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# Blue Flamingos



Jean-Pierre Martinez

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# Blue Flamingos

**Jean-Pierre Martinez**

The season begins poorly for Robert and Fanny, who have just opened a hotel called "The Flamingos" in the French village of Saintes Maries de la Mer. A strike causes a fuel shortage, leading to numerous cancellations. To save their hotel from bankruptcy, they must persuade the few stranded travellers to extend their stay and attract new guests. Luckily, the Camargue and its residents have plenty of charm, and the receptionist has a few tricks up her sleeve. This comedy is an irreverent homage to the this mythical French region: the Camargue.

## **Characters**

Fanny and Robert: the hotelier and her husband  
Sara and Paco: the receptionist and her cousin  
Folco and Marius: the herdsman and his son  
Patrick and Christine: the common tourists  
Victor and Diane: the aristocratic tourists  
Sam and Fred: the eco-friendly tourists

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# Act 1

## Scene 1

*A bar counter, which also serves as the reception desk, opens onto a terrace with a couple of tables, chairs, and deckchairs. Above the bar, a wooden sign displays the name of the establishment: Pink Flamingos. The terrace overlooks a pool, imagined to be in the direction of the audience. Beyond the pool, in the distance, are ponds populated with flamingos.*

*Fanny, looking exhausted and wearing an apron around her waist, collapses into a chair and sighs. Robert, wearing overalls and a straw hat, arrives looking equally worn out.*

**Robert** – It's so hot...

**Fanny** – And it's only the beginning of the season.

**Robert** – What will it be like in August...

*They pause.*

**Fanny** – At the same time, if we are so hot, it's because we're working non-stop

**Robert** – That's true...

**Fanny** – We'd be less hot if we were lying on a deckchair by the pool with a glass of chilled rosé.

**Robert** – When the hotel is full this summer, we won't have time for that.

**Fanny** – How about a quick dip now?

**Robert** – I just checked, the pool water is only 14 degrees. We'd risk hypothermia.

*He collapses into a chair next to her.*

**Fanny** – And to think we left our civil servant jobs to be our own bosses...

**Robert** – And to have a pool.

**Fanny** – When the water is at 25 degrees, we'll just have to watch our guests swim while serving drinks at the bar.

**Robert** – Our own bosses, yeah right... We do all the work, and we haven't even managed to find someone to help us.

**Fanny** – New hoteliers are the slaves of modern times.

**Robert** – Do you regret it?

**Fanny** – Not for a second. As long as we're both rowing in the same boat. And in the same direction...

*They share a tender moment.*

**Robert** – How about that chilled rosé after all?

**Fanny** – Don't we risk hypothermia from that...?

**Robert** – Fuck it ! Let's live dangerously.

*He gets up, goes behind the bar, and pours two glasses of rosé.*

**Fanny** – By the way, did you set up the pool robot?

**Robert** – Yes... I named it R2D2...

**Fanny** – Who?

**Robert** – The robot. I think it's nicer to give it a name. After all, it's our only employee...

**Fanny** – At least it gets to enjoy the pool...

*Robert returns with the two glasses.*

**Robert** – If only we could have robots for everything else, it would be paradise.

*He hands a glass to Fanny. They toast.*

**Fanny** – Cheers...

**Robert** – My name is Robert.

**Fanny** – Nice to meet you, Robert. I'm Fanny. Do you often come here on holiday?

**Robert** – Every year. It's a little hotel I found on the website Overbooking.com. The owners seem a bit crazy and quite overbooked, but they're rather nice. I'll give them five stars...

*Robert taps on his phone.*

**Fanny** – Still no response to our ad for a versatile receptionist?

**Robert** – None.

**Fanny** – It's crazy... We're offering a good salary...

**Robert** – Anyway, she would be the only one of the three of us to have a salary.

**Fanny** – I wonder if it's the term "versatile receptionist" that's scaring them off...

**Robert** – Especially since we specified she should speak English, a third language would be a plus, and she should have an impeccable appearance.

**Fanny** – You're right, we should have put "trilingual maid with a top model's physique." That would have been clearer.

**Robert** – We are offering more than the minimum wage, plus room and board...

*They finish their glasses.*

**Fanny** – This rosé isn't bad.

**Robert** – And not very expensive. It's from a local small producer.

**Fanny** – A bit rough, maybe, but well chilled, it goes down very well.

**Robert** – It needs to be drunk with a lot of ice, for sure... I'll pour you another glass.

**Fanny** – That wouldn't be wise. Our first guests arrive tomorrow. I've finished the cleaning, but I still have all the beds to make before tonight.

**Robert** – As you make your bed, so you must lie in it.

**Fanny** – Yeah. Well, I've counted, it's more like "as you make thirty-two beds, so you must lie in it."

## Scene 2

*Sara enters, dressed rather vulgarly and looking quite unkempt.*

**Sara** – Are you the Pink Flamingos?

**Robert** – Yes, well... that's the name of our hotel, indeed.

*Sara casts a somewhat suspicious glance around.*

**Fanny** – Don't tell me it's for a health inspection, they were already here yesterday.

**Sara** – I'm here about the job ad.

**Robert** – Oh, I see... Excuse us, we weren't expecting...

**Fanny** – In fact, we were just discussing...

**Robert** – The job profile.

**Sara** – But you're still looking for someone?

**Fanny** – Yes, well... It depends... Have you had experience with this kind of work before?

**Sara** – It can't be that hard... What exactly would I have to do?

**Robert** – Well... Answer the phone, for starters. And greet the guests when they arrive. We have a very international clientele, you know...

**Fanny** – It's a three-star hotel.

**Robert** – Do you speak a little English?

**Sara** – English?

**Fanny** – Italian, perhaps?

**Sara** – I speak a bit of Spanish.

**Robert** – Ah, yes, that's...

**Fanny** – But we don't get many Spaniards around here.

**Sara** – And how much does it pay?

**Robert** – Fifteen hundred euros.

**Fanny** – With room and board...

**Sara** – That'll do... to start with... Can I see my room?

**Robert** – Er... Yes, we have a small bungalow for staff accommodation...

**Fanny** – It's the blue door, just past the pool, but...

**Sara** – I've left my suitcase in the car, but don't bother, I'll manage. It has wheels...

**Fanny** – Well...

*Sara is about to leave but turns back one last time.*

**Sara** – What time is breakfast?

**Robert** – Don't worry, the first guests don't arrive until tomorrow afternoon.

**Sara** – Oh no, I meant... for me.

**Fanny** – For you?

**Sara** – You did say it was with room and board, right?

**Robert** – Let's say seven o'clock, then.

**Sara** – Seven o'clock? I'm not really a morning person...

**Fanny** – Would half-past seven suit you?

**Sara** – OK... But I'll have to set an alarm...

*They watch her walk away. Silence.*

**Robert** – Was that really a job interview...?

**Fanny** – It felt more like a check-in, didn't it?

**Robert** – Or a hold-up...

**Fanny** – I'll go and see what she's up to...

*She gets up.*

*Blackout.*

## Act 2

### Scene 1

*Sara is sitting behind the counter, her mobile to her ear.*

**Sara** – Well, listen, I'm fine... I've found a little job in a hotel... It's pretty cool... The bosses are completely stressed out, I really don't know why. It's their first season, but well... I've never done this before either! You just have to stay calm, you know... *(The old-fashioned landline phone on the counter starts ringing)* I have to go, I have another call...

