? Have you ever had liposuction done, then?

Charles – No, not that kind of liposuction, at least...

Yvonne – We'll talk about it when you know what it is, then!

Charles – I'm sorry...

Yvonne – My poor thing... Sometimes I wonder why we're together...

Charles *(under his breath)* – Yes, me too...

Yvonne – And now you're talking back?

Diane – Will you two shut up!

Yvonne – Hey, who does she think she is?

Diane – If I were you, Charles, I would have thrown her overboard already.

Amanda – That would be one less burden.

Diane – But of course, you're too weak for that, my poor thing.

Charles – I would appreciate it if everyone stopped calling me "my poor thing." It's starting to get annoying.

Diane – Sorry... But I suppose if you had money, you wouldn't have to put up with that shrew.

Amanda – Charles, you and I are in the same line of work: the oldest profession in the world. Only I'm freelance, and you've got a permanent contract...

Yvonne – He's still on probation, actually...

Charles *(to Amanda)* – And stop calling me "my poor thing". Do I call you "fatty"?

Amanda – Then that little runt is the one who's going overboard!

Amanda moves threateningly towards Charles. Yvonne intervenes. Charles cowardly takes refuge behind her.

Yvonne – Back off! If anyone's going to throw this little twerp overboard, it's me.

Max returns with Sergio, ending the confrontation.

Sergio – The engine just stopped. We ran out of fuel.

Marie – Jesus, Mary and Joseph... We're all going to die...

Max – I'm truly sorry... I thought half a tank would be plenty.

Diane – And what were you planning to do with the rest of the money? We each paid you five hundred euros! Wasn't that enough for a full tank?

Max – It's a long story...

Sergio – And maybe it's not the right time to tell it.

Diane – He's right. We should concentrate on finding a way out of this.

Amanda – A solution? Seriously?

Diane – Let's pretend we're playing a game! An escape game!

Amanda – What?

Marie – One of those corporate team-building games. Everyone is locked in a room and has to work together to find a way out.

Charles – And what do you think we've been doing? I've been focusing for an hour. I'm at my limit here.

Amanda – If it was just about focusing, we wouldn't still be here on this wreck, waiting to sink with it...

Yvonne *(to Diane)* – But if you have an idea to get us out of here, Miss Know-It-All, feel free to share it...

Diane – I don't know... Our mobiles don't work. What about putting a message in a bottle?

Charles – Well, congratulations...

Sergio – And what would you say in that message to help the rescuers locate us?

Diane – It was just an idea...

Amanda – A stupid idea, that's what it was...

Diane – Maybe. But when you're brainstorming, you mustn't censor yourself. Sometimes you need twenty bad ideas before you find a good one.

Amanda – In that case, I think you've already exceeded your quota a long time ago. Now would be the perfect time for you to come up with a brilliant idea.

Sergio – Get real, Diane. We're not in a corporate seminar here. We're on a boat about to sink!

Amanda – If we lose this life, we won't have another one. It'll be game over, and that's it.

Marie – What if we try a collective prayer? Maybe God will come to our aid...

General consternation.

Yvonne – Yes, and why not a religious procession while we're at it?

Charles – Or a human sacrifice...

Max – Fine. That's three stupid ideas towards our allowance of twenty...

Sergio – Unless God can turn water into diesel...

Max – Yes... If he could turn the water in the hold into diesel, we'd have more than enough. Speaking of the hold, somebody should get back to bailing...

No reaction.

Charles – We should at least put up a distress signal. In case a patrol aircraft flies overhead.

Marie – Yes, let's do that...

Awkward silence.

Yvonne – On the other hand, not all of us are in a very regular situation...

Diane – Come on, we're not illegal immigrants either.

Yvonne – Well, if the police asked us to open our suitcases...

Amanda – I've nothing to hide.

Yvonne – Oh, really? Then open your suitcase and show us what's inside...

Amanda – I don't need orders from you.

Max – When you leave a tax haven on a fishing boat, you're not necessarily bringing fish in your luggage, that's for sure.

