

La Comédiathèque

*One small step
for a woman*

*One giant leap backward
for Mankind*

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Translation by the author

A couple of astronauts embarks on a mission to Mars, with the goal of establishing a colony and laying the foundations for a more humanistic society. However, a mysterious accident transforms their space journey into a time-traveling odyssey. Between a dystopian future and a past carrying the seeds of impending disasters, it may be tempting to want to rewrite history... and perhaps even the Bible!

Characters:

Joe
Mary
Brian

The character of Brian can be played by a woman, androgynous individual, or someone dressed as a man, or simply by a woman referred to as Briana.

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While the stage remains in complete darkness, a male voiceover (Brian's, who will appear later) is heard in an outrageously promotional style and tone.

Voiceover – Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the launchpad of Mars Mission Company! In just a few minutes, you will witness an event that will go down in the history of humanity. A century after the first man set foot on the Moon, it is now a woman's turn to make history by stepping onto the red planet following several months of interstellar travel. This extraordinary woman is named Mary. On this historic mission, she will be accompanied by Joe, not just as her co-pilot but also as her husband. However, Mars Mission Company's project doesn't end with this remarkable achievement. This heroic couple will lay the foundations for a true Martian city. A team will take over in two years to initiate the large-scale colonisation of this resource-rich and promising planet. In no more than five years, those eager to contribute to the conquest of a new world, defying the limits of the impossible, can join us. Ready to be part of this incredible adventure? Secure your spot on our website with an early deposit. But for now, let's extend our best wishes to these courageous pioneers who are paving the way to the stars. Even though they can't hear you from their spaceship, please applaud these two heroes, not only for their historic journey but also for celebrating their recent wedding. For Mary and Joe, this Mars mission is not just exploration but also a honeymoon. Ladies and gentlemen, let's give an enthusiastic ovation to Mary and Joe!

Applause from the audience with a background of science-fiction film music.

Instead of a voiceover, Brian can address the audience directly in front of the closed curtain (if there is one) or at the forefront of the still-darkened stage. In this case, Brian will come out at the conclusion of his speech while the audience applauds.

Lights come on or the curtain opens to reveal the set of a spaceship command centre, styled with a deliberate nod to B-movies. Rather than pursuing realism, the artificiality of this science-fiction set will be embraced. The name of the spaceship, the Marsflower, is indicated on a panel. Enter Mary, donned in a snug spacesuit, closely followed by Joe, who is similarly attired.

Mary – Go to hell, jerk!

Joe – Look, I don't know what you've heard, but I swear...

Mary – Sure, mock me on top of everything...

Joe – I've never slept with that girl! I don't even know her...

Mary – You don't know her? I introduced you to her...

Joe – Oh, right... maybe... I meant I don't know her... intimately.

Mary – If it were the first time, maybe. But you fucked all the astronauts at the base. Americans, Russians, Chinese, Japanese...

Joe – Oh, the Japanese, I assure you, no!

Mary – Thanks for reassuring me about the Japanese... And for once, I believe you.

A pause.

Joe – Okay, maybe I slept with Ivanovna once or twice. But that was before we got married!

Mary – We got married yesterday!

Joe – Fine... but before that, we hadn't officially pledged fidelity.

Mary – Naturally... Now that you've officially sworn to be faithful, you won't cheat on me anymore, will you?

Joe – We're going on a mission to Mars for three years! Even if I wanted to, I can't see how I'd manage to cheat on you...

Mary – You're really just a loser. Sometimes I question why I married you.

Joe – Don't take it that way... And admit it... A man and a woman, alone for three years in a space barely bigger than a grain silo...

Mary – If you think mere proximity is going to prevent you from becoming celibate during this round trip to Mars, you're in for a disappointment, believe me.

Joe – Be reasonable, Mary... You can't expect me to be celibate for three years...

Mary – So, if I understand correctly, you married me just to satisfy your sexual needs during this never-ending journey. You sure know how to charm a woman...

Joe – Well, Mary... You knew me before this marriage. At least by reputation... You know well that I'm not made for monogamy.

Mary – Then why did you marry me?

Joe – Mars Mission Company insisted that the selected astronaut couple be married. If you didn't want to be my wife, you could have given up on this mission...

Mary – And give up on being the first woman to set foot on Mars? You're kidding! And you, first of all... if you couldn't control your urges, you could have withdrawn your application.

Joe – Well, the rocket is taking off in a few moments. Whether we like it or not, it's too late to change our minds. We're going to spend three years together in a confined space. Three years! It might be a long time if we're at each other's throats, don't you think?

A while.

Mary – All my life, I've been waiting for this moment. Believe me, I've had to put in double the effort of a man to reach this point: to become the first human to step onto Mars. And to have that human be a woman...

Joe – I'm sure you've prepared a historic line to immortalise this moment. Like Armstrong when he set foot on the Moon...

Mary – Perhaps...

Joe – So, what is it?

Mary – No way I'm telling you.

Joe – If you don't have an idea yet, I have a suggestion...

Mary – Oh, really?

Joe (*theatrically*) – A small step for a man, a giant leap for a woman...

She gives him a deadly look.

Mary – Just goes to show that men who claim to love women are often the most misogynistic...

Brian enters, the charismatic and somewhat eccentric CEO of Mars Mission Company, with a carefully curated cool look reminiscent of Silicon Valley tech executives.

Brian – Dear friends, good morning! I wanted to personally come and wish you a safe journey.

Mary – Thank you, Brian...

Brian – Know that the whole world is watching you. Comrades, the future of humanity is in your hands.

Joe – Is he really a Silicon Valley CEO? Feels more like Stalin wishing Gagarin a safe journey...

Mary – Wasn't it Khrushchev, actually?

Brian – As you're well aware, the future of our planet is quite uncertain. Our universe is over thirteen billion years old, whereas Homo sapiens emerged only a few hundred thousand years ago. In the vast scope of this cosmic timeline, Man is but an infant. Yet, this infant has already trashed his cradle and set the house on fire.

Joe – Doesn't exactly inspire you to have kids, that's for sure...

Mary – Don't worry; it's not likely to happen to you. At least not with me.

Brian – What Mars Mission proposes is to start over from scratch. Somewhere else. And that somewhere else is the red planet. My friends, we are going to build a new world. A new civilisation. A new mankind.

Joe – I must admit, he does have a way with words...

Mary – A new mankind... And to think that they picked a guy like you to regenerate the race... We're in trouble...

Brian – You will be the first specimens of these new men! And humanity will be eternally grateful to you. Yes, we will all owe you a debt of gratitude forever...

Joe – Speaking of debts, I take this opportunity to remind you... I'm still waiting for that bank transfer to my account...

Brian – Rest assured, it's just a slight delay... And believe me, in the next three years, you won't have much chance to spend pocket money.

Mary – Three years... It's going to be quite a stretch.

Brian – Fortunately, you won't be alone.

Mary – Yes, that's exactly what I was thinking...