*She puts away her mobile and looks at the landline phone curiously.*

**Sara** – How does this thing work...? *(She awkwardly picks up the receiver)* Yeah...? Yes, yes, you're at the hotel... *(She looks at the sign above her head)* Pink Flamingos, that's right... Yes... Yes... *(She looks at the reservation book)* Mr and Mrs Martin, absolutely... For a week in a double room... A cancellation? And why's that? A death in the family? Oh, really... And who died? Your husband? This isn't a joke, is it...? Well... No, what can I say... I have to take your word for it... No, I'm not doubting your word, but... No, I'm not going to ask for the death certificate either... Well, my condolences, then... And have a nice holiday anyway... *(She hangs up the receiver)* A death in the family, right... We know that trick... *(She crosses out the name in the book)* Well, good riddance... Less work for us... I'm so thirsty...

*She opens the fridge behind the counter, takes out a can, pops it open, and starts drinking.*

### Scene 2

*Fanny arrives, wearing overalls, a broom in one hand and a bucket in the other.*

**Fanny** – Everything okay, Sara? Not too hard?

**Sara** – It's fine...

**Fanny** *(ironically)* – If you're thirsty, feel free to help yourself from the fridge.

**Sara** – Yes, thanks, already done...

**Fanny** – Any new reservations?

**Sara** – No, unfortunately... Oh, but I did get my first cancellation.

**Fanny** – No?

**Sara** – Mr and Mrs Martin.

**Fanny** – They were supposed to arrive today!

**Sara** – Well, they're not arriving anymore. Mrs Martin is burying her husband tomorrow.

**Fanny** – Her husband died?

**Sara** – I suppose so, yes... Unless she plans to bury him alive...

**Fanny** – That's awful.

**Sara** – At the same time, we didn't know him personally.

**Fanny** – I'm talking about the cancellation! They had booked for a week... This is off to a great start...

**Sara** – Oh, you know what they say?

**Fanny** – No, what do they say?

**Sara** – One lost, ten found.

**Fanny** – I'm glad to see you're taking this philosophically... Excuse me, I'm going back to my cleaning...

*Fanny is about to leave.*

**Sara** – Now it's going to be my fault...

*The landline phone rings again. Fanny hesitates. Sara doesn't react.*

**Fanny** – Well, answer it!

**Sara** – Yeah, yeah... No need to rush! (*She picks up*) Pink Flamingos, how can I help...? Pardon? Could you speak more clearly, please? No, sorry, I don't speak a word of English... You're calling from Shanghai...? Yes... Yes... No... And why's that? Could you repeat...? Well... Okay... Right, got it... Look, I don't understand anything you're saying... Yes, I'm very disappointed too... Right, I'm hanging up now, the connection is very bad. Goodbye... (*She hangs up*) It's unbelievable, these people come to France for tourism and don't even make the effort to speak proper French...

**Fanny** – Who was that?

**Sara** – A Chinese lady from a travel agency in Shanghai. They had booked five rooms for a group of fifteen...

**Fanny** – And?

**Sara** – They're cancelling too.

**Fanny** – And why's that?

**Sara** – She said they're afraid of the demonstrations in Paris.

**Fanny** – Demonstrations? What demonstrations?

**Sara** – I don't know... She said the demonstrations... They saw images on Chinese television... Rioters targeting luxury stores on the Champs-Élysées, walking away with Vuitton bags under their arms.

**Fanny** – The Champs-Élysées...? We're a thousand kilometres from the Arc de Triomphe!



**Sara** – Yes, but they were supposed to land in Paris for a bit of shopping before coming down south. So now they've cancelled their trip to France and are going to Dubai instead... Apparently, they have the same shops as in Paris, but cheaper.

*Fanny glances at the register and seems devastated.*

**Fanny** – Almost all our reservations are cancelled! Do you realise that?

**Sara** – Oh yes, it's bad luck for you...

*Fanny gets annoyed.*

**Fanny** – For us? Because you think we'll still pay you to do nothing if the hotel's empty? You can pack your bags... You didn't fit the job profile anyway...

**Sara** – So now you need a master's degree to answer the phone in a small hotel like yours.

**Fanny** – Go on, get out.

**Sara** – You'll see, you'll regret losing me...

*Sara leaves.*

### Scene 3

*Robert arrives.*

**Robert** – What's going on?

**Fanny** – Have you heard about a strike?

**Robert** – No... We've been working day and night for a week, we haven't even had time to listen to the news... There's a strike?

**Fanny** – The Chinese... They've cancelled...

**Robert** – No...?

**Fanny** – Five rooms at once. Not to mention Mrs Martin. She just called to cancel too...

**Robert** – Because of the strikes? I thought she was coming from Marseille...

**Fanny** – Because of her husband! He had the good sense to die the day before they were supposed to leave on holiday.

*Robert looks towards the counter.*

**Robert** – And the receptionist, where is she?

**Fanny** – Let's say I ended her trial period... We're not hiring staff if the hotel's empty.

**Robert** – I'll turn on the radio... I hope they're not on strike too...

**Fanny** – Don't worry about that. Even during a strike they keep broadcasting bad news.

*Robert goes behind the bar and turns a knob.*

**Speaker** (*off*) – Due to a social movement affecting all Radio France staff, your usual news bulletin is replaced by a special news flash. The newly elected President has surprised everyone by announcing a bill to raise the legal retirement age to 74. All unions have immediately called for a general strike to demand the withdrawal of this proposal. Planes are grounded both at Roissy and Orly. Trains and metros are no longer running in the capital. And petrol is starting to run out at the pumps, especially along the Mediterranean coast...

*Robert switches off the radio.*

**Fanny** – This is a nightmare.

**Robert** – Six cancellations at once...

**Fanny** – Strikes are like the wind we call here the Mistral...

**Robert** – They come from the north...

**Fanny** – And the worst part? You know when they begin, but never how long they'll last...

*The phone rings. Robert answers.*

**Robert** – Hotel Pink Flamingos, how may I assist you... Yes... Yes... I see... No need to apologise... I understand, certainly... Yes, perhaps another time... (*He hangs up*) Another cancellation...

**Fanny** – Looks like it's far from over.

**Robert** – Timing couldn't be worse. Right before the holidays. They could've waited until guests arrived...

**Fanny** – Retirement at 74, it's unbelievable...

**Robert** – If our guests pass away before retirement, it spells the demise of the holiday hotel industry. Three-quarters of our clientele are retirees.

**Fanny** – Thankfully, our current guests are already retired.

**Robert** – Yeah, but they won't live forever...

**Fanny** – If there's no one to replace them before the age of 74, we certainly won't be making much money...

**Robert** – We shouldn't have opened a hotel, but rather a nursing home with medical care...

*The phone rings again. They exchange a glance.*

**Fanny** – You take it, I can't bear to...

*Robert picks up the phone.*

**Robert** – Hotel Pink Flamingos, how may I assist you...? Yes...? Oh, hello. How are you? Yes, we're aware of the issue, but it's only temporary, I assure you... Absolutely, we'll address it right away... Exactly... Thank you for your understanding... Have a good day...

*He hangs up.*

**Fanny** – Another cancellation?

**Robert** – The bank... Regarding the overdraft...

**Fanny** – And we were relying on those initial bookings to cover the shortfall...

*They both sink into chairs, utterly dejected.*

**Robert** – We would've been better off sticking to cozy jobs at the Avignon Prefecture... instead of getting into the hotel business with hope of striking it rich...

