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How to Get Rid of Your Best Friends

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Translation by the author

Sometimes making friends is easier than getting rid of them. Vincent and Julia have spent every summer holiday with Patrick and Christine for years. But now they have their sights on a more exclusive social circle – one that might help their rising careers. Desperate to shake off their increasingly inconvenient friends without causing offence, they become trapped in a web of their own lies. Getting rid of your best friends is harder than it looks...

Characters
Vincent
Julia
Patrick
Christine

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Interior – Modern middle-class setting. Vincent makes the final adjustments to the electric wine cellar, then opens the instruction manual. Julia enters from outside and calls out as she comes in.

Julia – Is that you?

Vincent – Yes.

Julia – It's me!

Vincent – In that case, I guess it must be us...

She comes in and sets a shopping bag down in a corner.

Vincent – Does anyone else have keys to this place, besides you and me?

She removes her coat and places the mail on the coffee table.

Julia – You never know. It could be a burglar.

Vincent – You're right... Or even a terrorist... Good evening, darling.

Julia – Good evening, love.

They exchange a quick kiss.

Vincent – Did you have a good day?

Julia – I worked on my new script.

Vincent – Oh, yes... What's it about again?

Julia glances at the wine cellar.

Julia – It's about a woman who discovers her husband is actually an alien.

Vincent – Really? And how does she figure that out?

Julia – She notices he's been tinkering with their fridge motor, turning it into a space-time machine to try to get back to his home planet.

Vincent (*distracted*) – Interesting... And how does it end?

Julia – I'm not sure yet... Probably with a divorce, I suppose...

Vincent – Great...

Julia – No, I'm just winding you up. I wanted to see if you were really listening.

Vincent – Shame, I actually liked that story...

Julia – I just went out to get a few things for tonight... What time are they arriving?

Vincent (*still engrossed in the manual*) – Who?

Julia – The Invaders! Patrick and Christine...

Vincent – Oh yes, that's right... Patrick called me. He's picking Christine up from the salon, and they're on their way.

Julia – The salon?

Vincent – The hair salon! It's open late tonight; she finishes at 9 pm...

Julia approaches and looks at the wine cellar.

Julia – What's this? We've already got a fridge, haven't we? Don't tell me it's broken...

Vincent (*proudly*) – It's not a fridge; it's a wine cooler.

Julia – A wine cooler?

Vincent – It's kind of like a fridge. But it keeps wine at a constant temperature.

Julia – For...?

Vincent – So it can age properly...

Julia – We don't usually give our bottles much time to age...

Vincent – ... so it's always at the right temperature when we drink it.

Julia – We don't exactly have any vintage bottles either...

Vincent – All the more reason for it to be at the perfect temperature!

Julia – And how much did this wine fridge cost?

Vincent – Not much. It's from a client we're working with at the agency...

Julia – How much?

Vincent – Three or four hundred euros, I can't remember.

Julia – Three hundred or four hundred?

Vincent – 399.

Julia – Wow... We could've bought a lot of good wine with that money.

Vincent – Which we couldn't have enjoyed at the right temperature...

Julia – OK, but... We already have a cellar, don't we? I mean a real one. Instead of storing old computers there at a constant temperature, we could store wine.

Vincent – Yeah... I thought about that.

Julia – Oh really... That's reassuring...

Vincent – Unfortunately, I checked, and the cellar's not at the right temperature.

Julia – No kidding?

Vincent – It's a bit too warm. Must be because of the boiler.

Julia – We could always put the boiler in the middle of the living room! That way, we could store the wine in the cellar! (*Vincent gives her a perplexed look*.) I'm joking.

Vincent – And it'll be more convenient to have the bottles within reach...

Julia – If you say so... (*She looks at the mail.*) Oh, I got my test results...

Vincent (*still engrossed in the manual*) – Oh yeah...?

Julia opens the envelope and reads.

Julia – Wow, this is complicated... Let's see... Normal, normal, normal... Phew... All the results are normal.

Vincent (*distracted*) – Good news...

Julia – No sign of cancer. You won't be a widower just yet.

Vincent – The temperature...

Julia – No, I don't have a temperature either, thanks for asking...

Vincent – I mean, I don't know what temperature to set it at... For storing wine, it should be around 12 degrees... But for drinking, it's more like 18...

Julia – Right, I'll go set the table...

Vincent – Well, for red wine, anyway. For white... Is Patrick bringing white or red?

Julia – Why don't you ask him...?

Vincent – Good idea, I'll send him a text.

He types on his phone and sends the message. The phone immediately rings.

Vincent – Wow, that was quick... (*Vincent answers the call.*) Yeah... (*Not seeming to recognise the voice*.) Charles...? (*Suddenly realising, much more engaged*.) Charles! No, no, of course... It's just that I was just expecting another call from... No, no, no problem... Sure, we can be on first-name terms... Not at all, you're... You're not disturbing me... We're just waiting for some friends, they haven't arrived yet... Yeah... Yeah... Oh really... Oh yes, of course... No, no, quite the opposite... Oh yes, absolutely... OK... OK... Right, we'll talk on Monday, Charles... Thanks for trusting me; you won't be disappointed, I promise... Have a good evening, Charles...

He hangs up, thrilled.

Vincent – That was Charles...

Julia – Charles...?

Vincent – My new boss.

Julia – I didn't know his name was Charles.

Vincent – To be honest, neither did I. When he took over the company, he started by firing ten people. Until now, he was just Mr Zimmerman to me.

Julia – And now you're on first-name terms?

Vincent – Wait, it gets better... He's putting me in charge of the Web Marketing for a new client. The one who makes these wine coolers, actually.

Julia – No way!

Vincent – If everything goes well, he hinted that I could be promoted to Account Manager soon.

Julia – That's amazing!