Brian – Admit that for a honeymoon, no husband has ever taken his wife this far...

Joe – Yes... It's already a nine-month journey to reach the intended honeymoon location...

Brian – Just tell yourselves that these nine months, you'll spend them in bed!

Joe – Lying in a freezer next to the bride is not the steamy idea I had for my wedding night...

Brian – You'll be in hibernation on the way there and back. You won't notice time passing! In reality, you'll only spend a year and a half on Mars. The time it takes for the alignment of this planet with Earth to allow the shortest possible return trip.

Mary – We won't have much time to get bored, that's for sure. With all we have to do over there...

Brian – Oh yes... You'll be laying the first stones of the first extraterrestrial city..

Joe – We'll do a bit more than laying the first stones, won't we...? We're going to build a part of the city. It won't be a walk in the park, like the first men on the Moon. I take a few steps, say a little phrase for history, plant a flag, and come back to parade on Fifth Avenue.

Mary – And all that in just a week.

Brian – Indeed... This is an even more significant achievement. Just think! You are pioneers! Why do you think I named this spacecraft the Marsflower?

Joe – Because we're going to Mars...

Mary – And you like flowers.

Brian – It's a nod to the first pioneers who departed Europe to colonise America. On the Mayflower, precisely.

Joe – Oh, I see, I didn't get that...

Brian – Your spacecraft is called the Marsflower. I will follow you in two years with a more complete team on the Aprilflower. And in five years, the first colonisers will arrive aboard an even larger spacecraft...

Mary – The Mayflower.

Brian – Exactly! Hoping that this poor Earth will hold out until then... Given the challenges posed by climate change and the international conflicts stemming from these recurrent natural disasters.

Joe – It's clear...

Brian – Russia invaded Poland, China invaded Taiwan, France invaded Monaco... We've never been so close to a nuclear conflagration! Even Switzerland has the atomic bomb, and threatens to annihilate Luxembourg... Yes, my friends, the survival of humanity is in your hands!

Mary – We'll do our best...

Brian – A brilliant future awaits you, rest assured.

Joe – If we survive this mission...

Brian – Do you know how many U.S. presidents are direct descendants of the Mayflower's small hundred passengers?

Mary – No.

Brian – Eight! Including George Bush father and son.

Joe – Great...

Brian – Not to mention some other celebrities like Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe, or Hugh Hefner!

Mary – Hugh Hefner?

Joe – He's the founder of Playboy magazine...

Brian – Joe, Mary... as I address you, I may be addressing the future President of the United States of Mars! And the first lady...

Lights start to flash.

Mary – Ah, I think we're about to leave. If you don't want to be on the first trip, now is the time to get off the rocket.

Brian – My dear friends, on behalf of all the shareholders of Mars Mission Company and all of humanity, I wish you good luck and a safe journey. And I'll see you on Mars in two years!

He hugs each of them successively and exits the spacecraft.

Joe – He's completely nuts, isn't he? Do you think we can trust him...?

Mary – It's a bit late to think about it.

Joe approaches the window supposed to be facing the audience.

Joe – If only the weather were good. But it's pouring rain...

Mary – Yeah... We're sitting on a big wet firework ready to ignite and send us to the sky.

Joe – It seems to be getting to you, doesn't it...? I'm feeling hot too. Maybe we still have time to...

Mary (*looking at the control screens*) – The countdown has started. We're taking off in less than ten minutes. It's time to get back to our cryogenic chambers. Nine months of hibernation at minus 200 degrees should be enough to cool your ardor.

Joe – Well... Let's go then...

Mary – We'll finally find out if the light in the fridge stays on or not when the door is closed...

The lights start to flash even faster. They exit. Then suddenly, it goes dark.

Black.

Sounds of a rocket taking off are heard, accompanied by flashes of light, like visual and auditory effects from a B-movie science-fiction film.

Black.

Same set. Joe arrives, stretching and yawning.

Joe – That's what you call a lie-in... How can you be so tired after sleeping for (*looking at his watch*) 5762 hours...? Well, the good news is that we're still alive. So, where are we at? (*He looks through the window facing the audience*) Oh, damn, we're already landed on Mars... As we were still asleep, they must have switched to autopilot from Houston...

Mary arrives as well.

Mary – Are you already awake?

Joe – Yes...

Mary – For a long time?

Joe – It's been an hour or two...

Mary – Really?

Joe – Slept well?

Mary – I don't know... I don't even feel like I've slept... At least, I didn't dream.

Joe – Or maybe we're still dreaming now...

Like Joe, Mary approaches the window.

Mary – No? We're already landed on the red planet!

Joe – I got out of the freezer a bit before you, so I took charge.

Mary – You could have woken me up!

Joe – You seemed to be sleeping so deeply... I leaned over your cryogenic chamber, like Prince Charming over Sleeping Beauty... You were completely stiff... A bit purple in complexion... You looked like a frozen steak...

Mary – Thanks.

Joe – I did consider giving you a wake-up kiss, but considering our frosty farewell...

Mary – And since we've landed, what have you been up to...?

Joe – You were still asleep, so I went for a little walk outside.

Mary freezes.

Mary – You didn't do that?

Joe – No, don't worry... You'll be the first to walk on Mars.

Mary – Don't joke about such a thing. I could kill for less than that...

Joe – Anyway, even if I had done it, no one would ever know; there was no camera.

Mary – I would know... Did you do it or not?

Joe – Who knows...

Mary – Well, in any case, get all the equipment running again. Call Houston, and turn on the camera to immortalise my first steps on the planet Mars.

Joe – Okay...

Mary – I'll freshen up, and I'll put on my best spacesuit... Might as well look my best for the few steps that separate me from Martian dust... Can you imagine? These images will forever be in all history books!

Joe – Haven't forgotten your little phrase, have you?

Mary – No, don't worry.

Joe – So...?

Mary – A small step for a woman, a giant leap forward for all women...

Joe – Yeah...

Mary – What?

Joe – Yeah, yeah, that's... that's good...

Mary – I'm going...

Joe – Mary...

Mary – What now?

Joe – Are you still mad at me?

Mary – About what? About cheating on me with a girl I introduced to you as my best friend?

Joe – That was nine months ago...

Mary – We spent them in hibernation! For me, it was yesterday!

Joe – I'm really sorry...

Mary – Well, if you don't mind, the whole world is waiting for me to set foot on Mars, and I haven't even decided which one yet... The right one...? The left one...? I'm sure journalists from around the world will try to see a political message in it...

Joe – If you can't decide, you can always jump in with both feet...

Mary – I'm afraid that wouldn't be very elegant.

She exits.

Black.

Still in the dark, Joe and Mary come in with a birthday cake on which two lit candles are planted. They sing in unison.

Joe and Mary – Happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us, happy birthday to us...

They blow out the candles together, and the scene is plunged back into darkness. Light.

Mary – We're going completely crazy.