**Fanny** – Perhaps not rich, but at least independent...

**Robert** – We poured all our savings into this venture.

**Fanny** – Not to mention the loan...

**Robert** – We can't afford to stumble at the start of the season... Here, we generate over half of our annual revenue in just three months.

## Scene 4

*Sara passes by, wheeling her suitcase.*

**Sara** – I left the keys in the door...

*She's about to leave.*

**Fanny** – Hold on a second, don't rush off like that... I apologise for losing my temper earlier. We'd keep you if we could, but all our clients just canceled their bookings.

**Robert** – And we're in the red with the bank.

**Sara** – Don't worry, I understand... I've been blacklisted by banks for three years...

**Fanny** – Sit down with us for a few minutes, let's have a drink... How about some rosé?

**Sara** – OK.

*Sara takes a seat as Robert pours the drinks.*

**Robert** – What were you doing before becoming a multilingual, versatile receptionist?

**Sara** – I used to work as a psychic.

**Fanny** – Really? Well, given the current situation, your skills might actually be helpful...

**Robert** – It's true, we definitely didn't anticipate this.

*Sara sips the rosé that Robert has just poured for her and grimaces.*

**Sara** – Trying to poison me after firing me, huh?

**Robert** – Just trying to save on severance pay.

*Fanny also takes a sip.*

**Fanny** – Yes, I think we'll skip another glass.

**Sara** – I can give you an address if you like. A few cases of local wine that fell off the back of a truck.

**Robert** – Hopefully, the bottles didn't break when they fell.

**Fanny** – What about our future? How do you see it?

**Robert** – Pink, like the flamingos'?

**Fanny** – Or dark, like Mrs Martin's?

**Sara** – Let me see your hand...

*Reluctantly, Fanny extends her hand, and Sara examines her palm attentively.*

**Robert** – So?

*Sara looks up.*

**Sara** – I see new guests arriving today...

**Fanny** – And you can tell that from the lines on my hand?

**Sara** – Yes... And also from the car park. A car has just pulled in...

*Fanny and Robert glance towards the car park.*

**Robert** – Oh, I see... But we're not expecting anyone else.

## Scene 5

*Patrick arrives, dressed as a stereotypical tourist, sporting a somewhat tacky T-shirt featuring Johnny Hallyday. He's accompanied by Christine, his wife, who also appears quite ordinary, if not a tad vulgar. Patrick holds a road map.*

**Patrick** – Excuse us, ladies and gentlemen, sorry to disturb you during your break...

**Christine** – Could we bother you with a quick question?

**Fanny** – Of course, go ahead...

**Patrick** – Do you happen to know where we are?

**Sara** – We certainly do. We're locals!

**Robert** – You're in Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, sir...

**Patrick** – See, Christine, I told you! Sainte-Marie-la-Mer. I saw the sign as we drove in. I can read, you know!

**Christine** – You're so stubborn! It's Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, not Sainte-Marie-la-Mer! I warned you, you entered the wrong address in the GPS.

**Patrick** – Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, Sainte-Marie-la-Mer... What's the difference, really? It's the same, isn't it?

**Fanny** – Not quite, I'm afraid. Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer is in the Bouches-du-Rhône, and Sainte-Marie-la-Mer is in the Pyrénées-Orientales.

**Christine** – See, Patrick! You always have to argue!

**Robert** – Allow me... *(He takes Patrick's map, lays it on the table, and points out Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.)* Here, we are here. And Sainte-Marie-la-Mer is over there...

*Patrick and Christine examine the map.*

**Patrick** – Is this our location?

**Fanny** – Yes, you're in the Camargue.

**Patrick** – What are we doing in the Camargue? This isn't on our route.

**Sara** – That depends, where were you headed?

**Christine** – We were aiming for Spain.

**Robert** – Ah, in that case, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer isn't on your route at all.

**Sara** – Besides, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer is on the road to nowhere. No one ends up here by accident...

**Christine** – Well, there you go, Patrick, you'll be the first. Oh, we can say you're truly the king. The king of fools.

**Patrick** – So we're not on the road to Spain...?

**Christine** – We're at a dead end, I'm telling you! Sainte-Marie-la-Mer is on the way to Spain.

**Patrick** – We were supposed to meet friends on the Costa Brava. We planned to make a stop at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

**Robert** – You mean Sainte-Marie-la-Mer, I imagine...

**Christine** – We had a reservation at a small hotel. The Flamingos, actually.

**Fanny** – It's true there are also flamingos over there. And apparently, there's a hotel with the same name.

**Patrick** – I trusted my GPS and followed the signs...

**Christine** – And right after the Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer sign, we ran out of fuel.

**Patrick** – There aren't many stations around here, and the ones we saw had no diesel!

**Christine** – What are we going to do now?

**Patrick** – We'll find some diesel eventually. We just took a slight detour, that's all...

**Christine** – A slight detour? You've got quite the nerve...

**Sara** – May I see your hand?

*Christine, a bit surprised, extends her hand. Sara examines the lines on her palm.*

**Christine** – Well?

**Sara** – Don't go to Spain, trust me.

**Patrick** – And why shouldn't we go to Spain?

*Sara examines Christine's palm once more.*

**Sara** – Crossing the border might bring about a great misfortune for you.

**Christine** – Are you a fortune teller?

**Robert** – Fortune teller and... receptionist.

**Fanny** – But trust me, she's a better fortune teller than a receptionist.

**Sara** – I see... horns.

**Patrick** – Horns? I hope I'm not the one wearing them...

**Sara** – I see your husband, gored by a bull.

**Christine** – There are bulls around here too. We saw plenty along the roadside.

**Patrick** – At one point, I even thought we had already crossed into Spain.

**Sara** – Yes, but that bull is Spanish, no doubt about it.

**Christine** – How can you tell?

**Sara** – The Spanish bulls are much larger... and much more aggressive. Your husband isn't a matador, is he?

**Christine** – A matador, my Patrick? He can barely swat a mosquito in a room, let alone face a bull in an arena...

*Sara releases Christine's hand.*

**Sara** – In any case, I strongly advise against heading to Spain. It might be your final journey together...

**Christine** – We have no intention of moving from here for now, especially if all the gas stations are dry.

**Patrick** – We'll have to sleep in this dump.

**Christine** – True, this place feels like the Wild West, doesn't it?

**Fanny** – You're not far off... In fact, many westerns were filmed here... The Camargue is a land of cinema. It's a fiction created by a few visionary men that became a reality because all the locals wanted to believe in it. The Camargue is, above all, a story of faith...

*Silence.*

**Sara** – Did you know Johnny Hallyday filmed a movie here?

**Patrick** – No...

**Fanny** – "Where Are You From Johnny?"

**Patrick** – Me, I'm Patrick. And I'm from Paris.

**Fanny** – "Where Are You From Johnny?" is the title of the film. But you must know the song.

**Patrick** – What song?

**Robert** – "For Me, Life is About to Begin." (*Singing*) "Pour moi la vie va commencer..."

*At this point, a musical interlude with Johnny's song can occur, either as a soundtrack, playback, or live performance with a small choreography.*

**Christine** – Oh yes... It's one of your favourite songs, Patrick...

**Fanny** – You'll see... For you too, life will begin in the Camargue.

**Sara** – In any case, it will end prematurely if you go to the Costa Brava...

*Patrick and Christine look at each other, hesitant.*

**Patrick** – Well... We don't have much choice. Do you have any rooms left?

**Sara** – You know, in this season, the hotel is fully booked. But wait, let me check. (*She opens the register and looks*) Ah, you're in luck, room nine just became available... The guy who had reserved it just kicked the bucket.

