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# A Hell of a Night

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# A Hell of a Night

**Jean-Pierre Martinez**

*Translation by the author*

*Sloth, greed, envy, lust, pride, wrath, gluttony...*

*How can you indulge in all seven deadly sins in a single evening, without ever leaving the comfort of your home, and without risking a one-way ticket to hell?*

## **Characters**

Christopher

Gabrielle

Stanley

Madeline

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## 1 – Sloth

*A studio, with a bed that also doubles as a sofa in the centre. The set mainly consists of seven large paintings leaned against the back wall. Paintings with abstract patterns and vibrant colours, not much different from one another. Christopher is seated in front of his computer, wearing a beanie on his head and a large scarf around his neck. Gabrielle, on the other hand, has made an effort with her appearance and is applying the final touches to her makeup.*

**Gabrielle** – Are you really sure you don't want to come...?

**Christopher** – I'd love to, believe me... But, as I told, I absolutely need to finish this script by Monday...

**Gabrielle** – You've been at it for six months. Can't it wait until tomorrow morning?

**Christopher** – No, I swear... The shooting has been moved up by two weeks. They're just waiting for the script, and I haven't written a single line of dialogue yet...

**Gabrielle** – But you already have the story, right?

**Christopher** – Yes, of course.

**Gabrielle** – What's it about again...?

**Christopher** – It's the story of... How do I put it... It's about a cod fisherman drowning in debt who... Well, he ends up asking his wife to turn tricks to tackle the bills for his trawler.

**Gabrielle** – OK... So basically... A cod fisherman turning into a pimp...

**Christopher** – It was originally set to be in Aberdeen, but the production snagged a film crew available in Sofia after another shoot got canceled.

**Gabrielle** – So that explains the rush...

**Christopher** – Exactly. We have to tweak the plot a bit, of course... Bulgaria undoubtedly has its charm, but I'm not sure it resembles Scotland much (*Doubtfully*) Do they even have a sea in Bulgaria?

**Gabrielle** – In any case, Sofia is not known to be a major cod fishing port.

**Christopher** – Honestly, Gabrielle, I'm starting to stress about it...

**Gabrielle** – Come on, you'll handle it, as usual... And remember, you're not alone in this boat. You've got Stanley on board, right?

**Christopher** – Yeah, well, Stanley, you know... I hope that this Bulgarian cod fishing boat doesn't turn out to be another Titanic...

**Gabrielle** – If you come with me to my parents', we can leave early... It'll help you relax a bit, and you can start working afterward... Anyway you need to eat something, after all...

**Christopher** – I really don't feel like it, I assure you... I'm tired, I'm not in a good mood... I have chills, I don't know what's wrong with me...

**Gabrielle** (*approaching him*) – My poor darling... Are you sick? I can stay here and take care of you, you know...

**Christopher** – No, really, I assure you... I'll take an aspirin and it'll be fine... I don't want to spoil your evening... Please apologise to your parents for me...

**Gabrielle** – Don't worry. They'll be disappointed, that's all...

**Christopher** – At the same time, it's not like I'm missing Christmas or New Year's, right? (*Smiling*) Shabbat is every Friday...

**Gabrielle** – Well then, I'll go...

*She puts on her coat to leave. Christopher's gaze falls on the paintings surrounding him.*

**Christopher** – What do these paintings you just made represent?

**Gabrielle** – It's a series on the seven deadly sins.

**Christopher** – Oh yeah...

**Gabrielle** (*pointing at the canvases*) – Sloth, avarice, envy, lust, pride, wrath, and intemperance...

**Christopher** – OK...

**Gabrielle** – According to Saint Augustine, these seven sins are the source of all others...

**Christopher** – Saint Augustine...

**Gabrielle** – You don't like them...?

**Christopher** – Well, yes... I mean, it's a bit...

**Gabrielle** – A bit...?

**Christopher** – A bit overwhelming, you know... But I guess that's the idea... To turn us poor sinners away from vice...

**Gabrielle** (*disappointed*) – You don't like them...

**Christopher** – No, I assure you... (*Pointing at a painting*) I actually like lust...

**Gabrielle** – That one is sloth...

**Christopher** – Oh really?

**Gabrielle** – Yes...

*Gabrielle is about to leave.*

**Christopher** – Are you going with your brother?

**Gabrielle** – He's already there. He doesn't take transport on Fridays, you know... It's shabbat...

**Christopher** – Oh yes, right... But you, take the car, it'll be faster.

**Gabrielle** – I'll take the subway... I don't feel like driving... And that way, if you want to join us for dessert...

**Christopher** – Why not... If I can make enough progress... I'll give it my all... (*They share a kiss*) But if I can't make it, I'd rather you stay there overnight... I don't like the idea of you taking the tube late on a Friday...

**Gabrielle** – Okay...

**Christopher** – Have fun...

**Gabrielle** – Good luck, my darling...

**Christopher** – Thanks.

*Gabrielle leaves, and Christopher comes back to life. He takes off his beanie and scarf and plays a CD.*

**Christopher** (*lowering the music*) – Damn, I'm starving...

*He goes to the kitchen and comes back with a pack of beer and a bag of chips. He starts drinking from the can and noisily munching on the chips. His gaze falls on a painting, and he seems uncomfortable, as if the canvas reminds him of his lies. He stands up and turns the first painting... on the back of which is written in big letters – Sloth. He appears once again disturbed by the inscription. He goes back to his computer, but we can hear him playing video games. Until someone rings the doorbell. He seems panicked.*

**Christopher** – Oh, damn...

*He stops the music and mutes the computer. He quickly puts his beanie and scarf. He hides the bag of chips and the beer can under the bed, and goes to open the door.*

**Christopher** – Stanley...?

**Stanley** – Hey there, buddy, what's up?

**Christopher** – What are you doing here? I thought you had plans and couldn't work with me on our script until tomorrow...