Joe – No wonder... It's been two years since we left Earth...

Mary – And over a year since we landed on Mars...

Joe – Still, when we look outside, it's hard to get used to it...

Mary – Yeah...

Joe – It felt the same way when I first landed in Texas...

Mary – Here, it looks more like the Grand Canyon, doesn't it?

Joe – I was mainly talking about the atmosphere...

Mary – Ah, yes...

Joe – It's true that beyond the magic of the first days, Mars could get a bit boring.

Mary – And Brian selling it to us as the new El Dorado...

Joe – That guy could sell ice to Eskimos.

Mary – And even if it were paradise... A French philosopher said that hell is other people... I'm more inclined to think that hell is being condemned to an eternal tête-à-tête.

Joe – Thanks for that, really...

Mary – I understand that after a while, Adam and Eve wanted to get out of the Garden of Eden.

Joe looks out the window.

Joe – This is not my idea of paradise, for sure...

Mary – And this spaceship is already a complete wreck. Nothing works anymore! The washing machine is broken, there's no hot water, the video player gave up the ghost...

Joe – Anyway, only three more months to endure, and we'll be back home.

Mary – If the rocket engine holds up until then.

Joe – It's a new engine based on completely revolutionary technology.

Mary – I didn't even understand how it works...

Joe – Me neither... Let's hope this thruster doesn't break down too, because fixing it must be more complicated than your electric car engine...

Mary – I don't know, I've never lifted the hood. When there's no more water in the windshield washer, I take it to the garage for a check-up...

Joe – Yeah, setting foot on Mars is nice, but I can't wait to get back down to Earth.

Mary – Earth may not be a paradise, but at least it's home: we can shower every day, go shopping once a week, go to the hairdresser once a month, and get waxed once a year...

A pause.

Joe – And when you say home, you mean...?

Mary – I mean each to their own home.

Joe – So you still haven't forgiven me...

Mary – I think I'm going to find it very hard.

Joe – Yet, for two years, I've never looked at another girl but you, I swear...

Mary – You didn't find any Martian to your liking?

Joe – The only Martian I want is you.

Mary – Because there are no others...

A pause.

Joe – One day off, and it also happens to be our wedding anniversary. Just a gentle reminder, our marriage hasn't even been consummated yet...

She appears hesitant.

Mary – Alright, let's call a truce. (Joe lights up with happiness) How about a game of Scrabble?

He expresses disappointment.

Joe – You brought Scrabble to Mars?

Mary – Well, surprise!

Joe – I didn't know.

Mary – I've been saving it for a special occasion.

Joe – Fine, Scrabble it is... It's not exactly the anniversary celebration I had in mind, but sure.

They set up the game, draw their letters, place them on their racks, and start thinking. Mary starts and places her seven letters on the board.

Mary – Cheater...

Joe catches the hint and reflects before strategically placing his letters on the board.

Joe – Sorry...

They exchange a meaningful look before reaching for more letters in the bag.

Mary – Betrayal...

Joe – Clemency...

They grab more letters from the bag.

Mary – Lie...

Joe – Love...

They share another meaningful glance, and Mary appears to weigh her decision with a hint of hesitation.

Mary – Alright, you win... I'm willing to let bygones be bygones.

Joe – After all, as Brian would say, we're a bit like Adam and Eve... not much of a choice, are we?

Mary – Don't push it too far; I can still change my mind.

They share a passionate kiss, and suddenly, the doorbell rings.

Joe – Who could that be at this hour?

Mary – What time is it anyway?

Joe – We're on Mars; it's hard to tell.

Mary – More importantly, does anyone even ring doorbells on Mars?

Joe – I didn't even know we had a doorbell.

Mary – Neither did I.

Another doorbell sound.

Joe – It's quite creepy, actually.

Mary – Do you think Jehovah's Witnesses could have tracked us down here?

They turn their gaze to the control panel.

Joe – It's coming from the control panel... (*Joe approaches the screen*) Another one of Brian's pranks... It's him calling.

Mary – By the way, he still owes us money.

Joe answers the call, and Mary joins him in front of the screen as the charismatic voice of Brian, the demagogue, resonates.

Brian (*off*) – Dear friends, hello! I wanted to personally wish you a happy anniversary! How are our two heroes?

Joe – Hello, Brian... Well, you know... we're holding up just fine...

Brian – Not too overwhelmed, I hope?

Joe – We were right in the midst of a...

Mary – A captivating game of Scrabble!

Brian – Ah, it's Sunday, after all! A day for a bit of leisure....

Joe – Ah, it's Sunday...

Mary – Indeed, we were wondering...

Joe – That's probably why we're even more bored than usual...

Brian – And what about the progress on the new Martian city? How are the developments unfolding?

Mary – Well... Fine...

Joe – In fact, we're even a bit ahead of planned schedule...

Mary – Since we really have nothing else to do but work...

Joe – Yes... At this rate, we should finish a month early...

Brian – Excellent, truly excellent...

Mary – Although, it's mostly the robots handling the lion's share of the workload...

Joe – We must acknowledge they've done a great job.

Mary – But it doesn't seem to make you happy.

Brian – No, no, of course, obviously, it's just that... it's the first time a real estate program will be completed before the expected delivery date, isn't it?

Joe – Uh-huh...

Brian – I mean... On Earth, it's typically the opposite, isn't it? Construction projects tend to lag behind schedule...

Mary – Yes, we got it...

Brian – Well, I won't bother you for too long... If you've just started a game of Scrabble...

Mary – You see, here, we find ourselves in such a state of ennui... Occasionally, we wish we were disturbed more often...

Joe – It's incredibly quiet... It's almost scary...

Mary – We've reached a point where we actually miss the noisy neighbours we left in our rundown building in the Houston suburbs.

Brian – I understand... As Pascal said, "The eternal silence of the infinite spaces frightens me"...

Joe – Pascal said that? Who's Pascal anyway...?

Mary (*to Joe*) – Another French philosopher, I guess...

Brian – But, dear friends, rest assured that we'll shatter this silence! Mars will soon resonate with the voices of the colonists who will join you in the coming years... and perhaps with the laughter of the children destined to be born on the red planet, populating this new world before us!

Joe – Well, we're mostly looking forward to going back to Earth. I must admit, we've already begun marking off the days on the calendar...

Mary – In exactly 98 days we'll be on our way back home...

Brian – Precisely, and that's precisely why I'm reaching out to you...

Joe – What do you mean?

Brian – I bring both good news and bad news...

Mary – Let's start with the bad news...

Brian – The sale of tickets to Mars for the colonists hasn't taken off as quickly as we had hoped...

Joe – So what?

Brian – The Objective Mars Company is still in the red, and our Wall Street debut saw our stock price plummet from \$50 to a mere 10 cents...

Mary – A hundred times less?

Brian – If my calculations are correct, it's actually 500 times less.

Joe – And the bulk of our compensation was supposed to come from stock options...

Mary – So, is that the bad news?