Amanda – So what should we do? Would you prefer we all drown?

Moment of hesitation.

Sergio – Okay. I'll take care of the distress flag.

He exits.

Marie – I'm starting to get very thirsty.

Charles – Dying of thirst while surrounded by water. There's something absurd about that.

Diane – Is that all you find absurd in this situation?

Yvonne – We didn't ask for your opinion.

Max – Don’t worry, I have a couple of bottles of drinking water in the hold.

Charles – You really did think of everything, Captain...

Diane – How many?

Max – Two.

Yvonne – Large ones?

Max – 33 centilitres each.

Charles – That’s reassuring...

Diane – At 500 euros a ticket, you could have at least provided some refreshments...

Amanda – Two 33-centilitre bottles make 66 centilitres.

Yvonne – Bravo, at least you can count...

Amanda – There are seven of us. That's not even 10 centilitres each.

Marie – We'll have to ration it. I think pregnant women should have priority.

Diane – Oh really? And why is that?

Charles – Why would you spend a holiday in this tiny tax haven when you’re so close to giving birth? What were you really doing there?

Marie – I didn't ask you any questions, did I? And what about you? Were you on your honeymoon? On an island the size of three football fields, but with five banks per square metre...

Silence.

Max – By the way, did you know that the highest point of the micro-state we just left is only three metres above sea level?

Amanda – No, and we don't care.

Yvonne – We didn’t come to a tax haven to go skiing. We came to put our money somewhere safe.

Diane – In Switzerland you can do both.

Sergio returns.

Sergio – I hoisted the distress flag. But if we don't want to sink before any help arrives, someone really needs to go back to bailing out water.

Max – We agreed to exempt pregnant women, so it’s your turn, Yvonne.

Yvonne – Charles will do it for me.

Charles – And why is that?

Yvonne – Because I'm the one supporting you, idiot! That's why!

Charles – I'll go... Out of gallantry... But I don't like being called an idiot either.

Yvonne – My poor thing...

Charles leaves, containing his response.

Max – If we manage to survive, I promise to refund you half the price of the crossing.

Diane – And he's still having a laugh at our expense! If we survive this, you'll be hearing from my lawyer.

Max – Are you sure?

Diane – What are you insinuating?

Max – We all have a good reason to be here on this boat. And to want to reach the mainland without going through customs. All of us, including you...

Diane – How can you say that?

Max – Otherwise, you would never have agreed to pay such a sum for the crossing. And you wouldn't be so attached to your suitcase...

Sergio – Let me remind you that the ferry company is on strike.

Max – The strike... That's just an excuse... It looks more like the rats are leaving the ship... taking the silverware with them.

Sergio – If only we could leave this damn ship...

Max – Ship, that's a figure of speech. I mean this island. This haven of peace for stateless billionaires. Why were you all in such a rush to leave?

Diane – That's none of your business... We just wanted to get back to the mainland as quickly as possible. The ferries were on strike, so we boarded the first departing boat...

Marie – When you're on the Titanic, you have to choose your lifeboat carefully... Unfortunately, it seems like we made the wrong choice...

Max – We're all in the same boat, indeed. But not for the same reasons. And I'd be curious to know which of these suitcases contains the most money... Not mine, that's for sure...

Diane – Even if you have nothing compromising in your luggage, Captain, I remind you that acting as a smuggler is a crime.

Marie – Especially when you don't even have a boating licence.

Diane – If the coastguard picks us up, we could all find ourselves in serious trouble...

Yvonne – Well, I hope we won't be rescued by pirates.

Sergio – At least, with them, we could probably make a deal.

Yvonne – And we wouldn't end up in jail.

Marie – If it's to end up at the bottom of the sea, eaten by sharks...

Embarrassed silence.

Yvonne – So what do we do? Besides bailing out water...

Sergio – What do you want us to do? We're out of fuel. We can only drift and hope that the currents or winds bring us back to the coast.

Marie – Is that the best you can come up with?