**Christine** – We'll take it for tonight then... And tomorrow is another day...

**Robert** – I'll show you the room...

*Robert exits with Patrick and Christine.*

**Fanny** – You know, I think I underestimated you. If you're interested, I'd like to keep you on.

**Sara** – As a receptionist or as a fortune teller?

**Fanny** – We did say a versatile receptionist, didn't we? I'm going to see what they're up to...

*Fanny exits.*

## Scene 6

*Sara lounges in a deck chair.*

**Sara** – What would they do without me...?

*She closes her eyes and seems to doze off. Victor and Diane arrive. They have an aristocratic old-school French appearance, very Catholic. Victor holds a jerrycan in each hand, his wife carries Louis Vuitton suitcases.*

**Victor** – Truly, this little pilgrimage to Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer is turning into a Via Crucis... We've made twelve stops without finding any petrol.

**Diane** – Don't be blasphemous, Victor. We've simply run out of fuel. And we're in France, after all, not in the middle of the Sahara.

**Victor** – In the Sahara, we would have found oil by now...

**Diane** – Though, we might not be in the desert, but I don't see anyone around...

**Victor** – The innkeeper can't be too far.

*They look around and finally spot Sara, dozing off.*

**Diane** – Ah, there is someone...

**Victor** – She must be a guest, like us.

**Diane** – We shouldn't wake her up, though...

*Victor drops one of his jerrycans, and Sara wakes up abruptly.*

**Sara** – Oh, sorry... I think I dozed off for a moment...

**Victor** – Apologies for tearing you away from the arms of Morpheus, dear Madam. We were looking for the receptionist.

**Sara** – The receptionist? That's me... Well, I started this morning, got sacked around ten, and just got rehired.



**Diane** – We're spending a few days on the French Riviera with friends who have a small manor there. We thought we'd make a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame-de-la-Mer, but we've become collateral damage in the ongoing protests against the retirement age increase.

**Victor** – We, who've never worked a day in our lives, find it rather amusing, don't you think?

**Diane** – Anyway, I fear we might be compelled to spend the night at this inn. By some miracle, do you happen to have two rooms left?

**Sara** – Why? Do you prefer separate rooms?

**Victor** – No, the second room is for our daughter. She's over there, admiring the bulls... By the way, it seems they're in heat, don't you think?

**Sara** – How old is your daughter?

**Diane** – Thirty-two.

**Sara** – Two rooms, then... Thirty-two... She's a bit old to be a third wheel... Let me check... (*She opens the register and pretends to examine it*) Yes, you're in luck, these are my last two...

**Victor** – But there's only one car in the parking lot...

**Sara** – At this hour, you know, everyone's out and about. There's so much to do in the Camargue. More than in the French Riviera, anyway.

**Diane** – We'll take the opportunity to rest a bit, then...

*Sara hands them two keys.*

**Sara** – Here are your keys.

**Diane** – Thank you. Coming, Victor?

**Victor** – Yes, dear...

**Diane** – And leave those jerrycans in the courtyard. You're not bringing that into the room. It reeks of diesel...

*They exit.*

**Sara** – It's non-stop this morning. If this keeps up, we'll have to turn people away...

*Sara exits.*

## Scene 7

*Enter Sam and Fred, two intellectually eco-conscious women wearing bike helmets and backpacks. Sam has a camera around her neck.*

**Sam** (*looking towards the audience*) – Oh, look! Pink flamingos!

*Fred approaches.*

**Fred** – That's incredible... I've never seen them in real life... Are you sure they're pink flamingos?

**Sam** – Well, they're pink...

**Fred** – Ah, yes...

**Sam** – But I also recognise a heron, a sandpiper, a grey wagtail... and a common buzzard.

**Fred** – A buzzard?

**Sam** – It's a bird of prey. I've never seen one so big before.

**Fred** – Me neither... Except for my mother-in-law, perhaps.

**Sam** – Does your mother-in-law look like a buzzard?

**Fred** – An old buzzard... In any case, she's a scavenger.

*Sara returns.*

**Sam** – Ah... Speaking of scavengers, I think I see another one coming...

**Sara** – Are you out of fuel too?

**Fred** – We came from Arles, by bicycle, to spend a few days in the Camargue.

**Sam** – Actually, we gave up using a car altogether a few years ago, even in Paris.

**Fred** – Running out of petrol in gas stations is probably the best thing that could happen for the planet, isn't it?

**Sara** – Oh, I steer clear of politics... Have you booked a room?

**Sam** – We never plan ahead. We prefer to live spontaneously.

**Fred** – Always be where you're least expected.

**Sara** – In that case, you're in the right place. We definitely weren't expecting you. Still interested in a room, or...

**Sam** – Two rooms, if possible... And if you have one with a bathtub, that would be a dream. I've been longing for a soak for three days.

**Fred** – But if you're fully booked, it's not a problem. We're seasoned travellers, used to surviving in the most precarious conditions.

**Sam** – Last year, we traveled to Nepal and slept in a yurt with llamas.

**Fred** – Llamas? I think llamas are in Peru.

**Sam** – Or yaks, I can't remember. But it definitely didn't smell like roses.

**Fred** – So if you don't have a room, we can sleep in the stable with the horses. It can't be worse.

**Sara** – I'm not sure the horses would agree, but it won't be necessary. I'll get you the keys right away...

*Fanny returns and smiles upon seeing the new arrivals.*

**Fanny** – Good morning, ladies, welcome to our four stars hotel.

**Sam** – Thank you.

*Sara hands them two keys.*

**Fred** – If you don't mind, I'd like to avoid room 13.

**Sam** – My friend is a bit superstitious...

**Fanny** – No need to worry, dear. Hotels rarely have a room 13.

*Fred looks at her key.*

**Fred** – Number 9! That's my lucky number! Thank you!

*Sam and Fred exit.*

**Fanny** – Looks like business is picking up. An hour ago, all our bookings were cancelled, and now we're almost full... Maybe you're our good luck charm after all...

*Sam returns.*

**Sam** – Excuse me, I forgot to ask. What time is breakfast served?

**Fanny** – Oh, whenever you like, dear. You're on holiday, after all. We won't ask you to get up at...

**Sam** – Then I'll have mine at six. I'm a wildlife photographer, well, an amateur one. And the best time to take photos is at sunrise, when the nocturnal birds are still around and the tourists aren't up yet....

*Sam leaves. Sara gives Fanny an incredulous look.*

**Sara** – Six in the morning...?

**Fanny** – Don't worry, I'll take care of it. I'm not sleeping much these days anyway...

*Blackout*

## Act 3

### Scene 1

*Victor and Diane are each sitting in a deckchair. Victor is reading "La Provence" while Diane reads "White Mane."*

**Victor** – What are you reading?

**Diane** – "White Mane."

**Victor** – Oh, really?

**Diane** – I found it in the hotel library.

**Victor** – Is it good?

**Diane** – It's the story of a horse.

**Victor** – I thought it was the story of a dog.

**Diane** – You're thinking of "White Fang."

**Victor** – Ah yes, that must be it.

**Diane** – They say it's one of the foundational novels of Camargue identity. I don't know why, because it doesn't portray the Camargue cowboys in a flattering light...