*Stanley enters.*

**Stanley** – It's only half past seven, man! Am I disturbing you? Were you about to go to bed?

**Christopher** – No...

**Stanley** – Are you off to the ski slopes?

**Christopher** – Why would I?

**Stanley** – I don't know... With the beanie and scarf...

*Christopher takes off his scarf and beanie again.*

**Christopher** – Oh no, it's just that... I thought it was Gabrielle...

**Stanley** (*intrigued*) – Oh, really...? So when Gabrielle is in a playful mood, you dress up as a ski instructor... Well, everyone has their own fantasies, huh... By the way, did you happen to mention my plans for the evening to Gabrielle? I ran into her on the street, and I let her know I'd be heading over here...

**Christopher** – No, don't worry... So, do you have any ideas?

**Stanley** – Ideas...?

**Christopher** – For the script! Remember, we're writing a screenplay together? That's why you came, right? To work a bit with me before your..."evening out."

**Stanley** – Actually... Not exactly...

**Christopher** – Not exactly...?

**Stanley** – Well, okay, they can wait another day or two... We're not at their beck and call, after all...

**Christopher** – On the other hand, they did give us each a 5000 pounds advance. And so far, we've only written our initials on the contract. We can assume they have the right to hope...

**Stanley** – Look, I'll get to it as soon as possible, I promise. But I didn't come here to talk about work.

**Christopher** – Oh, really...

**Stanley** – Do you remember that girl I met on that shoot in Woolwich?

**Christopher** – No...

**Stanley** – Come on! Madeline! A blonde. She played the role of a waitress at the courthouse cafeteria.

**Christopher** – And...?

**Stanley** – Well... I'm spending the evening with her...

**Christopher** – For professional reasons, I'm sure.

**Stanley** – More or less...

**Christopher** – And she's an actress.

**Stanley** – She dreams of becoming one, anyway. For now, she's mostly...

**Christopher** – A waitress at the courthouse cafeteria in Woolwich.

**Stanley** – Exactly...

**Christopher** – So, you offered to help kick-start her career...

**Stanley** – You have to help out the young ones a bit...

**Christopher** – Of course... And I guess you haven't told her the joke...

**Stanley** – What joke?

**Christopher** – How to recognise the dumbest actress on a film set.

**Stanley** – The one who sleeps with the screenwriter...

**Christopher** – Like they were asking for our opinion on the casting. We're barely allowed to see our names in the credits...

**Stanley** – Mmm...

**Christopher** – Did you inform Olivia about your generous plan to give a little boost to a budding young actress...?

**Stanley** – Of course not... And that's where I could use your assistance...

**Christopher** – Seriously...

**Stanley** – Could you tell Gabrielle that we spent the evening together working on our script...

**Christopher** – Oh, you see, you do remember, after all, that we have a screenplay to write together...

**Stanley** – Or even that I spent the night here because we worked like crazy until the wee hours... So, if Olivia talks to Gabrielle about it, I'll have an alibi...

**Christopher** – And how did you know Gabrielle was spending the night at her parents'?

**Stanley** – Olivia told me! Trust me, women spill all the details to each other... We're under constant surveillance, buddy... If we don't unite a bit to carve out some freedom...

**Christopher** – I have nothing to hide.

**Stanley** – You did tell Gabrielle that this script was due on Monday... to avoid spending Shabbat with her at her parents'.

**Christopher** – Yeah, well... Still, we do have to finish it by the end of the week...

**Stanley** – So, you lied to her too...

**Christopher** – You're pissing me off, Stan... You're placing me in a rather awkward position... Just a reminder, Olivia is also a friend of mine...

**Stanley** – Come on... I'll owe you one! I swear, tomorrow, once I've sobered up, I'll dive headfirst into that damn script. I've got loads of ideas, you'll see...

**Christopher** – Yeah, right...

**Stanley** – Alright, you'll save my ass tonight, and I'll write all fifty pages of dialogue on my own tomorrow. You'll simply need to co-sign. Are we on board with that deal?

**Christopher** (*tempted*) – You swear?

**Stanley** – If I'm lying, I'll go to hell!

*Christopher hesitates for a moment before giving in.*

**Christopher** – Fine... Get out of here, but I'm warning you, this is the last time.

*Stanley rushes to embrace him.*

**Stanley** – Thanks, Christopher... I knew I could count on you... (*Pauses with a smirk*) Oh, damn... Christopher... They didn't spare you, did they...

**Christopher** – Who?

**Stanley** – Your parents! My mother would have named me Christopher, I swear... If she had given birth to me, I would have strangled her with the umbilical cord...

**Christopher** – Mmm...

**Stanley** – Oh, heavens, Gabrielle must have truly fallen head over heels for you when she first met you... (*Playing along*) "I'm Gabrielle, and you?" "Christopher"... Good grief, if I were the girl, I'd make a speedy escape...