Sergio – Hey, I'm not the captain of this boat, okay? You should ask the idiot who led us out here, in the middle of the sea, on the brink of shipwreck.

All eyes turn to Max, who deems it wiser to keep a low profile.

Yvonne – I'm starting to feel hungry.

Max – Sorry, I didn't bring packed lunches. The crossing was supposed to take a couple of hours. There's half a packet of biscuits in the hold.

Yvonne – I think those of us with a larger build should get priority. We need more food than smaller people.

Marie – Unless they need to lose weight. And by the way, I'm bigger than you, just so you know!

Yvonne – After the biscuits, we might end up eating each other. Like the castaways on the Raft of the Medusa.

Marie – We could draw straws to decide who gets eaten first. Just like in that children's song.

Max – What song?

Marie begins singing an old nursery rhyme.

Marie – There once was a little ship, a little ship, that had...

Yvonne glances at Marie's swollen belly.

Yvonne – In the song, they end up eating the youngest person on board...

Marie – Then let's hope I don't give birth on this boat.

An oppressive silence follows.

Sergio – There's still something I don't understand, Max.

Max – Oh, really?

Sergio – Now, it's my turn to ask you a question.

Max – Go ahead, I'm listening.

Sergio – There are more effective ways to make money than taking passengers across the sea on a fishing boat without a licence.

Diane – Especially when you're already very wealthy, as you claim to be.

Sergio – What made you improvise as a smuggler when you can't even pilot a small boat?

Max – I told you, it's a long story.

Sergio – Given the situation we're in, we have nothing else to do but listen.

Max – As you know, the ferry company that usually connects this island to the mainland is on strike...

Yvonne – Yes, we noticed that, otherwise... why would we end up in this mess?

Max – The staff walked out when they heard the company had been sold to a financial group which was planning mass redundancies.

Diane – And what do you have to do with all this?

Max – I own that ferry company. Or I did...

Diane – So, it's you?

Yvonne – You know him?

Diane – Let's just say... I've heard about this acquisition.

Sergio – And why did you sell the company?

Max – I made some bad investments. Followed by a few shady deals trying to recover. I'm bankrupt. The bank took advantage of it to buy back my company at a ridiculous price.

Sergio – And you accepted?

Max – It was either that or go straight to prison.

Marie – That still doesn't explain how you ended up stealing a fishing boat.

Max – The striking crews had locked me in my office. I narrowly escaped being lynched. I got away and thought it best to leave the island immediately. So I... borrowed a fishing boat that had been hauled out of the water.

Sergio – Probably to fix that leak...

Max – I didn't even have enough fuel. And I needed some cash. Enough to survive upon reaching the mainland until luck turned in my favour.

Diane – I see...

Max – I left my assistant to sign the sales contract with the bank's negotiator. By the way, they almost lynched her too.

Diane – I know...

Max – How do you know that?

Diane – I'm the one who signed the contract on behalf of the bank.

Max – You're the negotiator from Continental Finances? The woman they call the Shark?

Diane – That's me.

Max – Well, that's a turn-up. In a way, I saved your life.

Diane – Don't push it too far... Let me remind you that we're lost at sea, out of fuel, and on the verge of sinking.

Max – I don't know what's stopping me from throwing you overboard. Your advice ruined my investments, and then your bank bought my business for next to nothing!

Diane – I simply follow instructions from head office. Times are hard for everyone. It's the crisis...

Marie – It's strange, the world has been in crisis since God created it... And yet the rich keep getting richer.

Max *(to Diane)* – I'd better go bail out water... before I give in to murderous impulses that I might regret.

A heavy silence follows.

Yvonne – Let me get this straight, the "shark"... He was talking about your bad advice that ruined him... I hope you've given me better advice. I've entrusted the management of all my investments to Continental Finances as well.

Diane – There's a reason we're the world leader in wealth management.

Sergio – Unless your bank built its fortune by ruining its most gullible clients.

Yvonne becomes increasingly worried. Charles returns.

Sergio – Have you finished bailing already? Is the hold dry?