Brian – Not entirely...

Joe – I dread to hear it...

Mary – Come on, spill the beans...

Brian – Failing to secure the necessary funds, we've fallen behind on the construction of the Aprilflower, the ship intended for my journey to Mars with the replacement team.

Joe – So what?

Brian – Unfortunately, it won't be ready by the scheduled date... And since the most favourable planetary alignment for your return to Earth happens only once every 18 months, you'll have to endure a bit more before making your way back.

Mary – Another year and a half stuck on this planet!

Brian – Yet, consider this! There are countless people who would jump at the chance to be in your position!

Joe – Yeah, right... If there were that many, you would have already sold all your one-way tickets to Mars...

Mary – And what's the good news?

Brian – I've finally managed to deposit an advance into your bank account!

Joe – How much?

Brian – \$500... I know we promised you \$500,000...

Mary – 5000 times less?

Brian – It's only 1000 times less, if I'm not mistaken.

Joe (to Mary) – If he weren't 78 million kilometres away, I would have strangled him by now...

Brian – I'm confident our financial situation will swiftly turn around. I'm actively seeking new investors, and...

Mary – You mean new suckers, like us...

Brian – I must go now; there's another call coming in. Oh, I believe it's the bank, actually... Best of luck, and congratulations once again You are writing a page in the history of humanity...

Joe – Hey, hold on!

Mary – Are you absolutely certain there's no alternative?

The communication is abruptly cut. Joe and Mary look at each other, clearly furious and dejected.

Joe – Damn it, another year and a half...

Mary – It will be almost five years...

Joe – The last time I spent that much time in one place was in prison...

She looks at him in astonishment.

Mary – You've been to prison?

Joe – Do you honestly believe they could find a volunteer with a clean criminal record to board this ramshackle spaceship, powered by an experimental engine?

Mary – And the prison stint, what was it for?

A pause.

Joe – You go first... Why did you sign up for this suicide mission? Don't tell me it's just for the glory...

Mary – It's a long story, one I might share someday when we find a moment.

Joe – We've just added eighteen months to our sentence. We've got two and a half years looming ahead.

Mary – Yeah... Provided he can gather enough funds to finish constructing Aprilflower and swoop in to relieve us by then...

Joe – If the Objective Mars Company goes bankrupt, we're definitely in trouble...

Mary – I'd rather not dwell on it.

Joe – Five years of absence, can you imagine?

Mary – Yes, I find it hard to imagine our return to Earth... when five years pass.

Joe – Everything is moving so fast now... Five years feels like an eternity! Just think about it—you depart just before the internet boom, and you return five years later... You're completely out of sync.

Mary – It's true... No significant discoveries for millions of years, and suddenly there's a major change every decade or so.

Joe – And we're only discussing positive changes. There's also the looming risk of a general systemic collapse...

Mary – Regardless, I doubt we'll endure two more years of filling our evenings with Scrabble games....

Joe – You're right... We'll have to explore other ways to keep ourselves occupied...

They throw themselves into each other's arms, sharing a passionate kiss.

Blackout

Joe arrives, looking cheerful, with a suitcase in each hand. Mary follows with a rolling suitcase. As mentioned before, realism is not the goal, but rather a generative comic discrepancy.

Joe – It's official this time! We're leaving!

Mary – Just need to drop off the keys at the front desk.

Joe – Fingers crossed they overlook the minibar charges; we've had quite a bit to drink in five years.

Mary – Considering all the money they owe us...

Joe steps forward, facing the audience.

Joe – The entire world will remember the day we arrived on the red planet; personally, I will never forget the day we left.

Mary – Just received a message from Brian. Aprilflower is already orbiting Mars. They'll be here in an hour.

Joe – I can't endure it any longer... Another week, and I might have lost my mind.

Mary – We finished assembling these habitation modules over a year ago...

Joe – And when it comes to tourism, Mars is quite limited.

Mary – Even if it looks like the Grand Canyon...

Joe – Who would contemplate spending three years in the Grand Canyon?

Mary – You go there, snap a few photos, and you leave.

Joe – And Scrabble, honestly... When you're bored out of your mind on vacation, maybe. But playing it morning, noon, and night for two years...

Mary – I'll never play Scrabble again in my life.

Joe – Well, we did more than just play Scrabble, after all...

He kisses her.

Mary – No... And precisely, on that note...

Joe – What?

Mary – I have some news to share.

Joe – Oh, really...

Mary – Can't you guess?

Joe – No...

Mary – I'm pregnant.

Joe – From me?

Mary – From who else? E.T.?

Joe – I thought you were on the pill.

Mary – Apparently, even in 2073, contraception isn't foolproof.

Joe – We engaged in as many bedroom activities as Scrabble games...

Mary – So?

Joe – So what?

Mary – Conceal your joy...

Joe – We're on Mars... And it will take us nine months to return to Earth. I can't picture myself playing midwife...

Mary – We'll be in hibernation during the trip. I assume the baby will be too...

Joe – You think so?

Mary – I don't know. It's uncharted territory. Typically, we freeze the eggs. I don't know what happens when you freeze the mother along with them...

Joe – Do you think we should inform him?

Mary – Tell Brian? What would it change?

Joe – Nothing...

Mary – We just have to hope that this embryo is indeed yours and not some space creature that visited me in my sleep. Because if it keeps developing while its mother is in the freezer, the movie won't be E.T., it'll be Alien...

Joe – It's strange; suddenly, this return journey doesn't excite me as much...

A doorbell rings.

Mary – Another prank?

Joe – No, this time, I think someone really rang at the entrance airlock...

Joe steps out and returns with Brian, who exudes a hippie-Catholic vibe reminiscent of the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Brian – Hello! Sorry, I'm a little early.

Mary – We were expecting you eighteen months ago...

Joe – Are you alone?

Brian – The others are still in orbit. I preferred to come as a scout with the shuttle to make sure everything was in order to welcome these missionaries of modern times...

Mary – Everything is ready, don't worry.

Brian stands in front of the window.

Brian – Oh yes, you've done an extraordinary job. It's truly impressive.

Joe – The first Martian village...

Brian – It's beautiful!

Mary – Yes... It looks a bit like a campsite with mobile homes... or a Palestinian refugee camp, but well...

Joe – I understand why customers aren't flocking in.

Brian – In any case, congratulations!

Joe – Thank you... But I won't conceal the fact that now, we're truly eager to return. How's Earth?

Brian looks embarrassed.

Brian – Well... It's fine...

Mary – Is it just fine, or...?

Brian – Yes, yes, it's fine.

Joe – Don't tell me that the Messiah has returned to save humanity, and we're no longer needed for the job?

Brian – Jesus has not returned yet, I can confirm that. For now, I'm filling in for him.

Joe – Well, that's a relief...

Mary – We've had ample time to make a list of the first things we plan to do when we get back. And believe me, it's a long list.

Joe looks at Mary.