Vincent – And in the meantime, he's giving me a permanent contract!

Julia – That's wonderful!

They hug.

Julia – I'm so proud of you, darling.

Vincent – Thank you...

Julia's expression becomes more serious.

Julia – Listen, I wanted to wait until I was really sure before telling you, but I've got some big news too.

Vincent – You're not pregnant, are you?

Julia – No, don't worry...

Vincent – Tell me!

Julia – I got an email earlier. From a production company I sent my first script to.

Vincent – And?

Julia – They're interested. They're talking about offering me an option!

Vincent – An option?

Julia – A pre-contract, if you prefer.

Vincent – How much?

Julia – What do you mean, how much?

Vincent – The contract – how much?

Julia – Well, there's no money yet. It's just an option, with an exclusivity clause, so I can't pitch the idea to anyone else, you see?

Vincent – Oh, right...

Julia – But it means they're interested in the script! It's a small independent producer. In Marseille. Of course, if they decide to shoot the film...

Vincent – Wow... That's brilliant! Me, soon to be Account Manager, and you selling your first script...

Julia – You're right... I don't know why, but I feel like we're on the rise now.

Vincent – Me too... I feel like we're turning a corner.

Vincent's phone signals a new message. He glances at the screen.

Vincent – Christine... They're bringing red wine...

Julia pulls a bottle of champagne out of her bag.

Julia – How about setting your wine cooler to champagne? We could celebrate your promotion and my first contract!

Vincent – With Patrick and Christine?

Julia – You're right, it's better if we celebrate that just the two of us...

He takes the bottle.

Vincent – Anyway, it's not at the right temperature. We'll drink it together when we're on our own. In the meantime, I'll pop it in the fridge. Champagne is best when it's nice and chilled.

He leaves with the champagne bottle. Julia starts setting the table.

Julia – And what about the boat? What's happening with that?

Vincent returns without the bottle.

Vincent – It's done. Patrick found one. A bargain, on eBay. Seems like a great deal...

Julia – Like the wine cooler... How much?

Vincent – I'm not sure yet. He'll tell us tonight... The only issue is that, for now, it's docked in Saint-Brieuc. We'll need to find a trailer...

Julia – A trailer?

Vincent – To bring it to Concarneau.

Julia – I thought a boat... To go from Saint-Brieuc to Concarneau...

Vincent – Hang on, that's nearly the whole way around Brittany. It's just a small sailboat... And we're not exactly seasoned sailors yet. I'm not ready for the America's Cup...

Julia sighs.

Julia – Great... Another year in Brittany then... With Patrick and Christine...

A pause.

Vincent – I know, I'd like a change too now and then. But Brittany does have some advantages...

Julia – For starters, we don't spend a fortune on sun cream...

Vincent – Not to mention, we don't have to pay for accommodation.

Julia – Yeah...

Vincent – Can you imagine how much it would cost us to rent a villa in Concarneau?

Julia – Well, it's not exactly a villa, is it... I'd call it more of a shack, wouldn't you?

Vincent – It was his grandmother's house...

Julia – Yes... and they haven't done any work on it since they inherited it...

A pause.

Vincent – Concarneau... That's where we met... You were sixteen when I first saw you, with Patrick, in that club, remember...?

Julia – Actually, I was only fifteen. But the bouncer was my friend's cousin...

He holds her in his arms for a moment.

Vincent – And you chose me...

Julia – Yes... Do you really want this sailboat?

Vincent – It's more Patrick's idea. He seems so excited about it...

Julia – If it's to make Patrick happy, then...

Vincent – They've never asked us for any financial help with the house... This is a way to contribute to the holiday costs.

Julia – And what am I supposed to do while you're out sailing? Talk fashion with Christine?

Vincent – You get that bored with her?

Julia – They're both very nice, but you have to admit...

Vincent – They're a bit tacky.

Julia – We're almost childhood friends, it's true, but we haven't exactly evolved in the same direction. After a while, it starts to show... He's a lifeguard, she's a hairdresser... We've got less and less to talk about... What do you two even talk about when it's just you and Patrick?

Vincent (*awkwardly*) – Well...

Julia – If I want to chat with a hairdresser, I'll go to the salon. Nobody goes on holiday with their hairdresser.

Vincent – You're right; they're not exactly helping us move up in the world.

Julia – It's sad to say, but when you're in a hot air balloon and want to rise higher, you've got to let go of some ballast.

Vincent – A hot air balloon?

Julia – Fine, a boat, if you prefer. When you're trying to make progress and the boat is overloaded, you have to be brave enough to throw off some dead weight to keep moving and discover new horizons.

Vincent – That's clear enough... But what exactly are you saying?

Julia – ‘Friends first,' sounds nice, but when you feel like the ship is sinking, you have to be ready to toss some friends overboard to stay afloat. And honestly, I've had it up to here with Patrick and Christine.

Julia's phone rings, and she answers.

Julia (*very politely*) – Yes, Christine? Alright... No, no, no problem, we'll wait for you... Oh, really? We can't wait to hear about it... See you soon, Christine... (*She hangs up*.) They're running a bit late, but they're on their way. And they have some good news to share.

Vincent – Great...

Julia – Good news...

Vincent – In their world, what would that be exactly?

Julia – They probably replaced the washing machine in Brittany.

Vincent – Or finally installed an indoor toilet.

Julia – Let's not dream too big...

They both pause thoughtfully.

Vincent – Did I mention that Charles has a villa in Saint-Rémy?

Julia – Saint-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse, near Paris?

Vincent – No. Saint-Rémy-de-Provence! In the south – a holiday home, with a pool and everything...

Julia – No way!

Vincent – Right next door to a famous television presenter's place. Provence is very fashionable these days. The Côte d'Azur is passé – far too ordinary. In summer, that's where all the right people go. Provence.