Charles – Bailing water is no longer useful. The leak is too significant...

Marie – So, this is the end. All that's left for us is to pray...

Charles – Yvonne, do something!

Yvonne – What am I supposed to do, you idiot? The only problems I can solve are the ones you can settle with a cheque.

Sergio – Unfortunately, this time, I doubt we can get out of it that way.

A moment of collective despair.

Yvonne *(to Charles)* – And stop biting your nails, it annoys me.

Charles – Leave me alone! I'll bite my nails if I want to...

Amanda – You never dared speak to her like that before.

Charles – Before, I dreamed of marrying a billionaire. But what good is it to marry a billionaire who's about to die? Especially if I have to die along with her.

Marie squirms a little.

Marie – It's torture...

Sergio – You're not going into labour now, are you? That's all we need...

Marie – No, don't worry. No risk...

Max returns.

Max – I couldn't connect to the network, but I managed to listen to the marine weather forecast on an old transistor I found in the hold.

Diane – So what? Is there still fog expected?

Max – No, but they say a tsunami just devastated the tax haven we left.

Marie – A tsunami?

Max – Of sufficient magnitude to completely submerge the island, given its low altitude.

Marie – Oh my God! That's the huge wave that almost swallowed us earlier.

Max – No one could be warned in time. There are no survivors...

Amanda – This is awful!

Marie – Perhaps it’s divine punishment. Jesus drove the traders from the temple. And God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah...

Max – In any case, it's a miracle for us... If we hadn't hastily left that island, we would all have drowned.

Sergio – Yes, what a fortunate coincidence...

Yvonne *(to Max)* – So, in the end, by boarding this wreck, you saved our lives...

Max – That's a fact.

Diane – We should call you Noah.

Amanda – Yes... You’ve brought aboard one example of everything that’s worst about humanity, so the species can survive the flood.

Charles – We escaped the flood, but unfortunately, our ark is taking on water at the back.

Sergio – And if we don't reach a coast quickly, we will sink.

Marie – Let's hope that the rescue teams rushing to the site of this catastrophe will be able to see us and come to our aid.

Yvonne – With a bit of luck, the rescue teams won't think to search our luggage...

Charles – Every cloud has a silver lining.

Yvonne – Do you have any other stupid expressions like that?

Charles – Some people's misfortune is other people's good fortune, if you prefer.

Yvonne – I'd prefer if you shut up.

Amanda – Are you two going to start again?

Yvonne – And what brings you here, anyway? You don't strike me as the type to stash your savings in a tax haven. And as for your profession, very ancient, they say, five-star hotels shouldn't usually be your preferred hunting ground, right?

Amanda – Don't judge by appearances. Look at you: living proof that money and class don't always go together.

Yvonne – I can't shake the feeling that you don't belong here. Who are you really, and what are you hiding in that ridiculous suitcase?

Amanda – Don't even think about touching it.

Yvonne – We have nothing left to hide from each other. Why not show us what's inside that suitcase?

Sergio – Go ahead, open it. At this point, what does it matter now...

Amanda – No way.

Yvonne – Come on, Charles, open the suitcase.

Charles – I don't know if...

Yvonne – Open it, I'm telling you!

Charles – What if it's booby-trapped?

Yvonne – Why do you think I'm asking you to open it, you idiot?

Charles – Okay...

He hesitantly approaches Amanda.

Amanda – Forget it... I'll open it myself.

Amanda opens her suitcase and takes out a gun, pointing it at Charles.

Amanda – I wouldn't advise you to come any closer!

Sergio – Is it to defend your virtue that you're walking around with such firepower?

Amanda – I confess... I'm not who you think I am...

Charles – Then who are you? And what do you do?

Yvonne – Arms trafficking? Terrorism?

Amanda – I'm a police officer. Financial crime division. I came here undercover to investigate your various dealings and catch you red-handed.

Max – And what do you plan to do now? Arrest us all in the hold?

Amanda lowers her weapon.

Amanda – You're right. There's no point now. We're all going to die, so why go on playing cops and robbers?