Joe – I'll start by having a juicy steak. Having frozen soy steak as the daily special for every meal during the first six months is bearable, but beyond a year...

Mary – And I'll kick things off with a relaxing bath...

Brian – It's true; there's a bit of a wild animal scent in here.

Joe (*looking ominous*) – Animals in cages, that's exactly what we've become, Brian. With Scrabble and fornication as our only distractions...

Mary – We're still meeting the relief team, right? Your missionaries, as you like to call them...

Brian – I don't think it's very necessary... And I understand that you're eager to leave...

Joe – Too bad; we had planned a karaoke night to welcome them.

Mary – Followed by a Strip Scrabble tournament.

Brian – Strip Scrabble?

Mary – It's like Strip Poker but with Scrabble. Since we didn't have a deck of cards.

Joe – So, the loser of the game removes an item of clothing.

Mary – We've become experts at it.

Joe – Do you know how to spell the word coccyx?

Mary – It's a small bone we have in the butt, with a very complicated spelling.

Brian – Well, no...

Joe – And I imagine you don't know how many points it scores?

Brian seems a bit stunned.

Brian – I must express my gratitude once again for all you've done...

Mary – Well, I hope you're a fan of board games because, you'll see, it's pleasant here, but it lacks a bit of liveliness.

Joe – Especially on Sunday evenings...

Brian – Well, I won't keep you then... I'm going to join Aprilflower to oversee the Mars landing manoeuvres... Dear friends, have a safe journey. And best of luck with your return to Earth...

He exits. The two exchange a concerned glance.

Mary – He seemed a bit uneasy when we inquired about Earth, didn't he?

Joe – Yes... And he didn't seem enthusiastic about us interacting with his modern-time missionaries.

Mary – Probably to avoid discourage them... He might be afraid they'd change their minds.

Joe – Still a long shot. What characterises a missionary is never changing their position.

Mary – Very funny...

Joe – Yeah... but I wonder if we'll find much to laugh about when we return. What if Earth has become uninhabitable?

Mary – More uninhabitable than Mars, you mean...?

Joe – You're right. It can't be worse than here...

Mary – I hope... because for now, we don't have a backup planet...

Joe – Who'd choose to spend their life in a frozen desert with an atmosphere that's dissipated into space?

Mary – Yes, it's on Earth that we're destined to spend the rest of our days.

Joe – And it's on Earth that our child is destined to live... after being conceived on another planet.

Mary – That's also a first...

Joe – Do you think we're the first to have done the deed somewhere other than Earth?

Mary – Thanks for sparing me a historic phrase to mark this premiere.

Joe – A fast one for a man, a giant leap for humanity.

Mary – Well, enough joking... It's time to prepare for liftoff.

The doorbell rings again.

Joe – Him again?

Mary – This time, he's calling us via video...

They stand in front of the control panel.

Joe – Brian? Did you forget to tell us something?

Brian – Yes... And it's a matter... a bit delicate.

Mary – Go on...

Brian – When you asked me how Earth was doing earlier, I didn't want to spoil the mood. You seemed so eager to reunite with your home planet, your family, your friends...

Joe – But...?

Brian – The world you're going to find is no longer the one you left behind when you embarked on this journey.

Mary – What do you mean? What happened?

There's a crackling sound, and Brian's voice is interrupted.

Brian – A few months after your departure... The situation suddenly... Life on Earth has become...

The communication is abruptly cut.

Joe – We've lost the connection...

Mary – What should we do?

Joe – We're going back! What else can we do? Don't forget, you're pregnant...

Mary – Trust me, I haven't forgotten that... You're right, let's return home and assess the situation...

Joe – After all, maybe it's better that we don't know what awaits us there...

Mary – True. By the time we get there in nine months, things might have improved...

Joe – Or they could be worse...

Mary – Thanks for uplifting thoughts.

Joe – Well, let's proceed...

Joe and Mary take their seats at the command centre, focusing on their tasks

Mary – Ready for liftoff?

Joe – Automatic procedure initiated.

Mary – Everything is so automated in this mission...

Joe – Probably because, before stepping onto this rocket, our only piloting experience involved electric cars.

Mary – Yeah... Sometimes, one wonders if sending robots wouldn't have been a better choice. Or monkeys...

Joe – At least, a robot never gets bored...

Mary – It doesn't eat. It doesn't fuck.

Joe – And it doesn't risk a contraception accident.

Mary – Are you subtly blaming me? Do you think I did it intentionally?

Joe – Not at all...

Mary – hen let's just get into our hypothermic chambers.

Joe – If some alien devours us during this journey, know that you're the only woman I've truly loved. Even though I accidentally slept with a few other Earth women...

Mary – Thanks, that really warms my heart...

They share a kiss.

Joe – Here we go.

Mary – See you on Earth in nine months.

They exit.

Black

The sound of a rocket taking off is heard, followed by a strange noise indicating a malfunction, and ominous flashes of light.

Joe returns to the command centre, still a bit sleepy. He is followed by Mary, in the same state. They take their seats.

Joe – Everything okay?

Mary – I'm freezing...

Joe – Nine months at minus 200 degrees... It's enough to catch a cold.

Mary – Do you think we stop aging while we're in these hypothermic chambers?

Joe – What's certain is that we stop living.

Mary – You're right, we don't see time passing. I feel like we left yesterday.

Joe – Thankfully. Nine months of the journey counting the kilometres that bring us closer to Earth, can you imagine? Seventy-eight million kilometres... I did the calculation, it's seventy-eight million times the distance between our home and the bus stop...

Mary – Yes, assuming there's one kilometre between our home and the bus stop... And how long did it take you to do the calculation?

Joe – What, isn't that right?

Mary looks at him.

Mary – You, at least, haven't changed at all.

Joe – Thank you.

Mary – You're still as stupid.

Joe – Well, you haven't changed either, and you still have a fresh complexion... You're even a bit frosty...

Mary – Maybe on Earth, we should consider sleeping in a freezer.

Joe – We spend half our time sleeping. We'd live twice as long.

Mary – Surprisingly, my belly hasn't grown at all...

Joe – I hope the baby is okay...

Mary – I feel like I can sense it moving.

Joe – Nine months it's been in there... And it'll have to wait another nine months.

Mary – How's the return shaping up?

Joe stands in front of the window, gazing out into space.

Joe – Here we are, already in orbit around Earth...

Mary joins him by the window, sharing the view.

Mary – It's a relief to see home again.

Joe – Feels like a horse catching a whiff of the stable...

Mary – Well, it's been smelling like a stable in this flying trash can for the past few months. Are the toilets still clogged?

Joe – Yeah, and it doesn't smell like a bouquet of roses...

Mary – I can't help but wonder in what condition we'll find Earth...

Joe – Is our planet still hospitable?

Mary – Do you think...?

Joe – If there was a nuclear war...

Mary – It's hard to tell from up here.

Joe – From space, Earth appears unchanged, but down there...