Julia – Did he invite you?

Vincent – Not directly... But he did mention, in front of me, that it's the perfect place to hang out with friends in the summer. Now that we're on first-name terms...

Julia – Of course, if we're not available, he won't even ask us... Does he know we spend every summer in Brittany?

Vincent – Well, I didn't exactly brag about it...

Julia – Saint-Rémy-de-Provence... That's definitely more appealing than Concarneau...

Vincent – It'd be good for your script. All the showbiz people are there in August – the TV and film industry...

Julia – They're certainly not in Concarneau, that's for sure...

Vincent – Isn't there a film festival in Concarneau? The Concarneau Film Festival rings a bell...

Julia – Locarno. The Locarno Festival.

Vincent – Ah, yes, that's it, you're right... I thought it sounded strange...

Julia – Locarno is in Switzerland, on Lake Maggiore. If there were a festival in Concarneau, it wouldn't be a film festival. More like, I don't know... a Clam Festival...

Vincent – Unfortunately, unless a miracle happens, it's Brittany again this year...

Julia – And with us co-buying this boat, we're locked in for life.

Vincent – Yeah...

Julia – Isn't there some way we could back out?

Vincent – They're our friends... What could we say? "We were planning to go with you to Brittany like every year, but we've decided you're not good enough for us?" They'll be offended...

Julia – Put like that, they definitely wouldn't understand...

Vincent – We need to find a way to pull out... without hurting their feelings.

Julia – Yeah, but that's not going to be easy. We've been going on holiday together for years. And now Patrick's buying a boat with you... A lame excuse won't cut it.

Vincent – We'd need something watertight... Something that would put an end to the discussion, once and for all...

Julia – Well, in the meantime, I'll take care of dinner for this little gathering of friends...

Vincent – What's on the menu?

Julia – I haven't cooked anything, but the supermarket freezer has... (*She checks the packaging.*) Baked cod fillet with mashed potatoes...

Vincent – Sounds good...

Julia – It's basically fish fingers with mash...

She exits. Vincent goes back to reading the wine cooler manual. The doorbell rings. He goes to answer it.

Vincent (*offstage*) – Hi, Christine! So, what happened to Patrick?

He returns with Christine, who is dressed garishly and somewhat tastelessly. She's carrying a baby carrier and a bag.

Christine – He's looking for a parking spot. It's getting harder to park in your neighbourhood. Since we've got the little one, I asked him to drop me off first...

Vincent – Great... But you didn't mention you were bringing Sabrina...

Christine – The neighbour's daughter was supposed to babysit her, but she's got mumps...

Vincent – The neighbour's daughter has mumps?

Christine – No, Sabrina...

Vincent, about to give a welcoming pat to the child, recoils slightly.

Vincent – Mumps...?

Christine – Well, she's sleeping now, thankfully... I gave her a spoonful of syrup...

Vincent – For the mumps?

Christine – To make her sleep! With any luck, she'll give us a break during dinner. She's been crying non-stop since this morning...

Vincent – Right... You can put her in the cellar if you like.

Christine – The cellar?

Vincent – I mean, the bedroom. You can put her in the bedroom.

Christine – Are you alright?

Vincent – And... it's not too contagious, is it?

Christine – A bit, yes... But you've had mumps before, haven't you?

Vincent – I'm not sure...

Christine – Sorry, I completely forgot to ask... You know, mumps can be tricky for men...

Vincent – What...?

Christine – Sometimes it can lead to complications.

Vincent – What kind of complications?

Christine – Fertility problems, for example.

Vincent looks concerned. Christine bursts out laughing.

Christine – No, but there's no reason for you to catch mumps... You probably had them as a kid...

Vincent – Yes, probably...

Christine – I'll wait a bit before putting her in the bedroom... I want to be sure she won't wake up... Where's Julia?

She takes off her coat and drapes it over the sofa.

Vincent – Well, she... She's in the kitchen...

Christine – You've been acting strange for a while now... Is something wrong?

Vincent – No... No, no... Well...

Christine – What is it?

Vincent hesitates before speaking.

Vincent – Listen, I didn't want to tell you, but... Julia isn't doing very well either.

Christine – You're scaring me... It's not serious, is it? This won't stop her from going on holiday with us, will it?

Vincent picks up the letter from the lab, which is on the coffee table.

Vincent – She just found out she has cancer...

Christine – Cancer? Oh my God... Julia, cancer...

Vincent – But she's not going to die. It's... not a serious cancer.

Christine – Not serious?

Vincent – Well, yes, but...

Christine – She came to the salon barely a week ago... She didn't mention anything... She looked perfectly fine...

Vincent – We got the lab results today.

Christine – Oh no... But what kind of cancer is it?

Vincent – I don't know yet... I mean, we're not exactly sure, but... I think it's in her foot.

Christine – Foot cancer?

Vincent – Well, um... It's... a corn on her foot, but potentially cancerous, if you see what I mean...

Christine – Oh no...

Vincent – Of course, it's thrown all our plans into question. Especially our holiday plans...

Christine – I don't know what to say...

Vincent – Just, don't mention it to her... Unless she decides to talk about it herself...

Christine – Of course... You know I'm discreet... If I repeated everything I hear in the salon, believe me... But you know you can count on us, both of us, if you need anything...

Vincent – Thank you.

Christine – We're friends, right? If you can't count on your friends during tough times like this...

Vincent – Yes, of course. But we don't want to...

Christine – And at least, cancer isn't like mumps, it's not contagious.

Vincent – Shall I help you take all this into the bedroom?

Vincent and Christine exit. Julia returns with the aperitifs. The doorbell rings again. She steps out for a moment to open it.

Julia – Ah! Good evening, Patrick.