Blackout.

Scene 5

Everyone is there except Diane. Their clothes are dishevelled. They have tanned, even sunburnt faces.

Yvonne – I'm getting really hungry.

Marie – We could go fishing... We're on a fishing boat, after all.

Sergio – I don't see a fishing net.

Charles – Does anyone know how to fish?

Max – Yes, big game fishing. On my yacht. And with staff. But here...

Yvonne – Do you think we'll resort to cannibalism?

Charles – In a case of extreme necessity, it wouldn't be a crime.

Sergio – It is if you have to kill someone before eating them...

Yvonne – Well, then we'll wait for the first among us to die a natural death.

Charles – If we're not rescued soon, it might happen in the near future.

Diane enters, very excited.

Diane – I caught a fish!

Max – How did you manage that?

Diane – With a landing net.

Max – Where did you find a net?

Diane – I improvised one with a broomstick handle and... my panties.

Sergio – And you managed to catch a fish like that?

Diane – Well, yes... It wasn't moving. It was lying on its back. It must have been sleeping.

Amanda – Do fish sleep?

Diane – Maybe a little nap, who knows.

Sergio – Or maybe it was dead.

Diane – It's true that when I pulled it out of the water... it had a strange smell.

Charles – Are you sure it was the fish?

Yvonne – Come on, Charles...

Charles – Sorry, it must be the sun. I'm on the verge of heatstroke.

Sergio – And what did you do with it?

Diane – Well, I ate it!

Stunned silence.

Marie – I think this time we hit rock bottom.

Charles – That phrase takes on a special meaning when said on a boat about to sink.

Yvonne – Now, he's getting philosophical... You're right, it must be the sun...

A pause.

Sergio *(to Yvonne and Charles)* – And what about you, what did you come to this island for?

Charles – We were scouting the place for our honeymoon. We first thought of Saint Barthélemy, but it’s become so overrated...

Yvonne – Never mind, my poor thing. At this point, I can tell him the truth.

Charles – I thought it was the truth...

Yvonne – I come to this tax haven twice a year to put my savings somewhere safe.

Sergio – Don't tell me your suitcases are empty...

Yvonne – I bring cash and leave with bearer bonds...

Sergio – And this year, did you have a good catch? What are you bringing in your nets? I mean, in your suitcase. It's huge...

Yvonne – Treasury bonds issued by the micro-state that governs this island.

Diane – No way... And who advised you to buy that?

Charles – Continental Finances. Why?

Diane – Let's just say that... now that this banana republic has been wiped out by that tsunami, your treasury bonds are worthless.

Yvonne – Are you sure?

Diane – Haven't you heard? By now, this island no longer exists. It's been wiped off the map.

Charles – What? So, Yvonne, you're broke...

Diane – The ferry company we’ve just bought isn’t worth much now either... But at least that solves the strike problem. Who knows? Perhaps the vessels are still afloat, even if all their crews have drowned.

Marie – It's true, it's a terrible tragedy... At least we're still alive... For now.

Max – Well, Yvonne, it's your turn now.

Yvonne – My turn?

Max – To bail out the water!

Yvonne – Charles, it's your turn.

Charles – No way, I'm fed up. I'm not your lackey.

Yvonne – You can't be serious about what you're saying?

Charles – I've been your punching bag for years, hoping for a marriage that would make me your heir. But you're broke, and we're all going to die, so what's the point now?

Max *(to Yvonne)* – Well, are you going to do it?

Yvonne – What's the point? He's right, we're all going to die. Sooner or later. No need to exert ourselves.

Marie – In that case... We just have to leave it to God...

Silence.

Amanda – And you, our very own Virgin Mary? What really brought you here?

Marie – Let's just say... I'm also in business.

Yvonne – What kind of business?

Amanda – There's no need to pretend anymore, you know... I remind you that I'm a cop. I'm aware of everything.

Marie – Oh, screw it, it's true... I can't stand this anymore...

She removes her fake belly.

Sergio – What is that?

Marie – Cocaine.