Mary leans over the instruments, noticing something odd.

Mary – That's strange...

Joe – What is it?

Mary – According to the dashboard, we're not...

Joe – Don't tell me this planet isn't Earth?

Mary – No, this planet is indeed Earth, but we're not...

Joe – Well, spill it... I mean...

Mary – Look at the computer clock... We're not in 2074...

Joe – Would a few more months have brought us straight to 2075?

Mary – I'd prefer you see this for yourself...

He leans over the screen.

Joe – 7074... Is this some kind of joke?

Mary – I'm not sure clocks have much of a sense of humour.

Joe – It might just be malfunctioning...

Mary – My watch shows the same date and time... To the second.

Joe checks his own watch.

Joe – Mine too...

Mary – How is that possible...?

Joe – It shouldn't be.

Mary – And yet... Take a closer look at Earth... Don't you notice anything...?

Joe – No more ice at both poles...

Mary – It couldn't have melted completely in nine months.

Joe – The planet is now just a vast ocean.

Mary – Yes... There's hardly any land visible.

Joe – What could have happened?

Mary – Time travel, something only exists in books, right?

Joe – The hypothermic chamber... Maybe there was a malfunction.

Mary – Or, perhaps, we made a mistake in setting the freezing time nine months ago...

Joe – You handled it, don't you remember?

Mary – Anyway... Were we supposed to remain frozen for five thousand years?

Joe – Then it wouldn't be a real time travel.

Mary – We would've simply been asleep for five millennia.

Joe – And we'd have been orbiting Earth for five thousand years?

Mary – Someone would have noticed us, don't you think?

Joe – If a nuclear war had recently erupted, maybe there's no life left on Earth... or the few survivors can't manage to build a rocket anymore.

Mary – Either way, we can't stay here orbiting forever. And, just to jog your memory, I'm pregnant.

Joe – Five thousand years... Now we can truly talk about the longest pregnancy in history.

A pause.

Mary – What will we find down there?

Joe – Did humanity survive its flaws?

Mary – Has all of this evolved for the better or for the worse?

Joe – And if the better turns out to be the worse...?

A pause.

Mary – What do you mean by that?

Joe – I have no idea... It just slipped out like that... I must have come across it somewhere.

Mary – Maybe in "Brave New World"...

Joe – We see no signs of life.

Mary – One thing's for sure, no one is waiting for us.

Joe – What if we're received as potentially dangerous extraterrestrials?

Mary – Yeah... Except we're all alone, and we don't have another planet to go back to if we're not welcomed here...

Joe – Five millennia... Considering how the world changed in our last ten years on Earth...

Mary – Picture a prehistoric man landing in the world we left behind? Could he really adapt?

Joe – Conversely, what if humanity had regressed to a primitive state?

Mary – And imagine if dinosaurs were roaming again...

Joe – It certainly wouldn't be any simpler. I wonder which scenario I'd prefer...

Mary – Anyway, everyone we once knew is gone, and we've been completely forgotten.

Joe – Or perhaps we're immortalized in history books as the first to set foot on Mars.

Mary – Can you fathom how thick those history books would be? Five thousand years...

Joe – There must be multiple volumes...

Mary – I wouldn't want to go back to school in 7069.

Joe – Clearly.

Mary – Anyway, if Earth has transformed into a hell, future humans will likely judge past humans very harshly.

Joe – We'll be perceived as monsters.

Mary – We'll be held accountable for crimes against humanity.

Joe – We might end up in prison.

Mary – Or perhaps we'll be viewed as sideshow attractions.

Joe – They could confine us to a zoo.

Mary – Or a laboratory. As guinea pigs for analysis.

Joe – Maybe even stuffed in a museum.

Mary – Or preserved in a jar of formaldehyde.

Joe – And if humans have become cannibals...

Mary – We light just end up in a cooking pot...

Joe – Anyway, we don't have a choice...

Mary – No... This child won't spend its life in a space cabin.

Joe – And neither will we...

Mary – Let's initiate the landing manoeuvres... And whatever will be, will be...

They begin the preparations. Joe leans over the control screens.

Joe – Wait a moment...

Mary – What?

Joe – A spacecraft is approaching...

Mary – Really...?

Joe – At the very least, it suggests there are still humans on Earth, and they haven't regressed to prehistoric times...

Mary – I see it now...

Joe – I can even make out the name of the spacecraft on the hull...

Mary – No way... Aprilflower!

Joe – It's Brian! But what is he doing here?

Mary – It seems he's taken a leap into the future as well.

Joe – Or perhaps he got stuck, just like us, for five thousand years in his freezer...

Mary – Both ships were constructed on the same model. If one of the hypothermic chambers malfunctions, it's no surprise the other does too...

A doorbell rings.

Joe – Who could it be?

Mary – Who do you think? It can only be him!

Joe – Already?

Mary – Well, go open the door!

Joe – Maybe he can shed some light on what happened...

Joe goes out and returns with Brian, now adorned in a tunic and sporting a lengthy beard, reminiscent of a hippie or even a portrayal of God the Father.

Mary – Brian? What happened to you?

Brian – I let my beard grow.

Joe – For five thousand years?

Brian – Well actually... I arrived here six months ago.

Joe – So, you didn't stay on Mars?

Brian – After a year on the red planet, I absolutely had to come back... Colonists weren't exactly rushing to buy tickets, Objective Mars Company went bankrupt... and Earth was on the brink of nuclear apocalypse.

Mary – And what about the others? The missionaries...

Brian – They remained on Mars... The first colonists had just joined them on the Mayflower...

Joe – And you left them there...?

Brian – We had some malfunctions... Only one of the three ships was still capable of making the return trip. I was supposed to go back to Mars with spare parts, but, like you, when I emerged from hibernation, I realized that five thousand years had passed...

Mary – You left after us and arrived before us?

Brian – Six months earlier, yes... It's bizarre...

Joe – If only that were the bizarre part of this story...

Brian – I thought I was the sole survivor of this Martian mission... I'm relieved to see you.

Mary – So, you've been orbiting Earth for six months?

Brian – I descended... and then ascended.

Joe – Is it that bad?

Brian seems embarrassed.

Mary – You can share everything with us, you know... In any case, we'll find out sooner or later...

Brian – There's no one left on Earth...

Joe – No one?

Brian – Apparently, humanity is a race that eventually extinguished itself, after eliminating all others...

Joe – So we're the last survivors...

Mary – But what happened?

Brian – Hard to say... There are no more traces or historical records.

Mary – And when you left Earth? You told us things were pretty bad...

Brian – The third world war, nuclear this time, had just erupted. Half the world was already uninhabitable due to radiation and rising waters. It probably didn't get better after I left...

Joe – And now, what's happening down there?

Brian – Only a small part of Earth has become habitable again, on one of the few remaining surfaces above water.

Mary – Some kind of Garden of Eden.

Brian – Yes... But without Adam and Eve...

Joe – And you? Why stay here? In orbit.