**Christopher** (*fuming*) – Well then, get lost...

**Stanley** – Hey, did you see my new car, by the way?

**Christopher** – What car?

*Stanley leads him to the window.*

**Stanley** – My Mini Cooper! Look, it's parked right down there... Leather interior, walnut dashboard... Electric sunroof... I've had it since Monday...

**Christopher** – You don't hold back, do you...

**Stanley** – I paid the down payment with the advance I got for the screenplay...

**Christopher** – I see...

**Stanley** – It's a gem, I'm telling you... If Madeline doesn't fall in love at first sight... There isn't much room in the back to fuck unless you're a contortionist, but well... There's no shortage of charming little hotels in London, right?

**Christopher** – At this rate, you'll soon be able to write a guidebook... Instead of writing the screenplay for which you've already received an advance...

**Stanley** – And what about you? You never wanted to cheat on Gabrielle?

**Christopher** – No...



**Stanley** – You're practically a saint, you know? Ever thought about writing a book, like "The Gospel According to Saint Christopher"...

**Christopher** – Screw you.

**Stanley** – Or maybe a co-authored masterpiece with your sweet heart? You know, something like "Recipes for a Lasting Relationship by Saint Christopher and the Angel Gabrielle"...

**Christopher** – I thought you were in a hurry.

*Stanley chuckles and gets ready to leave.*

**Stanley** – Alright... Shabbat shalom, brother...

**Christopher** (*pushing him towards the door*) – Yeah, just go to hell too...

*Stanley glances one last time at Gabrielle's paintings.*

**Stanley** – Those paintings are creepy, aren't they? What's the story behind them?

**Christopher** – The seven deadly sins...

**Stanley** – Oh, damn... Your life is a living hell, buddy...

*Stanley leaves. Christopher, now alone, sighs and then picks up the phone.*

**Christopher** – Yeah... I'd like to order a pizza... What do you have...? Okay, I'm torn between Four Seasons and Margherita... Put both of them... Yeah, Christopher Merrill... Yes, Christopher, is that a problem...? 42 Repentance Lane... That's right... Thanks... Uh, wait... Can you add a Calzone as well...? Yes, that's three in total... In half an hour, okay...

*He hangs up, settles onto the bed, and starts flipping through channels with the remote. Eventually, he stumbles upon what appears to be an adult film, judging by the sounds emanating from the TV. Amused, he opens another can of beer and begins to succumb to drowsiness.*

**Blackout.**

## 2 – Greed

*Christopher is jolted awake by the doorbell.*

**Christopher** – Damn, the pizzas... Yeah, I'm coming!

*As he heads to open the door, he pauses in front of a second painting and flips it over. On the back of the canvas, one can read "Greed."*

**Christopher** (*opening the door, still groggy*) – Stanley?

*Stanley enters again, very agitated.*

**Stanley** – Oh, buddy... I'm in trouble...

**Christopher** – What's wrong? Didn't it work out with Margherita?

**Stanley** – Madeline... I was supposed to pick her up at Charing Cross as planned... Miraculously, her train was on time...

**Christopher** – And then?

**Stanley** – I had planned to take her out for a nice dinner. We come back to the car... Gone!

**Christopher** – Gone...?

**Stanley** – I had her for barely a week, can you imagine! She was still in the break-in period...

**Christopher** – Madeline?

**Stanley** – My Mini Cooper! It got stolen, I'm telling you!

**Christopher** – Oh, damn...

**Stanley** – Wait, it's not over... I left my jacket inside with all my papers... and my credit card! It was just for five minutes...

**Christopher** – Oh, shit...

**Stanley** – I have nothing left on me, I'm telling you! Not a pound, and no way to withdraw money. Madeline had to lend me a subway ticket to come here...

**Christopher** (*sarcastic*) – Oh, yeah, that sucks...

**Stanley** – And I wanted to impress her with my new car, you know... I swear, it worked like a charm...

**Christopher** – What did you do? Did you put it back in her train to Woolwich?

**Stanley** – I couldn't do that to her... She had high expectations for this evening... So did I... She's at the pub downstairs.

**Christopher** – Oh, really...?

**Stanley** – While I try to figure out a solution...

**Christopher** – A solution...?

**Stanley** – Any chance you could lend me a hundred or two hundred quid? At least I could still take her out for dinner...

**Christopher** – Well, you know...

**Stanley** – I suggested to her that she could stay overnight in London, but now with nothing left to cover the hotel... I can't just bring her back to Olivia's place...

**Christopher** – Well, no...

**Stanley** – How on earth do I explain to her that my car got stolen at Charing Cross when I was supposed to be here with you, working...

**Christopher** – Oh, yeah, that sucks...

**Stanley** – Plus, I need some cash for the hotel... (*The other doesn't react.*) So?

**Christopher** – So what?

**Stanley** – Could you lend me two hundred euros? I'll pay you back as soon as possible... Once I can get a credit card or a check book...

**Christopher** – Oh, damn, that's some rotten luck...

**Stanley** – What?

**Christopher** – Earlier, I wanted to order a pizza, and I realised Gabrielle took my wallet with her to her parents' place... So, you see, I don't have anything to eat either...

**Stanley** – Damn... And you really have no cash on you?

**Christopher** – 50 pence, maybe... I can give them to you, if you want...

**Stanley** – Oh, shit... Can't you call her?

**Christopher** – Call who?

**Stanley** – Gabrielle! It's not that far to her parents' place, right...?

**Christopher** – Unfortunately, you know... It's Friday...

**Stanley** – So what?

**Christopher** – It's Shabbat... They don't answer the phone...

**Stanley** – Oh, fuck... (*Collapsed*) Well, can you at least lend me your car?

**Christopher** – My car...?

**Stanley** – So I can take Madeline home! Can you imagine the train to Woolwich, at this hour... I swear, with the way she's dressed, I'm already wondering how she hasn't been assaulted before arriving at Charing Cross... I feel responsible, man... I'm not even sure she's of legal age...