Patrick – Hi there. You look surprised. This evening was still on, right?

Julia – Yes, of course, come in...

She returns with Patrick, who has a down-to-earth appearance and is holding a bottle.

Julia – Isn't Christine with you?

Patrick – Her coat's here, so they must be in the bedroom putting the little one to bed. At least, I hope that's what they're doing. I wouldn't much like walking into a mate's house and finding him in the bedroom with my wife...

He laughs a bit too loudly.

Julia – You brought the baby?

Patrick – Turns out she's got measles. Lucky you're not pregnant...

Julia – Oh, right...

Patrick – Hey, you would've told us if you were pregnant, wouldn't you?

Julia – You'd have been the first to know...

Patrick – It's just that measles are dangerous for pregnant women, they say... Or maybe it's mumps. Anyway, I brought a bottle of wine.

He hands her the bottle. She glances at the label.

Julia – Côtes de Provence... Thanks. Is it red or white?

Patrick – It's rosé. You can pop it in the fridge; it's best served chilled.

Julia – Vincent will be pleased.

Patrick – Why's that?

Julia – He'll explain... By the way, I wanted to ask you about the boat...

Patrick – Vincent told you? That's it, I've found our sailboat!

Julia – Yes, he told me, but...

Patrick – Do you know what it's called?

Julia – What?

Patrick – The boat! Our boat! Do you know what it's called?

Julia – No...

Patrick – *Friends First*! If that's not a sign, I don't know what is!

Julia – Yes, of course, but I just wanted to...

Patrick – The only problem is, I need to find a trailer...

Julia – But have you already paid for the boat?

Patrick – I just sent the cheque. Actually, that's partly why we're here. It wasn't exactly cheap. If I could've, I'd have covered the whole amount, of course, but... if Vincent could give me a cheque for half, that would really help me out...

Julia – Well, that's actually going to be a bit complicated...

Patrick – What do you mean, complicated? I talked it over with him and...

Julia – When?

Patrick – Just yesterday.

Julia – Well, you're not going to believe this, but... Vincent just found out today that he's been made redundant...

Patrick – Redundant? Oh no...

Julia – He was on a fixed-term contract and...

Patrick – But he told me everything was going great... and that his boss was really pleased with him.

Julia – So, of course, the boat might be a bit tricky...

Patrick – No, but hang on, that's not the issue. We'll sort out the boat. If I have to pay for it all myself... he can pay me back when he's able.

Julia – It's not just the boat, unfortunately. It's the holiday...

Patrick – The holiday?

Julia – Brittany... You see... We're just not going to be able to...

Patrick – But it costs you nothing! We're inviting you! And just because someone's unemployed doesn't mean they can't go on holiday!

Julia – No, but... Vincent needs to stay here, to... To look for another job, you see...

Patrick – He can find one after the holiday.

Julia – No, honestly... I don't think it's a good idea... He's so focused on finding a new job... It wouldn't really feel like a holiday for him, you understand... And... just in case there's an inspection from the job centre...

Patrick – Oh yeah, that's right... Job centre... Oh no...

Vincent returns with Christine.

Vincent – Hi Patrick, how's it going?

Patrick – Yeah, I'm good... But how about you, mate?

Vincent (*a bit surprised*) – I'm alright...

They exchange cheek kisses.

Christine – Hi Julia, how are you? I mean... with work...

Julia – I'm fine, I'm fine...

They exchange kisses.

Christine – Did you find somewhere to park?

Patrick – I parked in the delivery bay at the Job Centre. I don't think there'll be many deliveries on a Friday evening. Sorry, Vincent, I didn't mean anything by that...

Vincent (*noticing the bottle*) – Oh, you brought some wine?

Patrick – Yeah, you even texted me to ask if it was red or white. Christine replied – I was driving. It's rosé, actually.

Vincent – Oh no, rosé...

Patrick – You don't like rosé?

Christine – Come on, Patrick, everyone likes rosé!

Patrick – No, it's just... I'm not sure what temperature it's meant to be served at...

Julia – Vincent bought a wine cooler...

Patrick – Oh yeah, a wine cooler, nice. Oh no...

Julia – But isn't it going to clutter up the living room? How about putting it in the cellar?

Vincent – In the cellar?

Julia – It's a wine cooler, isn't it?

Vincent – Yes, well... why not...

Julia – I'll put the rosé in the fridge.

Patrick – Rosé is better chilled... Need a hand moving it?

Vincent – OK... But I'll check where we can put it first...

Patrick – I'll come with you... So, how does this wine cooler work?

Vincent – Well, I'm still getting the hang of it, but...

They exit.

Christine – I'm really sorry about what's happened to you...

Julia – What's happened to us?

Christine – Vincent told me about the bad news...

Julia – Oh, right...

Christine – I promised him I'd wait for you to tell me yourself, but, well... We're friends, aren't we?

Julia – Yes.

Christine – What's the point of having friends if you can't rely on them in times like these?

Julia – Of course.

Christine takes her hand.

Christine – And you're going to get through this, right?

Julia – Me?

Christine – I've had several clients in the salon who've been through it... Women usually don't like to talk about it much. But you know, a hair salon is a bit like a confessional.

Julia – Oh, really...?

Christine – So tell me, because Vincent wasn't very clear. What type of...

Julia – Type of...?

Christine – I know it's hard to talk about – I understand. But I'm sure it would help to confide in a friend...

Vincent and Patrick return. The women stop talking.

Vincent – We'll leave it here for now. I need to tidy up the cellar a bit first.

Patrick – What's going on here? You all look like someone's died...

Christine (*to Vincent*) – You didn't tell him?

Patrick – Christine mentioned it, but... It's not that bad, surely. It's not like someone's died...

Christine – What do you mean, not that bad? Of course, they'll get through it. We've made so much progress now, but still... Saying it's not serious is a bit much...