Brian – It's not like we would find the world we knew down there. When we were hungry, we went to the restaurant. When we were cold, we turned on the heating. When we were hot, we turned on the air conditioning. When we had long hair, we went to the hairdresser. When we went to the toilet, we flushed...

Mary – Yeah, we get it...

Brian – I didn't feel like playing Robinson Crusoe on a deserted island. After all those years traveling in space, I still preferred this ship, the last traces of the civilisation we knew, and what's left of our modern comfort...

Joe – I see...

Brian – I stayed in orbit... Observing the world from afar... Like God...

Mary – God...?

A pause.

Brian – But come to think of it, since you're here, you could be the new Adam and Eve!

Joe – Pardon?

Brian – Picture this: Your Garden of Eden awaits you! You could repopulate Earth. We start from scratch... and we rebuild humanity on more... humanistic foundations.

Mary – Repopulate Earth all by myself...? Do you think I'm some kind of rabbit?

Joe – I would also be in favour of a single child.

Mary – And then, I didn't quite understand that part of the story in the Bible. Are our kids supposed to, you know, get together with their siblings?

Brian – That's one of the many mysteries of that ancient book. Unfortunately, it's riddled with inconsistencies...

Mary – Regardless, a decision needs to be made. We can't keep orbiting Earth for the rest of our days...

Joe – Either we crash headlong like kamikazes to finally put an end to humanity once and for all, or...

Brian – While you think it over, do you mind if I use your toilet? Mine has been clogged for five thousand years.

He exits. The other two exchange a worried look.

Joe – He's even more cracked than before...

Mary – He thinks he's God! And he takes us for Adam and Eve...

Joe – So what do we do?

Mary – We can't linger in orbit forever.

Joe – Especially with this impending child.....

A pause.

Mary – Yet, I can't fathom the idea of us becoming castaways on a deserted island either.

Brian returns.

Joe – Feeling any better?

Brian – Apparently, your toilets are clogged too...

Mary – Sorry, I forgot to mention it.

Joe – Yeah, we're really in deep trouble.

Brian – Have you considered my proposal?

Joe – Uh... yes...

Brian – And I can't help but sense that you're not exactly thrilled about it...

Mary – Repopulate the planet just the two of us while you play the third wheel...?

Brian – If you insist... I can contribute my little seed...

A pause.

Joe – I have an idea...

Mary – You're scaring me.

Joe – What if we return to Mars? Perhaps a civilization thrived among the initial colonists there?

Mary – The passengers of the Mayflower...

Brian – I thought about it, but I didn't feel like making the trip alone... My ship had some malfunctions, and I'm not an engineer either...

Mary – Maybe we can help you fix it, right Joe...?

Brian – The most complex thing I've ever fixed was a scooter, but I'm willing to give it a shot.

Mary – Since we're not keen on reenacting Adam and Eve, we won't aimlessly orbit the Garden of Eden, waiting for spontaneous generation...

Brian – Well... OK...

Joe – Go ahead. I'll grab my toolbox and join you...

Brian – I'm heading out...

Brian departs. Joe and Mary exchange a perplexed look.

Joe – I can't help but wonder what awaits us on Mars...

Mary – If people managed to survive there for five thousand years, they must have built a genuine civilization. Five thousand years is the span between the construction of the first pyramids in Egypt and the first human step on the Moon...

Joe – True. So, why wouldn't they have resettled Earth?

Mary – Initially, the planet was uninhabitable due to radiation. And perhaps, later on, they lacked the technological means for the journey.

Joe – Let's go back to Mars. We'll discover what lies in store for us there...

Blackout

New rocket engine sounds.

New flashes.

Joe and Mary arrive, still half-asleep. They look out the window.

Joe – If this is Mars, the red planet has undergone quite a transformation in five thousand years. It's blue!

Mary – It's so confusing...

Joe – To paraphrase a French poet, Mars is blue like an orange...

They glance outside again.

Mary – It's not Mars...

Joe – It's still Earth!

Mary – There must have been an engine failure...

Joe – So, we haven't moved!

Mary checks the control panel.

Mary – In space, no...

Joe – Another leap forward?

Mary – More like a significant leap backward this time.

Joe looks at the indicators as well.

Joe – Minus seven thousand years! We're just a year before the birth of Jesus Christ...

Mary – This can't be explained by a malfunction in the cryogenic chamber. It's clearly a case of time travel.

Joe – In this case, a journey back into the past.

Mary – Maybe this new experimental engine is causing temporal hiccups...

Joe – One small step for a man, one giant leap backward for humanity...

Mary – At least, this time, we know what to expect if we land on Earth... It's all in the history books.

Joe – Anyway, no need to go back to Mars. We're in the time of the Roman Empire... There's still no one there.

Mary – And what about Brian?

Joe – Who knows...

Mary – We have no choice; we must make a landing...

Joe – Regardless, the ship is no longer in a state to lift off. All the indicators are flashing red.

Mary – Let's go for it. What do we have to lose...?

Joe – Initiating descent...

He works on the controls.

Mary – The ship is spiralling out of control; I can't predict our landing spot...

Joe – As long as we touch down in one piece... but it's not guaranteed...

Blackout

New rocket engine sounds.

New flashes.

Joe and Mary slump in their seats, appearing visibly shocked. This time, Mary sports an enormous belly.

Joe – Are you okay?

Mary – I'm okay... But I have this strange feeling...

Joe – Please don't tell me we've time-traveled again...

Mary looks at her belly.

Mary – Apparently, nine months.

Joe examines the control screens.

Joe – Yes... We leaped forward exactly 243 days. We're just a few weeks away from the birth of Jesus Christ.

Mary (*placing her hands on her belly*) – I'm not sure I can make it a few more weeks... The landing was quite rough, wasn't it...?

Joe looks at the control screens again.

Joe – I think this time the Marsflower won't take off again... It's not a control screen; it's a Christmas tree. Every light is flashing...

Mary – Where did we land?

Joe – No idea...

He turns to her and finally notices her enlarged belly.

Joe – But... your belly is huge!

Mary – Nine months have passed, and since this time, we weren't in hibernation within our cryogenic chambers...

Joe – Nine months without food and water, logically, we shouldn't have made it...

Mary – You're right, it's not logical...

Joe – I think at this point, we'd better stop looking for logic in this story.

Mary – Here we are on Earth. Just before the beginning of the New Testament...

Joe – To think that, initially, we set out to colonise Mars...

Mary – We should go outside to see what's happening.

Joe – And where we might have landed.

Mary – Landing on Earth during Roman times... I feel even more uneasy than when setting foot on Mars for the first time...

Joe – On Mars, at least, there was no one there to welcome us. We weren't at risk of being lynched...

The doorbell rings. They are petrified.

Joe – Someone's at the door...

Mary – Yes, I heard it.

Joe – What should we do?

Mary – We can't remain confined in this non-functional ship with no communication with the outside world...