**Victor** – Oh really?

**Diane** – In any case, it's a grim story.

**Victor** – What is it about?

**Diane** – It's about a friendship between a boy and a wild horse.

**Victor** – So, it's a nice story.

**Diane** – They both die at the end.

**Victor** – Ah, I see...

**Diane** (*about to cry*) – It's really terrible...

**Victor** – Well, it's all folklore, isn't it? Cowboys don't exist anymore.

*Folco, Fanny's father, arrives dressed as a cowboy, looking rather stern.*

**Diane** – Looks like they do... That one looks like Buffalo Bill.

**Victor** – Good morning, sir.

**Folco** – Dear madam... Sir...

**Victor** – What wind blew you here, my good man? Is there a costume show in the village?

*Folco seems offended by this familiarity.*

**Folco** – It's not the wind that brings me here, sir. I was born on this land. Just like my family, for over ten generations.

**Victor** – Pardon me, I didn't realise we were among people of the same world.

**Folco** – The world? I only know one. However, it's populated by a great variety of fools...

*Victor rises to greet Folco more formally.*

**Victor** – Allow me to introduce myself, Victor de la Motte de la Taupinière, Baron of Coursensac...

*Folco shakes the hand that Victor extends.*

**Folco** – Folco from Mas de la Renardière, owner of the ranch of the same name. I am Fanny's father, your hostess. Our family breeds fighting bulls and Camargue horses.

**Christine** – The cowboys are the knights of the modern era, and the ranchers are, in a way, their lords.

**Folco** – We were already boarding some horses. Unfortunately, we recently had to also board some tourists...

**Diane** – I understand, we have friends who own a castle in Normandy, and to maintain it, they had to lay off the maid and open guest rooms.

**Victor** – And now they're the ones serving breakfast to passing commoners. What irony, isn't it?

*This doesn't seem to amuse the somber Folco.*

**Diane** – But tell me, it's been blowing since we arrived!

**Victor** – Yes, a wind to knock over bulls.

**Diane** – This wind is infernal. Does it ever stop?

**Folco** – Madame, know that in Provence, there is no wind. There's the Mistral, which is quite different.

**Victor** – Yes, well... it's kind of the same, isn't it? It's a northern wind, I think...

**Folco** – Indeed, the Mistral comes from the North, like you. But unlike you, it's part of the family. That's the difference...

*Fanny arrives.*

**Fanny** – Ah, dad... Have you met our guests...

**Diane** – Yes... Sir was telling us about the Mistral.

**Fanny** – It's true that it's a bit windy today. The advantage is that it dries the laundry and clears the clouds. Look, the sky is all blue!

**Folco** – The Mistral also drives away mosquitoes. Unfortunately, it doesn't always blow hard enough to drive away tourists...

**Fanny** – Folco is a true Camargue native, you know. He has plenty of stories to tell about the region. And if you want to go for a horse ride, he has a ranch nearby...

**Victor** – Oh yes, why not... We're members of a riding club in Paris, and we often go for rides in the Bois de Boulogne.

**Folco** – The Camargue isn't the Bois de Boulogne, you'll see. The fauna is very different. Here, it's more feathered animals than furry ones.

**Fanny** – My father is joking, of course. Well, dad, are you coming? I wanted to show you the boiler. I don't know what's happening, it's been making a strange noise since this morning...

*Fanny and Folco leave.*

**Diane** – Folco... He lives up to his name... He's quite folkloric, isn't he? By the way, it's curious; he shares the same name as that poor boy in "White Fang"... and that famous baron who supposedly invented the Camargue.

**Victor** – What do you mean, invented? Are we in a country that doesn't exist, surrounded by fictional characters?

**Diane** – Some fictions, when they're beautiful, are truer than dull realities.

**Victor** – Soon you'll be telling me we're acting in a play...

*They glance a bit anxiously toward the audience before returning to the "reality" of the play.*

**Diane** – And you, your newspaper? Any good news?

**Victor** – According to their newspapers, these southerners never cease their festivities. It's quite remarkable. They have listings by village. Every day, there's some celebration happening somewhere...

**Diane** – One wonders when they find time to work.

**Victor** – We should read regional newspapers more often, even in Paris. I assure you, it's less depressing than Le Figaro. Especially the obituaries. Since we don't know anyone...

**Diane** – Speaking of which, I'm not sure if I mentioned, but the Baroness de Casteljarnac passed away last week. Unfortunately, due to these strikes, we won't be able to attend her funeral. Such a shame...

**Victor** – Yes, her husband's funeral was quite the event...

**Diane** – Say what you will, but in high society, we still know how to bury our dead in grand style.

**Victor** – Indeed. I don't even know why they always call it "funeral pomp" for ordinary folks. Most of the time, there isn't even a church ceremony...

**Diane** – By the way, we have to go.

**Victor** – Where to?

**Diane** – To mass!

**Victor** – Oh yes, I completely forgot. When you're on holiday...

**Diane** – Since the opportunity presents itself, a mass at Notre Dame de la Mer, we can't miss that...

*Victor and Diane exit.*

## Scene 2

*Sam and Fred enter.*

**Fred** – Did you see that sky? That blue! It's like a Van Gogh!

**Sam** – Yes, if you take away the swimming pool... it's very picturesque.

**Fred** – Did you know Vincent spent a week in the Camargue? In 1888, precisely.

**Sam** – No, I didn't know...

**Fred** – He wrote some beautiful letters to his brother from Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. And he created six paintings... *(A pause)* And you, what are you reading?

**Sam** – "Mireille." She also went on a pilgrimage to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. But it didn't end well for her.

**Fred** – Mireille Mathieu? I think she's from Avignon. She went on a pilgrimage to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer?

**Sam** – Mireille! The epic poem by Frédéric Mistral. The renowned Provençal author.

**Fred** – Ah yes... And why didn't it end well for her?

**Sam** – She died there.

**Fred** – For a pilgrimage, indeed... That's not good publicity.

**Sam** – That's probably why there are more pilgrims in Lourdes than in Les Saintes Maries de la Mer...

**Fred** – On the other hand, here... there's the sea.

*Sam observes the birds through binoculars.*

**Sam** – All these birds, it's really beautiful...

*Folco returns.*

**Folco** – Ladies...

**Sam** – Good morning, Sir. Judging by your plumage, I guess you're from around here, like these flamingos?

**Folco** – Yes, I was born here, Madam. One of the last to be born in Les Saintes Maries de la Mer.

**Fred** – Is the birth rate declining?

**Folco** – No, but there's no maternity ward within a 30-kilometre radius.

**Fred** – Can I ask you a question?

**Folco** – If you absolutely insist...

**Fred** – I've always wondered why flamingos lift one leg when they sleep...

**Folco** – Ornithology specialists have been debating that forever. But the most commonly accepted theory is that if they lifted both legs, they'd fall over...

**Fred** – Ah, I see...

**Sam** (*aside to Fred*) – Must be Camargue humour... (*To Folco*) Anyway, this landscape is really flat... It's even flatter than Belgium.

**Folco** – That's probably why the Belgians come here to spend the summer.

*A moment passes.*

**Sam** – I gather you raise livestock?

**Folco** – I don't raise livestock, Madam. I breed fighting bulls and Camargue horses.

**Fred** – We are against bullfighting, I must warn you.

**Sam** – And we don't eat meat either.

**Folco** – But you have an electric bicycle whose batteries are made in China. The horses I ride, I breed them here.

**Fred** – But the bulls, you eat them.

**Folco** – Yes... But before that, they spend their whole lives in freedom. Not in the cages of a meat factory.

**Sam** – Some still end up in the arena anyway.

**Folco** – Indeed... But here, it's more Camargue racing. And in Camargue racing, there's no killing. Our bulls have names, they often live very long lives, out in nature. When they die, we bury them standing up, facing the sea. And for the best of them, we even sometimes erect statues...