Patrick – I have faith in my Vincent. He's always bounced back. He'll find another job.

Christine – A job? Vincent?

Julia (*to Vincent*) – Sorry, but I told them about you losing your job...

Vincent – Oh, right...

Christine – Wait, so... on top of everything, Vincent's lost his job?

Patrick – On top of what?

Christine (*to Vincent*) – I'm sorry, I promised I wouldn't say anything...

Patrick – Say what?

Christine – Julia has cancer.

Julia is stunned. Christine starts crying, and Patrick comforts her. Vincent and Julia look very uncomfortable.

Patrick – Oh no... No way... Cancer? Tell me it's not true...

Vincent – No, no, don't worry. Everything's going to be fine. It's just that for the holiday...

Patrick – But what kind of cancer is it?

Julia – It's... pancreatic cancer.

Christine – Vincent told me it was foot cancer... Don't tell me it's already spreading...

Julia – We're still doing further tests...

Vincent – Apparently, in Chinese medicine, the pancreas and the foot are very closely linked.

Christine – Listen, at the salon, I do the hair of the wife of a top cancer specialist – Professor Bismuth. Normally, getting an appointment with him is harder than getting a haircut, trust me. But Mary-Anne, his wife, told me that if I ever needed anything, she'd put my case at the top of the pile. I'll talk to her...

Julia – No, maybe it's not necessary to trouble her...

Christine – Are you kidding? Julia! We're friends, aren't we?

Julia – Yes, of course, but...

Christine – This guy's like a god at the hospital. They say he works miracles...

Patrick – And as for your job, Vincent... I'll keep my ears open... You know, at the pool, I meet all sorts of people.

Vincent – I'm not sure... But thanks anyway...

Patrick – In the meantime, there's no way we're letting you two be down in the dumps. We're all going to Brittany this summer.

Christine – The sea air will do you both good.

Patrick – And don't worry about the boat. We'll sort it out... Things aren't easy for us right now either, but I can always take out a small loan if I have to.

Vincent – I don't know what to say...

Patrick – Wait, do you know what the boat's called?

Vincent – No?

Patrick – Go on, tell him, Christine.

Christine – *Friends for Life*.

Patrick – Actually, it's *Friends First*, but you get the idea... You see, you're not on your own!

Christine – I think the baby's awake... Can you help me, Patrick? I'm so shaken up, I don't know if I'll manage on my own...

Patrick and Christine exit.

Julia – Foot cancer? You couldn't come up with something better?

Vincent – I improvised... It was the first thing that came to mind...

Julia – Always a pleasure...

Vincent – Still, the story about my redundancy wasn't bad either...

Julia – You think so?

Vincent – You can recover from cancer, but me? What am I going to tell them after the holiday? That they've rehired me?

Julia – Yeah, we probably should've coordinated a bit better. Improvisation isn't always the best idea...

Vincent – Definitely not... Now I'm not sure how we're going to get out of this...

Julia – You're right, they'll never let us go. They're really nice, but... They're also incredibly clingy...

Vincent – Like a plaster... You think you've pulled it off, but it's still stuck to you...

Julia – Well, they are Bretons after all...

Vincent – We need something stronger. Something more final.

Julia – You're scaring me...

Patrick and Christine return.

Christine – We changed her, and she's just gone back to sleep.

Patrick – With a bit of luck, we can enjoy the evening. Well, given the circumstances, I mean... (*His phone rings, and he answers*.) Yeah? Oh, hi Marco. Yeah, yeah, yeah... Great! Thanks, mate, I owe you one. OK, I'm with Vincent now. Right, I'll call you back. (*He hangs up.*) That was my mate Marco. His brother-in-law can lend us his trailer for the boat. Do you have a tow bar?

Vincent – A tow bar?

Patrick – On your car! For the trailer...

Vincent – Oh... Well, no...

Patrick – No problem. I'll get one fitted on mine. So there we go, mate! We've got our sailboat!

Christine – I think this holiday in Brittany will do us all the world of good.

Vincent's phone rings, and he takes the call.

Vincent – Oh, Charles... No, no, not at all... (*To the others*) Excuse me for a minute...

He steps out.

Julia – It's Charles, his boss.

Patrick – His boss? The one who fired him?

Julia – That's right...

Christine – And he's still calling him *Charles*?

Patrick – Vincent's always been too nice, that's his problem, and people take advantage...

Christine – Too nice for his own good.

Julia – They're negotiating his exit package.

Patrick – I thought he was on a fixed-term contract. There shouldn't be much to negotiate, right?

Julia – I'm not sure...

Christine – Honestly, what kind of world are we living in... I can't wait for the holiday...

Julia – Listen, about the holiday, it's really going to be difficult.

Christine – Don't let it get you down, Julia. Believe me, with everything you're going through, it'll do you both good.

Julia – Well, actually... It's going away together... That's what won't be possible...

Patrick – And why's that?

Julia – Well, because... we're getting a divorce.

Christine – What?

Patrick – That can't be...

Christine – Tell me it's not true...

Patrick – Not you two...

Christine – Not now. Not with everything you're both going through at the moment.

Patrick – You should be sticking together, not pulling apart!

Julia – Actually, it's... It's something we've been thinking about for a while now. I mean... long before all this bad news. And now, we just feel that... This marriage... It's not bringing us much luck...

Patrick starts crying this time. Christine consoles him. Vincent returns.

Vincent – What's going on?

Julia – I just told them... about our divorce...

Vincent – Oh, right... Good call...

He seems a bit taken aback.

Patrick – I'm really sorry, I'm not usually one to cry in front of everyone. But to us, you were the perfect couple. Vincent and Julia, you were... I don't know...

Christine – Vincent and Julia.