Yvonne – And to think she used that fake pregnancy to get out of bailing and to drink more than her share of our precious fresh water...

Charles – So, she's the one you came to arrest?

Amanda – Among others, yes... Because on this boat, between you and me, I have a wide choice, don't I?

They all look at her.

Marie – You're taking a risk, my dear...

Amanda – Oh, really?

Yvonne – You're alone, we're six.

Diane – We might feel like getting rid of you.

Sergio – In the situation we're in, it wouldn't be surprising if not all of us make it out alive...

Yvonne – I'm starving. Why don't we eat her?

They take a step towards Amanda. She pulls out her gun again.

Amanda – Don't forget that I'm armed...

Charles – Alright.

They all freeze for a moment before cautiously stepping back.

Marie – And you, Sergio? What do you have in your briefcase? A miniaturised atomic bomb?

Sergio – No, but it's just as explosive...

Charles – You've either said too much or not enough... What is it?

Sergio – Secret campaign funds. From completely selfless donors, *(Pointing at Yvonne)* like Madame...

Charles – I didn't know you were so generous, honey...

Yvonne – Generosity can have its rewards. If our dear President is re-elected, we might even get a few favours in return. Or would you rather see the opposition back in power?

Max *(to Sergio)* – Alright... So that's why you also didn't want to go through customs...

Charles – It's amazing how the rich can be so supportive of each other when it comes to preserving their privileges...

Sergio – I'm following orders. The President asked me to urgently retrieve the funds held by his campaign committee in this tax haven.

Marie – Urgently... So you were aware of the tsunami, right?

Sergio – As commander-in-chief, the President has access to information the rest of us don’t.

Marie – He was worried about his war chest. But he didn't warn anyone else about the tidal wave that swept away this island and all its inhabitants...

Sergio – There wasn't enough room for everyone on the boats anyway. Only a few privileged ones were informed.

Marie – His generous donors, for example. Those who finance his campaign.

Max – Yes... Like you, Yvonne.

Charles – So you knew too?

Yvonne – You should thank me, you idiot! After all, I saved your life...

Charles – You only made one reservation, for yourself! If I hadn't caught up with you in the hotel lobby as you were leaving in a hurry...

Amanda – If it's any consolation, I didn't know either. And yet, I'm a police officer. If I hadn't decided to tail this whole bunch, I would have been swept away by that tsunami...

Charles – That's probably what the President wanted. To bury the investigation with the investigator... *(To Diane)* Were you aware too?

Diane – No... But obviously, my boss was in the loop... I understand now why he was so eager to settle his account in this tax haven and why he sent me there to bring back his cash.

Max – Without warning you that you might be swept away by a tsunami.

Diane – And here I was, trusting him completely... I'm disappointed...

Sergio – Trust the head of one of the world's largest banks? You surprise me, my dear.

Charles – And they call you the Shark...

Diane – I thought even sharks had a family, that I was part of it, and that sharks didn't eat each other...

Sergio – Well, now you know the limits of solidarity among the real billionaires and those who serve them as valets, hoping for a few crumbs from the feast.

Max – As a great philosopher once said: "When seagulls follow a trawler, it's because they expect sardines to be thrown overboard."

Sergio – I don't think I know that philosopher. Who was it?

Max – Eric Cantona. A footballer, as it happens.

Marie *(to Sergio)* – You could have at least warned the striking sailors. Given the circumstances, they would have returned to work without hesitation...

Sergio – We could have, yes...

Marie – But...?

Sergio – The head of state of that little republic used to be an ally of our government. A personal friend of our President, in fact. A very generous friend. But then...

Max – I suppose this friend became too much of a burden...

Sergio – I can't tell you any more. It's a matter of national security.

Max – Anyway, the problem is now resolved...

Sergio – Thanks to God.

Max – And marine weather forecasts…

Blackout.

Scene 6

Everyone is here, except for Marie. They are looking more and more like shipwrecked people. Marie arrives, very excited, with a water bottle in each hand.