**Christopher** – Oh, yeah, but the car, uh... Gabrielle took it to go to her parents' place...

**Stanley** – I thought it was Shabbat...

**Christopher** – You know, I haven't fully understood everything about Judaism yet...

**Stanley** – Oh, damn... Alright, can I at least use your bathroom urgently? I don't even have enough money to pay for public toilets...

**Christopher** – Go ahead, you know where it is...

*The phone rings, he stops the CD.*

**Christopher** – Hello? Oh, hi Gabrielle... No, I'm afraid I can't make it... No, no, I'm fine, just caught up with work.... Yeah, it's going great, lots of ideas flowing... Anyhow, I've got to cut this short, sorry about that... Okay... I love you too...

*He hangs up. The doorbell rings. He goes to open it.*

**Christopher** – Thanks a lot... Yeah, that's right, a Four Seasons, a Margherita, and a Calzone... 29.90, okay... (*He takes out a wad of bills from his pocket*) Here you go, 30 pounds... You can keep the change... Yeah, well, it's still 10 pence... That's it, yeah... Have a great evening...

*A flushing sound is heard. Christopher quickly hides the three pizza boxes under the bed. Stanley returns.*

**Stanley** (*smelling the pizza*) – Oh damn, I'm starving... Where is this pizza smell coming from?

**Christopher** – Must be the neighbours downstairs. The floor is pretty thin...

**Stanley** – Fair enough... First things first, I need to head to the nearby police station to report the theft of my car...

**Christopher** – I'm truly sorry I can't be of more help...

**Stanley** – I'll check with another friend who lives nearby... I hope he can assist me...

**Christopher** – You'll find a solution, I'm sure.

**Stanley** – It really pisses me off...

**Christopher** – I can imagine... Especially with a brand new car...

**Stanley** – I don't care about the car. I'll get reimbursed for it. It's more about Madeline... I had already pictured our time together, you know... You should see her... She's quite piece, believe me...

**Christopher** – Oh yeah, that's unfortunate...

**Stanley** – Look, I'm just asking you for a small favour...

**Christopher** – Of course, you can count on me...

**Stanley** – If you could keep her company for about half an hour, while I sort this out... Taking her to a police station on a Friday is not the most glamorous first date...

**Christopher** – Well, you see...

**Stanley** – I can't leave her waiting in that pub... Because a girl like her, I assure you... She won't stay alone for very long...

**Christopher** – No, of course, but...

**Stanley** – Okay, I'll tell her to come up...

**Christopher** – Alright, half an hour then...

**Stanley** – I swear, it's really been one hell of an evening... Well, at least with you, I can relax...

**Christopher** – What do you mean...

**Stanley** – Don't take it the wrong way, but... You, at least, are faithful, that's why... Saint Christopher! And I'm not sure you're exactly her type anyway...

**Christopher** (*offended*) – Well, still, if Gabrielle came back unexpectedly, it wouldn't look good... Are you sure...

**Stanley** – Come on, the sooner I leave...

*Stanley goes. Christopher remains there, devastated.*

**Blackout.**

### 3 – Envy

*Madeline rings the doorbell. As Christopher goes to open the door, he flips over a third painting with "Envy" written on the back.*

**Madeline** – Christopher...?

**Christopher** – Come on in...

**Madeline** – I was worried I might have picked the wrong door. Stan mentioned the third left, but I wasn't sure.

*Madeline enters. She's a blonde, super-sexy type, but not necessarily very bright. She looks around at the paintings.*

**Christopher** – No worries, you're in the right place... (*Awkward pause*) Lucky you didn't choose the third right; that's a repeat offender on parole...

**Madeline** – No...?

**Christopher** – I'm just kidding, that's my brother-in-law.

**Madeline** – Oh, got it...

**Christopher** – Take a seat... Can I get you something to drink?

*She settles onto the bed.*

**Madeline** – Thanks, I already had a beer at the pub downstairs...

**Christopher** – No problem...

**Madeline** – I don't want to be a bother... Pretend I'm not even here...

*Christopher swallows hard, his gaze following her as she crosses her legs provocatively.*