Patrick – Exactly. When you said "Vincent and Julia", well...

Christine – There was nothing more to say.

Patrick – It was Vincent and Julia, that's all.

Christine – Have you really thought this through?

Vincent – We're going to let the summer pass. Take some time to think, each on our own.

Julia – Separately.

Vincent – So you understand, for the holiday...

Julia – We can't go to Brittany together.

Christine – I understand, of course...

Patrick – But we're not going to choose between you two, are we, Christine?

Christine – Of course not.

Patrick – You're both still our friends. You'll always be welcome at ours.

Christine – And for Brittany, well... You can come one at a time!

Patrick – Oh yeah, that's a great idea... That way we can still enjoy the boat!

Christine – And that way, you'll each go away for less time... with everything you're going through...

Patrick – Vincent could come the first two weeks of August, and Julia the second...

Julia – That's kind of you, but I'm not sure... What do you think, Vincent?

Vincent – I don't know what to say...

Christine – Well, then don't say anything...

Patrick – But still, it's a real blow...

Christine – Yeah, for me too.

Patrick and Christine both start crying at the same time. Vincent and Julia are completely at a loss.

Christine – To think we were both witnesses at your wedding, and now...

Julia – I'm going to check on dinner. Let's not get too down about it... Vincent, why don't you get them a drink?

Julia exits.

Christine – Listen, Vincent, I've always supported you, but this... You can't do this to her! Not with what she's going through right now.

Vincent – Listen, it's *her* who...

Christine – Okay, Julia hasn't always been... perfect. But she loves you, and that's what matters.

Vincent – What do you mean, not perfect?

Christine – I mean... Everyone has their faults. She does too. But remember when you had your tonsils out? She visited you every day in the hospital...

Vincent – It was haemorrhoids...

Patrick – Well, whatever she has now is much worse than haemorrhoids, believe me.

Christine – OK, medicine has come a long way, but you never know.

Patrick – In three or six months, you could be a widower. So why rush into anything?

Christine shoots Patrick a startled look.

Christine – I wouldn't have put it like that, but I do think this divorce... It really isn't a priority right now, is it?

Julia returns.

Julia – Dinner will be ready in five minutes. Vincent, can you take care of the wine? I'll serve them a drink since you didn't...

Vincent exits.

Patrick – Listen, Julia, I think you're making the biggest mistake of your life.

Julia – You think so?

Patrick – OK, maybe Vincent hasn't always been the perfect husband...

Julia – Oh really? Do you know something?

Patrick – Not exactly... But he's a man, isn't he? I mean, sometimes at the pool... I get tempted too...

Christine – Oh, do you?

Patrick – Anyway, Vincent adores you, that much is clear.

Julia – I know, but...

Christine – But what?

Julia – I've met someone, that's what!

Christine – You? You've met someone?

Julia – What? Is it that surprising?

Christine – No, not at all, but...

Julia – Vincent didn't want children. And I'm not getting any younger.

Patrick – What do you mean, he didn't want children? He never told me that. But you know what men are like. I didn't want any either, but Christine insisted a bit...

Christine – Just a little?

Patrick – I just mean that having kids wasn't as urgent for us. But once they're here, we adore them, obviously.

They hear the baby crying.

Christine – Nice to know you feel like I forced your hand... Want to press charges for rape while you're at it?

Patrick – I'm just trying to help, Christine! Look, maybe Vincent thought it wasn't the right time... And between us, he might not have been completely wrong...

Christine – Because of Julia's cancer? *Not the right time?* That's monstrous!

Patrick – Because of Vincent's redundancy! But deep down, I'm sure he wants kids with you.

Julia – I'm telling you, Patrick, he doesn't. In fact, it's not just that he doesn't want them... He can't.

Christine – You mean... Vincent can't have children?

Julia – No, of course not... But he can't have them with me...

Patrick – And why's that?

Julia – Because... Because he just admitted to me that he's gay.

Christine – No...

Vincent returns, wearing a feminine apron around his waist.

Vincent – Maybe we should head straight to the table?

Christine – Do you want me to help?

Vincent – No, no, stay seated. Julia will help me...

Vincent and Julia exit.

Christine – Oh, now I get it...

Patrick – Get what?

Christine – The divorce. I understand why Julia would want to find someone else...

Patrick – Right...

Christine – Honestly, I feel like I'm seeing them both for the first time tonight... And we've known them for years...

Patrick – It's crazy. You think you know people, and then...

Christine – And you never noticed?

Patrick – Noticed what?

Christine – That he was gay!

Patrick – How was I supposed to notice something like that?

Christine – I don't know... You two spend a lot of time together... Especially on holiday...

Patrick – And so?

Christine – When you go off for hours out at sea... on a pedalo...

Patrick – Have you lost your mind?

Christine – I always thought he had a slightly feminine side, but still...

Patrick – Feminine side? I never noticed anything. But now that I know, the thought of going sailing alone with him...

Christine – Now that you know he swings both ways, as they say...

Patrick – Poor things... Can you imagine?

Christine – A redundancy, cancer, a divorce. And now a coming out...

Patrick – When it rains, it pours... And tonight it’s a downpour...

Christine – I think finding out that Vincent's gay is even more shocking to me than Julia's cancer...

Patrick – Yeah... When you've got cancer, sometimes you can still recover. But when you're gay...

Patrick knocks over a stack of papers.

Patrick – Oh look, here are her test results...

Christine – Let me see.

Patrick – Still...

Christine – If I'm going to mention it to the Professor Bismuth's wife...

Patrick – You're right.

He hands her the paper, and she quickly scans it.

Christine – I don't understand.

Patrick – That's normal, medical jargon is impossible to understand. You'd think they do it on purpose.

Christine – No, I mean...

Patrick – Is it really that bad?