**Fred** – That's true... I think I saw a statue of a bull near the arena.

**Folco** – Vovo.

**Sam** – Sorry...?

**Folco** – That's the name of that mythical bull... How many pigs do you know that have statues erected in their honour?

**Fred** – None... Except for a few politicians...

**Folco** – So you see, Madam, here we respect animals. And I would even say we venerate them.



*Folco leaves.*

**Fred** – I forgot to ask him why flamingos are pink.

**Sam** – You did the right thing... I think he was a bit... annoyed. Well, shall we go for a bike ride? Are you coming?

**Fred** – Yes... At the same time, he's not wrong... It's so flat here... I wonder if it was necessary to rent electric bikes...

### Scene 3

*Marius enters, exuding a playboy charm. The two women are visibly intrigued by his presence.*

**Marius** – Good morning, ladies!

**Sam** – Good morning, young man.

**Marius** – I'm Fanny's brother.

**Fred** – Oh really? She didn't mention having a little brother.

**Marius** – I take care of the horses at the neighbouring ranch with my father. If you ever want to go for a ride...

**Sam** – Oh, yes, that... It makes you want to go horseback riding...

**Fred** – It almost makes you want to be the horse...

**Marius** – I see you're a photographer... You know, horseback riding is the best way to get close to birds without scaring them away...

**Sam** – I'm convinced. We'll definitely come see you, won't we, Fred?

**Fred** – With pleasure...

**Marius** – Have you ever ridden a horse?

**Sam** – Well, no... Usually, I'm against animal exploitation, but... you can't be too sectarian, can you...

**Marius** – Our horses are very well treated, you'll see.

**Fred** – I'm sure.

**Marius** – I can also offer you a boat ride or an introduction to water sports...

**Sam** – Water sports... Oh yes, that... That could interest us too, right Fred?

**Fred** – Well, as long as we start gently, because it's been a while since we've had the chance to practice...

**Sam** – You, on the other hand... It's sport and outdoor life that give you that fresh complexion and athletic look.

**Marius** – I'm also a volunteer firefighter.

**Fred** – Of course...

**Sam** – With the physique you have, you could even be a model, I assure you...

**Fred** – Or sing in a Camargue boy band.

**Sam** – Have you ever thought about acting?

**Marius** – Actually, I was convinced by a friend to enter the Mister Camargue contest.

**Sam** – Mister Camargue?

**Marius** – It's like Miss Camargue, but for men.

**Fred** – Obviously...

**Sam** – And when is this contest?

**Marius** – Saturday night. At the arena.

**Fred** – Personally, I'd give you both ears and the tail...

**Marius** – In that case, why don't you come! Anyone can vote, you know.

**Sam** – Usually, we don't frequent the arenas...

**Fred** – Nor beauty pageants...

**Sam** – But why not, after all?

**Marius** – Then see you soon!

*Marius exits.*

**Fred** – Is it true he looks like he stepped out of a firefighter calendar, huh?

**Sam** – In any case, he makes you want to vote for him...

**Fred** – Wait... we haven't seen the other candidates yet.

*Sam and Fred exit.*

## Scene 4

*Patrick and Christine enter, in beach attire. Folco returns.*

**Folco** – Ladies and gentlemen... Did you have a good day?

**Patrick** – We wanted to swim, but the water was freezing!

**Christine** – Are you sure this is the Mediterranean here...? The water is even colder than in Brittany!

**Folco** – It's because of the Mistral, which pushes the warm surface waters offshore.

**Patrick** – And is this Mistral going to last long?

**Folco** – It should calm down by evening.

**Patrick** – True, it seems like it's already blowing a bit less.

**Christine** – Yes, but the mosquitoes are back.

**Patrick** – And the town hall, they don't do anything about the mosquitoes?

**Folco** – Ah, yes... We conduct an aerial treatment campaign every year.

**Christine** – Aerial?

**Folco** – By helicopter. We drop napalm over the rice fields. To the music of Wagner. You have to see it at least once in your life, I assure you. It's truly spectacular.

*Folco exits. Patrick and Christine exchange a perplexed look.*

**Patrick** – Did you know they treat mosquitoes with napalm in Camargue?

**Christine** – No...

**Patrick** – That's probably why there's not much growing around here.

*Patrick and Christine exit.*

## Scene 5

*Fanny returns with Sara.*

**Fanny** – It's a disaster... The boiler just broke down! There's no hot water in the entire hotel.

**Sara** – Did you ask your husband to take a look?

**Fanny** – Robert? Before becoming a hotelier, he worked in the vehicle registration department at the prefecture. Even to change a light bulb, I would be afraid he'd electrocute himself...

**Sara** – I see... Do you have a plumber you can call?

**Fanny** – Yes, but he's stuck on a construction site in Marseille. Do you happen to know one?

**Sara** – I have a cousin who's handy, I can ask him to come by.

**Fanny** – OK.

*Robert arrives.*

**Robert** – Unfortunately, misfortunes never come alone...

**Fanny** – What now...?

**Sara** – The gas station just across the street has been restocked.

**Fanny** – No hot water in the taps and diesel at the pump... All our guests will leave! They were only staying because they didn't have fuel to go away...

**Robert** – We need to find something to make them want to stay...

**Fanny** – But then again, there's no shortage of activities around here.

**Robert** – Yes, but with these strikes, people aren't going on holiday anymore. Once these few stranded travellers leave, the hotel will be empty...

**Sara** – Yeah... It would take a miracle to save the season...

**Fanny** – Thanks for the encouragement... Do you have any ideas?

**Sara** – I could light a candle at the church and ask for the help of the Black Madonna.

**Robert** – Thanks, I feel much more reassured now.

*A moment passes.*

**Fanny** – We could organise a music evening. (*To Sara*) Do you know any musicians around here?

**Sara** – I have a cousin who plays flamenco, unfortunately he's stuck in Marseille too, like your plumber.

**Fanny** – On a construction site?

**Sara** – No... In jail.

**Fanny** – Did he sing that badly?

**Sara** – It's a bit of a complicated story...

**Robert** – In that case, unless we manage to break him out of there...

*Blackout.*

## Act 4

### Scene 1

*Victor and Diane are seated at a table. They are having breakfast. Patrick and Christine arrive.*

**Patrick** – Ladies and gentlemen... Enjoy your breakfast!

**Victor** – Thank you, that's very kind of you.

**Diane** – Did you sleep well?

**Christine** – It was okay... However, waking up was a bit difficult. No hot water! Mornings are still a bit chilly...

**Diane** – Oh yes, us too. We had to take a cold shower. They say it firms up old skin, but well...

**Victor** – Anyway, we'll be able to head back to French Riviera. The gas station has been restocked.

**Patrick** – And we'll be hitting the road to Spain.

**Diane** – Well, it's not so bad here, you know.

**Patrick** – Yeah... I went fishing yesterday, caught two cod. Gave them to the landlady... What could I possibly do with two cod in a hotel room...

**Victor** – Are you sure they were cod? Cod is more common in northern seas, isn't it? I'm not sure if you'd find them in the Mediterranean...

**Diane** – Then again, the water was so cold yesterday. Wouldn't surprise me if cod decided to spend their holidays here...