Joe – I'll open it...

He goes out and comes back with Brian.

Mary – Brian? You again? What brings you here?

Brian – I arrived a few days before you...

Joe – So you're aware of our location.

Brian – Yes... And you won't believe it...

Mary – We don't have time for riddles right now...

Brian – We are in Palestine...

Joe – In the Gaza Strip?

Mary – We are in Roman times!

Brian – You landed in Bethlehem.

Joe – No... And... How did you manage to find us?

Brian – I spotted a luminous streak in the sky... It resembled a spacecraft descending into the atmosphere... So, I came to find you.

Mary – Like the Three Wise Men, then. What did you do with the other two?

Brian – They're waiting outside.

Joe – Seriously?

Brian – But... you're pregnant?

Mary – Yes, and I believe I'm about to go into labor... I'm feeling the first contractions...

Blackout

Mary is seated, visibly exhausted from childbirth. Joe, by her side, cradles in his arms, wrapped in cloth, the newborn baby.

Mary – May I hold him?

Joe – Certainly.

He hands the baby to her, and she holds him in her arms, like a Madonna and Child. Joe looks even more exhausted than her.

Mary – Are you okay? You look pale... Will you make it?

Joe – It's the first time I've delivered a baby.

Mary – Yes... Same here...

Joe – Turns out, it's not that complex.

Mary – If you say so...

Brian arrives.

Brian – Well?

Joe – There you go! The child is born.

Brian – Congratulations... And what's his name, this divine child?

Mary – We don't know...

Joe – We haven't decided yet.

Brian – Anyway, you're not going to have him baptised...

Joe – And why not?

Brian – Baptism doesn't exist yet! Jesus won't be born for a few more weeks...

Mary – Oh yes, that's true...

All eyes turn to the child. Blissful smiles.

Brian – What if we call him Jesus?

Joe and Mary turn to him, puzzled.

Joe – Jesus? Why Jesus?

Mary seems to grasp his line of thought.

Mary – So, you haven't given up being God...?

Brian – It's likely my destiny. And I don't believe our presence here is a mere coincidence. Consider it! This is a unique chance to change history! We're in Palestine. In Bethlehem. Right before the birth of Christ. It's a sign, isn't it...?

Joe – A sign? A sign of what?

Mary – I think I might have an idea...

Brian – What if we precede Jesus by a few weeks, by introducing another messiah before him... The Christ we knew would go completely unnoticed...

Joe – Do you really think so?

Brian – Picture if Gagarin had been the first to set foot on the moon. No one would remember Neil Armstrong and his little phrase...

Mary – You want my son to become the saviour of humanity?

Joe – It's a fact that the other didn't leave an unforgettable legacy. Saviour of humanity, my ass... The history that followed is just a long sequence of massacres.

Brian – Many of which were fueled by religious wars...

Joe – Not to mention the Church, which has always sided with tyrants...

Brian – And has always supported the most reactionary positions.

Mary – Especially against women...

Joe – So, what's your plan now?

Brian – I initially intended to establish a new civilisation on Mars, but fate had other plans: this space journey turned into a journey through time... But all is not lost!

Mary – So, you still feel invested with a mission...

Brian – My mission was to save humanity. Since we now have this opportunity, why not attempt to rebuild the world on different principles? More humanistic...

Mary – By founding a new religion?

Joe – Just another one...

Brian – If the prophet we're about to introduce is superior, and if our faith is less divisive and more beneficial for all of humanity than others, we'll crush the competition!

Mary – You already promised us the moon with Mars...

Joe – Not to mention that we never got paid.

Mary – Understand that we might be a bit skeptical.

Joe – This time it will work, I can feel it...

Moment of hesitation.

Joe – Well, it can't get any worse... Humanity survived for seven million years, and two thousand years after Jesus Christ, our Judeo-Christian civilisation somehow found a way to self-destruct....

Mary – So you believe you can save the world from climate change and nuclear apocalypse by bypassing Christianity?

Brian – We can at least make an attempt, can't we?

Joe – After all, what do we have to lose?

Brian (to Mary) – You don't seem enthusiastic, do you?

Mary – I'll remind you that Jesus ended up on the cross...

Brian – We'll try to avoid that. But anyway, by arriving on Earth in a spaceship and astronaut suits, we don't have much choice...

Joe – Either we pretend to be messengers from God, or we'll end up on the stake as messengers from Satan...

A moment.

Mary – It's true that, by being the parents of the Messiah, at least initially, we'll probably be safer.

Brian – Look at it positively! The future of this child will be exceptional anyway! And being the parents of the Messiah is not an opportunity everyone gets...

Mary leans towards the child.

Mary – Let's go with Jesus...

Satisfied smiles from everyone as they gaze at the child.

Brian – Well, considering the other Jesus doesn't exist yet and is destined to fade into obscurity... we can name our messiah whatever we please. Because, you know, Jesus... It sounds a bit antiquated, doesn't it?

Mary – I feel like you already have a name in mind...

Brian – Why not Brian?

Joe (to Mary) – He's not the father, is he?

Mary – Who knows... For Jesus, too, we never really knew who the father was.

Brian – It's true that this immaculate conception tale isn't the most believable thing in the holy scriptures either.

Mary – At the same time, labelling Joseph as cuckolded wouldn't have been very marketable...

Brian – Let's say I'm the godfather, and we gave him my name because I'm a family friend.

Mary – Hmm...

Brian – Let's call him Brian Junior...!

Joe – Brian Junior...? For a messiah who is supposed to save the world...

Brian – What's true is that this child descends a bit from heaven...

A moment.

Mary – Do you think this plan could succeed?

Brian – We still have a lot of equipment on board. While we might not possess the ability to restore sight to the blind or turn water into wine, we can certainly perform some miracles...

Joe – My self-propelled spacesuit is still operational. Ascending to heaven with just the press of a button will undoubtedly be more striking than walking on water.

Brian – We'll need to rewrite the Bible. At least the New Testament...

Mary – I presume you'll title it "The Life of Brian"...

The sound of a baby crying is heard.

Brian – Oh... I think Brian Junior already wants to convey a message...

Joe – He may just want his diaper changed.

Mary – I'll check on that...

Brian – You must admit that he has character. Not to mention possessing a certain charisma...

She starts to unwrap the baby, and her gaze freezes.

Mary (to Joe) – You did say it was a boy... right?

Joe – I was so shocked... I didn't think to check...

Brian – Is there a problem?

Mary – No, it's just that... it's a girl!

Moment of astonishment.

Brian – Well, as long as we're laying the foundations for a new Christianity, why not have a female messiah!

All eyes turn to the baby. Blissful smiles. Sacred music.

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:

Comedies for 2

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
Preliminaries
Running on empty
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Joker
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
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
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Smell of Money

Comedies for 5 to 6

All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools

Comedies for 7 or more

Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
False exit
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
Neighbours' Day
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Him and Her

Monologues

Like a fish in the air

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