Christine – It says everything is normal!

Patrick – Normal?

Christine – It's written here in black and white! There's nothing wrong with her!

Patrick – That's not possible... Let me see...

Christine – Look for yourself!

She hands him the paper, and he scans it quickly.

Patrick – But... what does this mean?

The landline rings. After two rings, they hear a voicemail.

Charles (*off*) – Hi, it's Charles. To finalise your permanent contract, I just need a few more details. Call me when you can... Oh, and about Saint-Rémy, it's a shame, but as you said you'll be in Brittany in August... Maybe next year...

Patrick and Christine exchange a horrified look.

Patrick – They've been playing us for fools... But why? It's not April Fools' Day, is it?

Christine – Why? I don't know... Maybe they think we're not good enough for them...

Patrick – What?

Christine – They want to get rid of us, that's it! They don't want to go on holiday with us anymore, and they don't have the guts to say it to our faces, so they came up with.

Patrick – No? That can't be true... And the boat?

Christine – They don't care about your boat! Don't you see?

A pause.

Patrick – Yeah, I'm starting to get it... It took a while, but I think it's finally sinking in...

Christine – It's pathetic... The cancer, the redundancy, the divorce – all of it was a lie.

Patrick – So Vincent's not even gay?

Christine – They've been stringing us along, I'm telling you.

Patrick – Well, I'm really disappointed...

Vincent and Julia return with a dish and other food, placing it on the table.

Julia – There we are... Time to eat...

They all sit down in silence, the awkwardness palpable.

Vincent – Don't let it ruin your appetite now.

Vincent pours the wine.

Vincent – Come on, cheers! Well, I mean...

They drink.

Julia – It's not bad...

Vincent – Yes, it's exactly the right temperature.

Julia – Are you okay? You're very quiet...

Patrick – It's just... We're still in shock...

Christine – Yes, we're really sorry, Vincent. If we'd known...

Vincent – About... my redundancy, you mean.

Christine – Yes, that too, but mostly...

Patrick – If we'd known you were gay.

Vincent (*stunned*) – Oh, right...

Christine – Julia told us everything.

Patrick – I know, I'm not the best when it comes to making jokes about that sort of thing. But deep down... I mean, at my core... Well, I'm not like that, you know...

Vincent – You mean... You're not gay...

Patrick – I'm not homophobic!

Vincent gives Julia a puzzled look.

Vincent – Of course...

Christine – Anyway, gay or not, you'll always be our friend, Vincent.

Patrick – Because we don't judge our friends on things like that, do we, Christine? What matters in friendship is loyalty, right?

Julia – Of course...

Christine – Knowing you can rely on your friends when you're going through tough times, that's what counts.

Patrick – The rest... And between friends, we should be able to tell each other everything, shouldn't we? There's no need to lie...

Vincent – Absolutely.

Christine – So we accept you as you are, Vincent.

Patrick – And if you still want to spend time with me on that sailboat, like we used to on the pedalo... Well, I'm up for it.

Vincent – Thank you, I... I'm really touched... But I don't know if...

Julia – Please, eat! It's going to get cold...

They start eating in silence.

Julia – So, what was your surprise?

Christine – Surprise?

Julia – You mentioned a surprise on the phone...

Patrick – Oh, right, that...

Christine – Well, it doesn't seem to matter much now.

Patrick – Should we tell them anyway?

Christine – It's up to you...

Patrick – We're almost embarrassed to say. After everything you're going through...

Christine looks at him, surprised.

Julia – Go on, tell us.

Patrick – Christine had an elderly lady as a client at the salon.

Christine – She used to come in for her hair every Saturday morning when we opened.

Patrick – Very lonely. No family. Just a poodle...

Christine – Madeleine.

Vincent – That's a name for a poodle...

Patrick – No, the lady was called Madeleine.

Julia – Of course...

Christine – I took good care of Madeleine. She always wanted me to do her hair. I'd chat with her, listen to her little stories, and tell her mine. She liked me a lot. She always said she wouldn't forget me when she died. I thought it was just words.

Patrick – Or that she'd leave us a trinket, a piece of jewellery, a few hundred euros...

Christine – She passed away a month ago. No heirs. Her solicitor called us yesterday.

Patrick – She made Christine her sole beneficiary.

Christine gives Patrick a surprised look but keeps her composure in front of the others.

Julia – That's an incredible story!

Vincent – How much?

Christine – We don't know exactly yet, but the solicitor mentioned a villa in Monaco. With a pool and everything.

Patrick – We feel like we've won the lottery... Imagine, a lifeguard inheriting a pool!

Vincent – Yeah, it's like... a miner inheriting a mine. I mean, a gold mine, of course...

Julia – That's insane! But you don't seem happy? If something like that happened to me...

Christine – Now that we know about your troubles... it dampens the celebration a bit...

Patrick – And we don't want to get ahead of ourselves... We're waiting for all the details.

Christine – Can you imagine us as billionaires? Us?

Patrick – Patrick and Christine, owners of a villa in Monaco!

Christine – In Monaco, can you believe it? Not only would we be rich, but we wouldn't have to pay taxes anymore.

Patrick – No, there's got to be a catch somewhere.

Vincent – What do you mean, a catch?

Patrick – Sometimes, with inheritances...

Vincent – What?

Patrick – Sometimes there are debts too... You think you're rich, and you end up with a bunch of creditors chasing you.

Christine – You have to think carefully before accepting this sort of thing.

Julia – Please tell me... you haven't refused it?

Christine – We asked for the full details of the estate.

Patrick – It's called ‘under benefit of inventory', according to the solicitor. We're waiting for a call back.

Christine – But still, if it's really true... It's such a shame you won't be able to enjoy it with us...

Julia – Yes, it is...

Vincent – But you're not eating! Please, help yourselves!