Marie – It's a miracle! Yesterday we had two bottles of water. Now there are four.

Amanda – The multiplication of water bottles... A divine intervention, perhaps?

Max – No, but it's still a little miracle. It rained last night, and I was able to fill some empty bottles.

Charles – I didn't realise it rained this far out at sea.

Max – Does that surprise you?

Charles – Yes, I don't know why...

Max – It will allow us not to die of thirst right away.

Charles – Do you know why seawater is salty, Captain?

Max – No... And you?

Charles – Neither do I...

Yvonne – Are you sure you haven't caught sunstroke, my poor Charles? You should wear a hat.

Charles – Can you imagine if seawater wasn't salty? It would solve a lot of problems in the world.

Amanda – Is he going to keep pissing us off for much longer?

Diane – At least we're not starving, with all these dead fish floating to the surface...

Sergio – Ocean pollution has its benefits, after all.

Marie – Unless we all die poisoned, like those sick fish we're forced to eat, half-rotten.

Diane takes one of the fish and takes a bite.

Diane – It's not that bad.

Amanda – Yes... You get used to it.

Yvonne – I think I've already lost ten kilos.

Charles – Well, there you go! Liposuction can wait a little longer...

Amanda – I'll see if I can scoop up a few more.

Amanda walks away. The others continue chewing their fish. Amanda returns hastily.

Amanda – There it is, we can see the coast!

Diane – No way?

Amanda – But yes, look!

They all look.

Yvonne – It's not a mirage, is it?

Max – Good Lord, it's true!

Charles – Land! Land! I feel like Christopher Columbus discovering America!

Marie – I hope we haven't drifted that far, but well... Thank God, we're saved!

Max – It's about time. Even with all the bailing we've been doing day and night, the boat was sinking deeper and deeper.

The atmosphere immediately relaxes, and they all smile again.

Diane – Phew... We'll finally be back to civilisation.

Max – Except that we lost a lot of money.

Yvonne – And a few kilos.

Max – We'll recover. Once rich, always rich...

Sergio – Yes... Unless we end up in prison.

All eyes turn to Amanda.

Amanda – I promise I won't say anything. After everything we've been through together...

Yvonne – Thank you.

Amanda – The President has come out of this rather well, hasn't he?

Sergio – I sense an insinuation in that last remark... or even an attempt at blackmail with extortion of funds.

Amanda – Now, let's not use such strong words... But I wouldn't mind a little reward for services rendered to the nation... and as a token of my discretion.

Max – And we wouldn't mind a little compensation either. Because with all the money we lost in this ecological disaster...

Yvonne – You've got the President's ear. Couldn't you have us officially declared victims of a natural disaster?

Marie – Because between us, if we were to tell what we know... your President's reelection would be seriously compromised.

Sergio – Among well-mannered people, we can always come to an arrangement...

Max – And how about a little medal? Thanks to my heroic action, I managed to save a few lives.

Sergio – I'll mention it to the President.

They all start looking towards the coast again.

Max – The winds are favourable, we're getting closer to the coast. We just have to wait...

Yvonne – That's strange... It doesn't look much like the French coast.

Charles – That's true... With all these palm trees...

Amanda – Whatever it is, it certainly isn't Brittany.

Sergio – And the French flag isn't flying above the port.

Charles – Where on earth are we? Corsica?

Sergio – There's a boat coming, we'll ask them.

Marie – It's just a big rowboat, and there are about a hundred people on it.

Yvonne – They look like migrants.

Charles – But why would migrants be leaving the French coast and heading out to sea?

Diane – I can see the flag more clearly now.

Marie – It looks a bit like Morocco...

Max – What kind of flag is it?

Amanda *(to Sergio)* – You know your flags, don't you?

Charles – Surely that isn't the Palestinian flag?

Sergio – Worse...

Yvonne – What could be worse than ending up in Gaza?

Sergio – That's the flag of Libya.

They all freeze, stunned.

Blackout.

Scene 7

They are all there, dazed, their gaze turned towards the back of the room, representing the inhospitable coast.