**Christopher** – Well, that's... not gonna to be easy.

**Madeline** – Okay... Then... what do we do?

**Christopher** – I don't know... (*Attempting to inject humour*) How about a game of Monopoly?

**Madeline** – I'm afraid I don't know the rules...

**Christopher** – Just kidding...

**Madeline** – Oh, got it...

**Christopher** – Yeah...

**Madeline** – It's funny, your bed smells like pizza...

**Christopher** – Oh, does it?

**Madeline** – It's making me hungry...

**Christopher** – I apologise; I don't have much to offer you...

**Madeline** – No worries, really...

**Christopher** – Alright.

**Madeline** – You know, when Stan spoke about you, I had a completely different image in my mind...

**Christopher** – How did you imagine me...?

**Madeline** – Hard to say... Maybe older, definitely...

**Christopher** – Due to the name, I assume...

**Madeline** – Yeah, Christopher...

**Christopher** – I looked it up online. Apparently, it's one of the least popular names in England these days...

**Madeline** – Oh, seriously?

**Christopher** – Just kidding...

**Madeline** – Oh, got it...

**Christopher** – So, you work at the cafeteria in the Woolwich Court?

**Madeline** – Yeah, but it's just a temporary job...

**Christopher** – Temporary...?

**Madeline** – Until I make it as an actress!

**Christopher** – Oh, I understand...

**Madeline** – So far, I've only done some voice dubbing... And a lingerie commercial.

**Christopher** – With your looks, it would be a pity to do only dubbing.

**Madeline** – Stan offered me a part in his upcoming film.

**Christopher** – His upcoming film...?

**Madeline** – The one you're writing the script for.

**Christopher** – Okay... So I'm writing a script for him, now...?

**Madeline** – It must be quite inspiring for you as well.

**Christopher** – Of course...

**Madeline** – To write a feature film script for Stan. Until now, he mentioned you've mainly written sitcoms for TV, right...?

**Christopher** – Uh-huh...

**Madeline** – Stan is considering me for the lead role.

**Christopher** – I see...

**Madeline** – Stan mentioned that...

**Christopher** (*interrupting*) – Stan is a bit of a mythomaniac, Madeline.

**Madeline** – A mythomaniac...?

**Christopher** – Don't fault him too heavily for it. It's just part of the job, you know. A kind of professional quirk, you could say. When you've been weaving tales for as long as he has, they begin to blur with reality...

**Madeline** – Tales...

**Christopher** – Like, for instance, his stories about his car...

**Madeline** – His car...?

**Christopher** – His Mini Cooper... The one with leather seats, a walnut dashboard and an electric sunroof. I bet he shared all those details with you, right?

**Madeline** – Yes...

**Christopher** – And he told you it got stolen...

**Madeline** – Yes...

**Christopher** – Mmm... He spins that yarn for everyone, especially the ladies...

**Madeline** – So it's not true?

**Christopher** – Have you seen his Mini Cooper?

**Madeline** – No...

**Christopher** – Well, there you have it...

**Madeline** – So, you're saying he's a liar?

**Christopher** – Uh... Yes... That's what I was implying when I mentioned he's a mythomaniac...

**Madeline** – Really?

**Christopher** – Mythomaniac, you see? A professional liar...

**Madeline** – Oh, got it... Mythomaniac... I thought it meant sex addict...

**Christopher** – In his case, it can also mean that, believe me...

*Madeline looks disheartened.*

**Madeline** – I never would've imagined that about him...



**Christopher** – And of course, he presented himself as single, right...?

**Madeline** – We didn't really talk about it, but...

**Christopher** – He's been married for five years.

**Madeline** – What...?

**Christopher** – To Olivia. She's a friend of mine.

**Madeline** – Are you sure?

**Christopher** – I was a witness at their wedding. And I'm the godfather of their children.

**Madeline** – He has kids?

**Christopher** – Three daughters...

**Madeline** – Really?

**Christopher** – I was there at their circumcision.

**Madeline** – Oh, because he's...

**Christopher** – He didn't tell you that either?

**Madeline** – Oh my God...

*Madeline is on the verge of tears.*

**Christopher** – I'm sorry...

*Christopher hands her a pack of tissues. Madeline wipes her tears and tries to regain composure.*

**Madeline** – And you... Are you married?

**Christopher** – Me? No...

*A pause follows as Madeline appears to be processing the information*

**Madeline** – But you two are collaborating on a script, right?

**Christopher** – Yes, indeed... Well, more like me doing the writing. I proposed the idea to him after he was released from prison, to help him get back on track...

**Madeline** – Released from prison?

**Christopher** – Oh, he didn't share that detail with you either...

**Madeline** – He mentioned attending a screenwriting school in Hollywood for three years...

**Christopher** – Three years, yes, that's... That's the time he spent behind bars... It actually inspired me the idea. It's a TV series concept... Like an English version of

*Prison Break*, you know... Considering his firsthand experience in the prison environment...

**Madeline** – But why did he end up in prison?

**Christopher** – I'm sorry, but... I really can't talk to you about that... He's a friend, you understand.

**Madeline** – Of course...

*Silence ensues as Madeline processes the revelation. Her phone rings, and she answers.*

**Madeline** – Oh, Stan... Yeah, I'm fine... At the police station? (*With an insinuation*) Sure, I believe you... Yeah, of course, they haven't found your car... Two hours? Okay, take your time. But no, I don't sound strange. Alright, see you later, then... (*She hangs up and turns to Christopher.*) He told me he's at the police station...

**Christopher** – Oh, yes, unfortunately, that might be true... He's on probation... He has to check in every Friday night...

**Madeline** – We were supposed to have dinner together at a restaurant to talk about my role...

**Christopher** – And he told you his papers and credit card got stolen...

**Madeline** – Yes...

**Christopher** – He tried to borrow some money from me... But I declined... I believe it wouldn't be in his best interest...

*A pause. Madeline seems to be working to regain control.*

**Madeline** – So, if I'm understanding correctly, you're actually Stan's boss.

**Christopher** – You could say that, yes...

**Madeline** – Okay... So you're the boss, then.

**Christopher** – Absolutely...

**Madeline** – Could you possibly find me a small role... in your series?

**Christopher** – Why not...? Auditions would be necessary, of course... It's centered in a men's prison, but... I don't know... I can envision you as a prison visitor... I don't know... Something that radiates from you... A desire to help others... Am I wrong?