**Christine** – In any case, you've made a friend.

**Patrick** – He lives in Paris too, just two streets away from us. He comes here every year in a camper van.

**Christine** – Meanwhile, I worked on my full-body tan. Did they tell you there's a nudist beach a bit further down?

**Diane** – A nudist beach... Well, well...

**Patrick** – If you fancy it, you can join us tomorrow...

**Victor** – I'm not sure... *(To Diane)* What do you think, my dear?

*Diane, embarrassed, doesn't respond.*

**Christine** – True, the sea water is even colder than the shower, but... there were flamingos in the ponds, and horses on the beach. It was beautiful.

**Patrick** – And what about you?

**Victor** – We went to the ornithological museum.

**Christine** – An ornithological museum? And what's in there?

**Diane** – Birds. It's like an ornithological park, you know.

**Patrick** – But, there are birds everywhere around here, aren't there? There are even some in the pond just behind the pool. No need to go to a museum to see them.

**Diane** – Yes, but there you can get closer to them. Plus, each bird has its name on a small sign.

**Christine** – Are they stuffed?

**Victor** – No, they're alive! There are signs... facing where the birds are.

**Patrick** – So, are they in aviaries then?

**Diane** – Oh no, they're free.

**Christine** – But if the birds move, they won't be in front of the sign anymore.

**Victor** – That's a valid point.

**Patrick** – If they're not locked up, they could even leave the museum, couldn't they?

**Diane** – Yes, I suppose they could.

**Christine** – Strange museum... Can you imagine the Louvre Museum, with the Mona Lisa taking off for a stroll around Paris with the Venus de Milo?

**Patrick** – We ended the day in a paella restaurant. There were gypsies playing flamenco. It was really authentic. Right, Christine?

**Christine** – Yeah. With a jug of sangria to wash it all down... We had a great evening...

**Patrick** – It makes you wonder why we travel all the way to Spain. If in Camargue, there are arenas and bulls, sangria and paella, flamenco and gypsies..

**Christine** – I didn't know there were gypsies in Camargue.

## Scene 2

*Folco arrives with Fanny.*

**Patrick** – Ah, here's Folco, he can enlighten us...

**Christine** – He knows everything about the history of Camargue. Just ask him...

**Patrick** – Tell me, Folco, are there many gypsies around here?

**Folco** – It depends on the seasons. Gypsies, like flamingos and tourists, are migratory, but some are settled.

**Fanny** – Camargue is a land of welcome, you know. It's deeply rooted in its history and traditions, but it's also open to modernity and the world.

**Folco** – Les Saintes Maries de la Mer, it's the capital of Camargue... but it's also the capital for those for whom borders are not barriers.

**Fanny** – Twice a year, all the gypsies in Europe gather here to venerate their patron saint, Sara, the Black Madonna. It's an event not to be missed, believe me.

**Christine** – We'll have to come back, right, Patrick?

**Diane** – Yes, us too... Right, Victor? It must be very picturesque...

**Fanny** – I'm really sorry about the hot water. The boiler broke down, but we'll try to fix it as soon as possible...

*Sara arrives with Paco, a handsome, dark-haired man with a Latin appearance.*

**Sara** – Here's Paco, the cousin I told you about...

**Fanny** – Hello sir... So... you're a plumber.

**Paco** – Among other things, yes...

**Sara** – Paco is competing in the Mister Camargue contest on Saturday, at the arenas.

**Fanny** – Ah, I see... That doesn't surprise me. But... didn't you bring your tools?

**Paco** – I work by ear.

**Fanny** – By ear?

**Sara** – He has a knack for it... Just by listening to the sound a car makes, he can tell where the problem is. It must be the same for boilers...

**Fanny** – Well, then I'll let you have a look at it... Well, listen, rather...

*Sara and Paco exit. Robert arrives.*

**Robert** – Who's this Latin lover?

**Fanny** – He's the man who talks to boilers...

**Robert** – Excuse me?

**Fanny** – He's Sara's cousin. I'll explain it to you...

**Robert** – He looks more like a flamenco singer than a heating plumber, but well...

**Patrick** – Wasn't he the guy singing in that restaurant last night?

**Christine** – Oh yes, maybe...

**Fanny** – So? What are you going to do today?

**Victor** – We'll start by packing... Our friends are waiting for us for lunch in Nice.

**Robert** – You're leaving us already?

**Diane** – Unfortunately... But we'll be back, I promise.

*Victor and Diane exit. Sam and Fred arrive.*

**Fanny** – And what about you ladies? Are you planning to extend your stay with us?

**Sam** – We would have loved to, but we have to catch the train tomorrow in Arles to go back to Paris...

*Fanny is on the verge of tears.*

**Fanny** – So everyone is leaving... It's silly, but... you're our first guests, and I was already starting to get attached to you...

**Robert** – You'll have to get used to it, my dear. We opened a hotel, not a retirement home. If you start crying every time a guest leaves...

**Fred** – And we'll come back! Right, Sam?

**Sam** – Of course...

**Fred** – In the meantime, let's try to make the most of our last day here.

**Sam** – We have a horseback ride planned, with Marius.

**Fred** – And tonight, we're heading to the arenas for the Mister Camargue election.

**Fanny** – Well, well... Have you decided who to vote for already?

**Sam** – Your brother is a very handsome man...

*Sara and Paco return.*

**Fred** – But I must say, this one isn't too bad either...

**Fanny** (*seeing Paco*) – Already back?

**Sara** – I told you, he's got a knack for it... It runs in the family...

**Robert** – So, what's the diagnosis?

**Paco** – When it goes clack clack, it's an electrical issue. When it goes gurgle gurgle, it's a water circuit problem.

**Fanny** – And this?

**Paco** – It's a knock knock.

**Robert** – And... is it serious, doctor?

**Paco** – When it goes knock knock, usually it's the carburetor.

**Robert** – The carburetor? I didn't know there was a carburetor on a gas boiler...

**Fanny** – But can you fix it?

**Paco** – Oh, boiler repairs aren't my expertise. I specialise in cars

**Sara** – Specifically, used cars.

*Fanny collapses into a chair.*



**Fanny** – We've been preparing for the opening of this hotel for months... And now, the boiler gives out on us... Without hot water, the season is ruined! All our guests are leaving... Where are we going to find a plumber?

*Fanny starts crying.*

**Christine** – Don't cry like that, dear...

**Fanny** – I'm sorry, it's just the nerves...

**Christine** – So, you're having trouble with your boiler?

**Robert** – It suddenly stopped working last night at midnight...

**Christine** – Well, Patrick, you know what to do!

**Patrick** – Alright, I'll take a look...

**Christine** – My husband is a heating plumber.

**Fanny** – Really? It's like divine intervention! Let me show you where the boiler room is...

*Fanny and Robert leave with Patrick and Christine. Then everyone exits.*

### **Scene 3**

*Marius walks by and crosses paths with Paco. They eye each other without saying a word.*

### **Scene 4**

*Sam returns and observes the flamingos through binoculars. Fred arrives. Then Folco.*

**Fred** – Ah, Folco... Actually, I wanted to ask you something...

**Folco** – Yes...?

**Fred** – Do you happen to know why flamingos are pink?

**Folco** – If it's a joke, like why flamingos sleep on one leg, I have to admit I don't know it, but I'm curious to hear it.

**Fred** – Um... no, it's not a joke.

**Folco** – Alright, got it..

**Fred** – So, any insight on this?

**Folco** – Well, flamingos get their pink colour from feeding on small shrimp that contain a red pigment.

**Fred** – Oh yeah...? Did you hear that, Sam? (*But Sam seems more absorbed by her observation*) So it's a bit like when we take beta-carotene pills to get a pink complexion.