Amanda – This time, we can clearly see the beach.

Yvonne – Yes, but I wonder if there's any reason to rejoice.

Marie – We can even see their faces now.

Max – And their assault rifles...

Charles – Some of them seem to be laughing.

Diane – They're going to be surprised to see us, that's for sure.

Sergio – Of course. Usually, the traffic goes the other way around.

Marie – A boatload of wealthy Europeans arriving on the Libyan coast with suitcases full of cash, bonds and cocaine...

Max – Maybe we should get rid of all that, right?

Yvonne – Throw our money overboard?

Sergio – We could always give them your bearer bonds, they're worthless now.

Diane – If they find us with all this money, they'll kill us to rob us.

Sergio – But if we arrive empty-handed, in rags and half-starved, they won't understand... and that might anger them too.

Marie – It’s hard to pass ourselves off as desperate refugees seeking asylum in Libya.

Max – We could always tell them the truth.

Amanda – They'll never believe us.

Marie – I must admit, this story is quite hard to believe.

Max – Yes...

A mobile phone rings. It's Sergio's, and he answers it.

Sergio – Yes...? Yes, Mr President. Very well, Mr President. Thank you, Mr President.

He puts away his phone.

Yvonne – So, what did he say?

Sergio – It was the President.

Marie – And then?

Sergio – Our country's military aircraft have spotted us in the area. They're sending a helicopter.

The sound of a reconnaissance helicopter is heard, getting closer and then moving away.

Marie – God exists!

Yvonne – We're saved! Well, I hope this time it's for real...

Charles – About time. I've had enough of all these twists. This comedy has gone on quite long enough.

Sergio – Rest assured, this time, all our troubles will be over.

Amanda – This ending feels a bit like a Western, doesn't it? The cavalry arriving...

Marie – All's well that ends well, that's the main thing.

Diane – Yes... A true fairy tale.

Max – It could even end in a wedding. As captain of this ship, I'm entitled to perform the ceremony.

Charles – Well, here goes... *(He kneels before Yvonne)* Yvonne, will you be my wife?

Yvonne – Get lost!

Amanda – Not this time, unfortunately.

Diane – But the good news is that in a few hours we'll be back in France!

General relief and mutual congratulations.

Diane – It's fortunate the President values you so much. You must be a very valuable collaborator.

Sergio – He's mostly interested in getting his briefcase and the millions it contains to finance his campaign.

Marie – Are you sure we won't all end up in prison? I have at least five kilos of cocaine as accompanied baggage.

Yvonne – After everything we've been through, prison would almost be a relief.

Sergio – Don't worry. I gave you my word. The President has every reason to keep this business quiet.

Amanda – The military will be bringing us home, not the police. That makes things much easier.

Sergio – The Special Forces are used to dirty tricks, and they're under the President's command.

Diane – That's good, that's good... So, all's well that ends well!

Charles – Except for the few citizens of that tiny state, which has been wiped off the map.

Yvonne – Well, most of them were bank employees anyway. Since we're talking about a tax haven, we can consider that they died for the homeland.

Max – And let's be honest, the disappearance of Sodom and Gomorrah is good for everyone's business, isn't it, Sergio?

Sergio – I can tell you now: our government, through the President, owed a colossal sum to the central bank of that little tax haven.

Amanda – No more haven, no more debt.

Sergio – And when a country's debts disappear, its citizens become that little bit richer. Well, some of them do...

Diane – That's what you call wiping the slate clean: erase everything and start again. The show's over, but business goes on.

Sergio – The President promised to do away with tax havens. For once, a politician has kept an election promise.

Max – Lose one tax haven, find ten more.

Amanda – But for now, thanks to our beloved President, we're going home!

Charles – Long live the President!

Sergio – Long live the Republic!

Charles – Long live our great country!

All together – And long live Finance!

They snap to attention. A rousing national anthem strikes up, then fades as they march off in close formation. Diane is last in line and therefore exits last.

Diane *(as she leaves)* – I think I've just had another orgasm...

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/

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