**Madeline** – My Lady Diana side, I suppose...

**Christopher** – No, I assure you... it sparks some ideas for me... For my script, that is...

*Madeline adopts a more provocative demeanour.*

**Madeline** – I could impress you, you know... But for now, I'm just so disappointed.

*She leans into Christopher's arms, visibly shaken.*

**Madeline** – Christopher... Actually, I love that name... I don't know... It carries a reassuring energy.... And my grandpas's name was Christopher... He passed away a few years ago, but... He looked after me a lot when I was little...

***Blackout.***

## 4 – Lust

*Christopher and Madeline are in bed. Christopher, looking somewhat dazed, seems overwhelmed by the situation.*

**Madeline** – So, impressed...?

**Christopher** – Very...

**Madeline** – I did say I could surprise you...

*She lights a cigarette. Christopher snaps back to reality.*

**Christopher** – What are you doing?

**Madeline** – Lighting a cigarette, why?

**Christopher** – Sorry, but that won't be possible.

**Madeline** – You think it's too cliché?

*He rises to dress, searching for his scattered clothes.*

**Christopher** – It's just that... My girlfriend has an incredibly sensitive sense of smell. She's a non-smoker... Quite conservative, you know.

**Madeline** – Your girlfriend?

**Christopher** – You asked if I was married, I said no. I didn't say I was single...

**Madeline** – Oh, I see... (*Getting up, wearing a large t-shirt*) You guys are all the same, I swear... Can I take a shower, at least? I promise I'll try not to leave too much hair in the bathtub...

**Christopher** – Yeah, sure... It's over there... But don't take too long, okay... Stan will be back soon... He's still a friend, you understand...

**Madeline** – Yes, I think I'm beginning to understand...

*Madeline exits. Her phone starts ringing. Christopher doesn't answer, but he looks very uncomfortable.*

**Christopher** – Oh, damn...

*The phone stops ringing. Christopher continues to search for his clothes to get dressed. In the process, he accidentally flips over a fourth painting, revealing "Lust" written on the back. Just then, Christopher's phone starts ringing. He answers, a bit panicked.*

**Christopher** – Yeah...? Oh, Stan... Yeah, yeah, everything's fine... Listen, I can't pass her the phone right now, she's... She's in the bathroom... Yeah, yeah, everything's fine... In ten minutes, okay... (*Astonished*) With Gabrielle? Oh... You ran into her at the station... Okay... No, no, it's fine... Don't worry, I won't mention anything about you and Madeline... Yes, I'm aware Gabrielle knows Olivia... I'll do my best, alright...

*Christopher begins to panic. Desperate to eliminate any evidence of his mistake, he decides to wash the sheets. In his haste, he unintentionally tosses Madeline's clothes into the washing machine, tangled up with the sheets rolled into a ball. He starts the washing machine. Meanwhile, Madeline emerges from the shower and begins searching for her clothes, only to discover they are nowhere to be found.*

**Madeline** – Have you seen my clothes?

**Christopher** – Uh... I'm not sure... Have you checked under the bed? Listen, you need to hurry; they'll be here in five minutes...

**Madeline** – They...?

**Christopher** – Stan and... Gabrielle. My girlfriend...

**Madeline** – Oh, I see...

*Madeline glances under the bed.*

**Christopher** – So, did you find them?

**Madeline** – No... but I found this... (*She pulls out three pizza boxes and a bag of chips from under the bed*). I thought you had nothing to eat...

**Christopher** – It's my squirrel side... When autumn comes, I can't help it... I start storing pizzas under my bed just in case... It's weird, right?

**Madeline** (*horrified*) – Yes... What did you do with my clothes? I can't even find my panties! You're not a fetishist, are you?

**Christopher** – Damn, the washing machine...

**Madeline** – What?

**Christopher** – I started a load... to wash the sheets... I must have taken your clothes with them...

**Madeline** – Great...

*He stands in front of the washing machine, eyeing the dial.*

**Christopher** – Do you know how to stop a washing machine once it's started...?

**Madeline** – You can't... (*She looks at the dial and delivers her verdict.*) Very dirty laundry... Two hours...

**Christopher** – It can't be stopped now... It's a hellish machine...

**Madeline** – And what about me?

**Christopher** – You could hide in a closet.

**Madeline** – That's been overused, hasn't it? Not very original for a screenwriter. You're letting me down, Christopher... You're disappointing me a lot...

**Christopher** – Any other idea?

**Madeline** – I'll snoop through your girlfriend's drawers... I hope she has better taste in picking clothes than in picking guys...

**Christopher** – Oh no!

**Madeline** – Or would you prefer I welcome them dressed like this?

**Christopher** – Okay, go ahead...

*Stanley enters with Gabrielle. Gabrielle holds a box of cake and a bottle of Champagne.*

**Gabrielle** – Surprise! You didn't think I'd leave you all alone on the anniversary of our first meeting!

**Christopher** – Our anniversary...?

**Gabrielle** – I figured you forgot...

**Stanley** (*innocently*) – Madeline isn't here?

**Christopher** (*embarrassed*) – She's, uh... in the bathroom.

**Stanley** – Again?

*Gabrielle gives him a suspicious look.*

**Gabrielle** – Who's Madeline?

*Christopher looks concerned.*

**Blackout.**

## 5 – Pride

*Madeline returns, now dressed in a more classic manner, distinctly closer to Gabrielle's style.*

**Gabrielle** – So?

**Stanley** – So, who is this charming young woman... I didn't quite catch it when we ran into each other earlier. I must say I left in a hurry. (*To Gabrielle*) I saw through the window that my car wasn't parked downstairs anymore, so naturally...