*Pause.*

**Sam** – That's odd. I didn't smoke anything this morning...

**Fred** – What?

*Sam hands her binoculars.*

**Sam** – Look! Do you notice anything?

**Fred** – No...

**Sam** – The flamingos! They're blue...

**Fred** – Oh, yes, indeed... That's true! (*She passes the binoculars to Folco*) Do you see them as blue too?

*Folco looks through the binoculars.*

**Folco** – Yes...

**Sam** – We can't all be colour-blind.

**Fred** – Maybe the females are pink and the males are blue.

**Sam** – There must be a scientific explanation...

**Folco** – Yeah...

**Fred** – Maybe they ate blue shrimp.

**Sam** – But that wouldn't explain why the shrimp turned blue...

**Folco** – Or maybe it's a miracle of the Black Madonna.

*They turn to look at Folco.*

**Fred** – The Black Madonna?

**Folco** – Sara. She's the Patron Saint of the Gypsies.

*Sam glances at the front page of the newspaper.*

**Sam** – Oh yes, look! It's in the newspaper *La Provence*... Blue flamingos suddenly appeared in Les Saintes Maries de la Mer this weekend...

*Folco takes the newspaper and reads the article.*

**Folco** – They say curious visitors are starting to arrive from everywhere. (*Putting the newspaper down*) At this rate, in three days, it'll be Woodstock here...

**Fred** – Well... Blue flamingos... It's not an apparition of the Virgin after all!

**Sam** – But it's still very surprising... It must be climate change.

**Fred** – Or maybe it's a setup...

**Sam** – A setup?

**Fred** – Fake miracles to attract tourists, that's been seen before, right?

**Sam** – Do you think Bernadette Soubirous was on a mission for the Lourdes Tourism Office when she pretended to have seen the Virgin in a cave?

*Sam and Fred leave. Folco exits too.*

## **Scene 5**

*Patrick returns at the same time as Fanny and Robert.*

**Fanny** – Can you do something about it?

**Patrick** – It's just a blown fuse. I have to say your electrical installation isn't exactly new.

**Robert** – And then?

**Patrick** – I replaced the fuse, and the boiler started working again.

**Fanny** – It's a miracle! Can I kiss you?

*She kisses him, while Robert glances at the newspaper.*

**Robert** – Speaking of miracles, have you seen the newspaper?

**Fanny** – As if I have time to read the newspaper...

**Robert** – You should still take a look.

*He hands her the newspaper, but the phone rings at the same time, and she answers.*

**Fanny** – Pink Flamingos Hotel, can I help you... A reservation? Of course. For how many people? Eight?

**Patrick (to Robert)** – Looks like business is picking up...

*Blackout.*

## Act 5

### Scene 1

*Silent scene, in a surreal atmosphere. Western-style music like "Once Upon a Time in the West". First comes Marius, dressed as a cowboy, with pistols at his waist. Then Paco enters, in a similar outfit. They both walk slowly before stopping and facing each other, as if for a Western duel. Blackout. The music stops. Two gunshots ring out. A small musical interlude in the dark while all the characters take their places for the final scene.*

### Scene 2

*The light comes back on to reveal a farewell party with all the characters from the play. A small orchestra, composed according to the talents of each (or possibly by musicians who did not have roles in the play), plays a tango. If not, a soundtrack can be used. Some couples dance, but they are not the initial couples. Victor dances with Christine, and Patrick with Diane, playing on the contrast of their social classes. Patrick, in particular, holds Diane firmly, which she seems to enjoy. Marius and Paco both wear sashes of Mister Camargue. Fanny and Robert watch the dancers. The music will lower in intensity with each dialogue.*

**Fanny** – In the end, they all stayed...

**Robert** – And it seems to be working out...

**Fanny** – This little party is a good idea to celebrate this somewhat chaotic start to the season.

**Robert** – While waiting for the arrival of the new guests, who are rushing from all over to admire our blue flamingos.

**Fanny** – We're already fully booked for the next three weeks.

**Robert** – Another miracle we can attribute to Sara...

**Fanny** – Yes... But which one should we thank...?

**Robert** – The one whose statue rests in the crypt of our church, or the one we hired as a receptionist?

*They exchange a friendly gesture with Sara.*

**Fanny** – I suggest we rename our hotel Blue Flamingos...

**Robert** – At least it will be the only establishment with such a name...

*The dance continues.*

**Sam** – Who did you vote for?

**Fred** – For Marius. And you?

**Sam** – In the end, I voted for Paco.

**Fred** – It's not surprising they ended up tied.

**Sam** – It's true he's quite a catch too...

**Fred** – Look at that cute butt...

**Sam** – I think we're heading down the wrong path...

**Fred** – Yeah...

**Sam** – What's the equivalent of "macho" for a woman?

**Fred** – "Macha"?

*The dance continues.*

**Diane** – My goodness, Patrick, you're an excellent dancer... It's been ages since my husband made me dance like this... My head is spinning...

**Patrick** – We'll have to do this again next year...

*Victor dances with Christine with much more restraint.*

**Victor** – This impromptu little party is really charming. We should do this more often.

**Christine** – When we're all back in Paris, come for drinks at our place one of these days.

*Sam and Fred watch the dancers while sipping rosé.*

**Sam** – This rosé is definitely awful...

**Fred** – Yeah... but it's organic.

**Sam** – It doesn't matter about the wine, as long as it gets us tipsy.

*Marius approaches and speaks to Fred.*

**Marius** – Do you dance?

**Fred** – I'd love to, but I don't know how to dance tango.

**Marius** – I'll teach you, it's very easy. You just have to let yourself go.

**Fred** – Then, I'll completely surrender into your arms...

*Marius and Fred go to dance, as well as Robert and Fanny, while the other two couples return to their seats. Paco approaches Sam.*

**Paco** – Would you grant me this dance?

**Sam** – Let me check my dance card... (*She pretends to look at the screen of her phone*) Yes, I think I have an opening.

*Paco and Sam go to dance.*

**Victor** – These are the best holidays we've had in a long time, aren't they, my dear?

**Diane** – Definitely, much more fun than in the French Riviera... We're having a great fucking time, right?

**Victor** – Even so, watch your language, Baroness. I think our new friends are having a bad influence on you...

*They laugh. Folco approaches.*

**Christine** – In the end, Camargue is just as good as Spain.

**Patrick** – And it's much closer.

**Christine** – We'll come back next year to the Saintes Maries de la Mer...

**Folco** – You'll be welcome. In Camargue, we're proud of our pink flamingos, but even the blue ones are welcome as long as they love our region and respect our traditions.

*Sara flips the sign above the counter, revealing on the other side the inscription "The Blue Flamingos".*

*The party continues.*

*Fade to black.*

**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 13<sup>th</sup>  
Ménage à trois  
One small step for a woman, one giant leap  
backward for Mankind

**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 13<sup>th</sup>  
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 Deal  
The Perfect Son-in-Law  
The Pyramids  
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**

Backstage Comedy  
Check to the Kings  
Christmas Eve at the Police Station  
False exit  
In flagrante delirium  
Just like a Christmas movie  
Miracle at Saint Mary Rogera Abbey  
Music does not always soothe the savage beasts  
Neighbours'Day  
Open Hearts  
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  
Lost time Chronicles  
Open Hearts  
Sidewalk Chronicles  
Stories to die for

**Monologues**

Happy Dogs  
Like a fish in the air



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