**Christopher** – Well, she's... the lead actress, you know... The one who's supposed to play the role of the prostitute...

**Gabrielle** – The prostitute...?

**Christopher** – The wife of the pimp... I mean...the fisherman.

**Gabrielle** – Of course... The prostitute...

**Christopher** – She came so that I could brief her a bit on the role...

**Stanley** – Quite professional of her. But it's curious, Madeline, you seem to have changed something about yourself since earlier, don't you think?

**Gabrielle** – It's funny, I have the exact same dress.

**Madeline** – Oh yes, it's hilarious, isn't it, Christopher...?

**Christopher** (*to Stanley*) – So, about your car...?

**Stanley** – You won't believe it...

**Christopher** – At this point, I'm prepared for anything...

**Stanley** – It wasn't stolen at all. It was impounded! I parked in a handicapped spot.

**Christopher** – No way... And you didn't have the right to park there?

**Stanley** – That's the good news... The bad news is, I have to go pick it up from the impound lot. And it's not close by...

**Madeline** – So, you really do have a Mini Cooper?

**Stanley** – Well, yes, of course... Why...?

*Madeline shoots a murderous look at Christopher.*

**Madeline** – And I suppose you've never been to prison either...

**Stanley** – Not yet... (*Jokingly*) But you know, for parking violations, with a good lawyer, you can still hope for probation...

**Gabrielle** (*coldly*) – Well, I'll go put this in the fridge... (*To Christopher*) We'll talk about all this later...

*Gabrielle exits.*

**Madeline** – I believe it's best if I leave you all to your family...

**Stanley** – You don't want me to walk you back? I could go get my car and...

**Madeline** – I think it's fine like this. I'll take the train...

**Stanley** – I'm really sorry about tonight. We can reschedule. I'll call you?

**Madeline** – Sure... Gentlemen professional farters, I bid you farewell.

**Stanley** – Professional farters?

**Christopher** – I think she meant "professional liars."

**Stanley** – Oh, I see... That's reassuring...

*Madeline leaves. Stanley lets out a sigh of relief.*

**Stanley** – It's not turning out too bad after all...

**Christopher** – Speak for yourself...

*Stanley laughs.*

**Stanley** – Oh man, you've got such bad luck... Not only will you never get her, but you also have to explain everything to Gabrielle.

**Christopher** – You find that funny? I'm tired of taking responsibility for your foolishness, Stan...

**Stanley** – Sometimes, you've got to find humour in things... You're too uptight, Christopher... Madeline's right: fart a bit, buddy...

*Christopher flips over a fifth painting on the back of which reads: Pride...*

**Christopher** – And who says I didn't get her...

**Stanley** – You...? (*No longer laughing*) You?

**Christopher** – Me.

**Stanley** – You didn't do that...?

**Christopher** – Why not?

**Stanley** – But... But you're a real jerk...

**Christopher** – In that case, we're two... I'm fed up, Stan, with your crappy messes, your lousy cars, and your second-rate chicks...

**Stanley** – That didn't stop you from getting with her, based on what you're saying... How did you pull that off...?



**Christopher** – I let my natural charm work its magic... And it's not my fault, he practically threw herself at me...

**Stanley** – Yeah, right... What did you tell her to get to that point... She's been acting weird around me since earlier...

**Christopher** – She probably feels guilty about you, that's all... It's kind of normal, isn't it?

**Stanley** – What if I spill the beans to Gabrielle?

**Christopher** – Go ahead... I'll spill everything to Olivia...

*They are about to fight when Gabrielle returns.*

**Gabrielle** – Where's... Madeline?

**Christopher** – She must have left suddenly...

**Gabrielle** – I see... Well... (*To Stanley*) Shall I accompany you to the impound lot to get your car?

**Christopher** – I can handle it...

**Gabrielle** (*sarcastic*) – No, no, of course not... It'll relax me a bit...

**Stanley** – I think I left my phone in the bathroom earlier, I'll be right back...

*Stanley leaves.*

**Gabrielle** – And don't forget, you've got a screenplay to write... I'm curious to see what you'll come up with by the time I get back...

*Stanley returns.*

**Stanley** (*to Christopher*) – See you later, buddy...

*Gabrielle and Stanley exit. Christopher is left devastated...*

**Blackout.**

## 6 – Wrath

*Christopher paces back and forth in his studio, perhaps contemplating what he's going to say to Gabrielle. There's a knock on the door, and he opens it anxiously.*

**Christopher** – Stan?

**Stanley** – Looks like you're not thrilled to see me?

*Stanley enters with a mocking smile.*

**Christopher** – What did you do with Gabrielle?

**Stanley** – She's getting dressed in the parking lot.

**Christopher** – Pardon?

**Stanley** – Turns out the back of a Mini Cooper is surprisingly roomy. Or maybe it's just that your girl and I are exceptionally flexible. But hey, when we're truly motivated...

**Christopher** – You didn't do that...?

**Stanley** – I called Madeline earlier. She spilled the beans about... my stint in prison, my wedding at the synagogue, my three kids... and more.

**Christopher** – I don't believe you... Gabrielle isn't like that...

*Stanley takes a pair of panties out of his pocket and tosses them at Christopher.*

**Stanley** – And this, by any chance, doesn't belong to her...?

*Christopher goes pale.*

**Stanley** – She got it loud and clear, about you and Madeline... I didn't even have to spell it out...

**Christopher** – And then?

**Stanley** – I just offered her some comfort... Just like you did with Madeline... Women appreciate being consoled... Maybe she also wanted to give you a taste of your own medicine... Or maybe it's just my natural charm...

**Christopher** – Get out... Before I lose my temper for real...

**Stanley** – I served you a dish of your own making, buddy... Now we're even...

*Stanley leaves. In a daze, Christopher turns over a sixth painting, revealing the word "Anger" on the back. He heads to the fridge, grabbing the cake and champagne with cold anger. Systematically, he flips over the first six paintings, vandalising one by smearing it with cake cream (easily washable shaving foam). Adding moustaches to another painting using a washable marker, he incorporates additional graffiti as desired.*

*Suddenly, another knock on the door interrupts Christopher's actions. He opens it, only to find Stanley standing there.*

**Christopher** – What do you want now?

**Stanley** – This is not true...

**Christopher** – What?

**Stanley** – Nothing happened between Gabrielle and me. I may be a jerk, but I wouldn't use her for some petty revenge...

*Christopher takes the hit.*

**Christopher** (*pointing to the panties*) – And this?

**Stanley** – I took it from one of her drawers earlier before I left... You can check when she gets back, don't worry, her "angel" outfit is still complete. But I doubt the angel Gabrielle is in the mood to show you her panties tonight...

**Christopher** – Okay...

**Stanley** – And you, with Madeline? Was it true?

*Christopher's silence is an admission.*

**Stanley** – Well, you see, it's funny, but I don't give a damn anymore... You're right, I'm an asshole. And now, you're an asshole just like me... Gabrielle, Olivia... We don't deserve them... I think I'm going to quit my bullshit...

*A moment of silence.*

**Christopher** – And Gabrielle?

**Stanley** – She said she's going to her mother's to sleep... But I swear, I had nothing to do with it. (*Stanley is about to leave.*) I hope at least it was worth it with Madeline... (*He glances at the vandalised paintings by Christopher.*) These paintings also seem to have changed, don't they? Anyway, catch you later, buddy. I'll hit you up tomorrow about the script...

*Stanley leaves. Christopher is left alone, devastated. He tries to erase the graffiti and the mess, but it's in vain. Resigned, he grabs the champagne bottle and takes swigs straight from it... while digging into what's left of the cake with his hands.*

**Blackout.**

## 7 – Gluttony

*Christopher, in a drunken stupor, rises unsteadily and overturns the seventh painting, revealing the word "Gluttony" on the back. The doorbell rings. He hastily hides the canvases under the bed and goes to answer it.*

**Gabrielle** (*entering, icy*) – I forgot my keys... (*She notices that he's been drinking and sees the mess in the living room.*) I see you didn't wait for me to celebrate the anniversary of our first encounter... (*Noticing the missing paintings.*) Where are my paintings? The seven deadly sins...

**Christopher** – You'll never believe it...

**Gabrielle** – Go ahead...

**Christopher** – I was... I was attacked...

**Gabrielle** – Attacked...?

**Christopher** – A commando of three men came out of nowhere. They were wearing masks...

**Gabrielle** (*sarcastic*) – What kind of masks...?

**Christopher** – Wait... It all unfolded so fast... But... They wore masks... How can I describe it... Diabolical, you know... It might have been some sort of satanic cult...

**Gabrielle** – And how did they get in? I don't see any signs of forced entry...

**Christopher** – They had a duplicate of the keys!

**Gabrielle** – And they only took my paintings...

**Christopher** – It just goes to show that your worth is skyrocketing... I've always believed in your talent, Gabrielle.

*Gabrielle, touched by Christopher's confused state, seems ready to calm the situation.*

**Gabrielle** – I believed in you too, Christopher. From our first encounter. And yet, with a name like that, it wasn't a given. But tonight, you've disappointed me. A lot...

**Christopher** – I'm sorry. It's... I wasn't in my right state, I assure you. It was like I was possessed...

**Gabrielle** – Possessed?

**Christopher** – I don't know... I wonder if it's not these paintings you created... They enchanted me...

**Gabrielle** – Isn't it more likely that it was this Madeline who enchanted you?

**Christopher** (*pathetic*) – Who knows if she's not a Devil's envoy too...

**Gabrielle** – We'll talk about all of this when you're sober, okay?

*Gabrielle leaves. Christopher kicks one of the paintings under the bed. He plays a song... Gabrielle comes back and brandishes a seductive bra.*

**Gabrielle** – And you'll also have to explain to me how your burglars managed to forget this in the washing machine. Because it's not mine...

**Christopher** (*discomposed*) – One hell of a night, I tell you...

*Lights and satanic sound effects evoking hell.*

**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 brief moment of eternity*  
*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*  
*Crash Zone*  
*Crisis and Punishment*  
*Critical but stable*  
*Eurostar*  
*Four stars*  
*Fragile, handle with care*  
*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*  
*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*  
*Just like a Christmas movie*  
*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 Costa Mucho Castaways*  
*The Ideal Son-in-Law*  
*The Jackpot*  
*The Joker*  
*The perfect Son-in-Law*  
*The Performance is not cancelled*  
*The Smell of Money*  
*The Window across the courtyard*  
*The Worst Village in England*  
*Welcome aboard!*

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