Christine – It's delicious, but with all these emotions... we've lost our appetite.

Patrick – Mind if we go smoke a cigarette on the balcony?

Julia – No, you can smoke here.

Christine – We're not going to make you breathe our cancer-causing smoke on top of everything...

Patrick and Christine exit, leaving Vincent and Julia in awkward silence.

Julia – This inheritance story is unbelievable...

Vincent – Yeah... That it happened to *them*...

Julia – Patrick and Christine.

Vincent – Yeah... I'm having a hard time imagining them living in a villa in Monaco.

Julia – It's like those people who win the lottery and suddenly become millionaires. When you're not prepared for it...

Vincent – Funny, if it happened to me... I feel like I could handle it just fine.

Julia – Me too...

Vincent – Just goes to show how unfair life can be sometimes...

A pause.

Julia – Still, they are very kind...

Vincent – Did you see their reaction when we told them you had cancer and I'd been made redundant?

Julia – Not to mention our divorce...

Vincent – And my homosexuality... I always thought Patrick was horribly homophobic... Turns out he was ready to accept me just as I am.

Julia – Wait, just to remind you, you're not actually gay, are you? Or did I miss something?

Patrick and Christine return, smiling.

Patrick – Actually, we didn't just go out to smoke...

Vincent – Oh no?

Christine – We made a few calls, and we've got some good news for you.

Julia – Oh really?

Christine – You've got an appointment with Professor Bismuth next week. Thursday at 10 a.m.

Julia – I don't know what to say...

Patrick – I called my boss at the pool.

Vincent – The pool?

Patrick – If we really inherit from the old lady, I'll only be a lifeguard for my friends in my own pool in Monaco.

Christine – Goodbye, Brittany!

Patrick – So, if you're interested in replacing me...

Vincent – Replacing you?

Patrick – They'll definitely need another lifeguard at the pool.

Vincent – But I don't know if...

Patrick – Being a lifeguard isn't that hard. You can swim, can't you?

Vincent – Yes...

Patrick – Well, then you're hired!

Vincent – I don't know what to say...

Christine – Well, don't say anything!

Patrick – We're friends, aren't we?

Christine – If we were in your situation, you'd do the same for us, wouldn't you?

Vincent – Of course...

They hear the baby crying.

Christine – Excuse me for a moment.

Patrick – I'll come with you.

Patrick and Christine exit. Vincent and Julia exchange an awkward look.

Vincent – I'm starting to wonder if all these lies were such a good idea...

Julia – Yeah, I'm not sure how we're going to get out of this.

A pause.

Vincent – With everything they're doing for us... I'm starting to feel guilty...

Julia – It's true... I didn't expect that from them...

Vincent – Friends like that, we're not going to find again anytime soon.

Julia – You mean... friends with a villa in Monaco...

Vincent – That too, yes...

A pause.

Julia – Do you think we can still fix this?

Vincent – It's not going to be easy.

Julia – No...

Vincent – By the end of the evening, you'd need to recover from your cancer, I'd need to find a job, we'd need to decide to stay together...

Julia – And you'd need to change your sexual orientation.

Patrick and Christine return, laughing.

Patrick – It's official now!

Vincent – You mean, about my lifeguard job!

Patrick – The solicitor just called. Everything's clear. Not a penny of debt.

Christine – Quite the opposite... Madeleine's accounts are overflowing! Money everywhere!

Patrick – And guess what? We've also inherited a yacht, currently docked in Monaco's harbour!

Christine – Believe me, Julia, when I heard that... It wasn't just the yacht that was wet...

Patrick – Goodbye to that little boat we found online... And this one, believe me, no need for a trailer. It comes with a full crew!

Vincent – No way...

Patrick – And do you know what it's called?

Vincent – *Friends First*?

Patrick – No, this one's called *Me First*...

Julia – That's amazing...

Vincent – Yes, we're really happy for you.

Patrick and Christine's smiles freeze suddenly.

Patrick – Sorry... In all the excitement, we momentarily forgot about your troubles...

Christine – Such a shame you can't enjoy it with us...

Vincent – Yes, it is...

Patrick – With your divorce.

Julia – Yes, well...

Vincent and Julia exchange a look, then Vincent speaks.

Vincent – Actually, we've thought a lot about what you said earlier.

Julia – You've got to take your friends' advice seriously, right?

Vincent – You're right. We're not divorcing anymore.

Patrick – What? But I thought you were gay...

Vincent – Yeah, I'm not so sure about that anymore either...

Patrick – Really...

Christine – But wait... Does that mean you'll be available this summer? Oh no, silly me... With your foot cancer...

Patrick – Wasn't it liver cancer?

Julia – The pancreas.

Christine – Right, the pancreas. That's not the best one, I hear...

Vincent – Sometimes you can recover from it.

Christine – OK, Professor Bismuth works miracles, but let's be realistic.

Patrick – We don't want to give you false hope.

Christine – No, for the Monaco holiday, we'll probably ask François and Catherine, right, Patrick?

Julia – Or maybe we'll wait and see if there's a mistake in the diagnosis... You never know...

Patrick – Well... That's crazy... Now it sounds like they regret not being able to go on holiday with their old friends, doesn't it, Christine?

Christine – Maybe because now we're billionaires with a villa in Monaco?

Patrick – Definitely better than going with two chavs in their shack in Concarneau...

Vincent and Julia exchange a panicked look.

Vincent – No, not at all...

Julia – It's just that...

Christine – Don't bother. We know about your supposed cancer and your redundancy...

Patrick – The only thing we're not sure about is whether Vincent's really an arsehole.

Vincent – I swear to you...

Julia – It's not like that at all... It's a huge misunderstanding...

Christine – We accidentally found your medical results.

Patrick – And your boss left a voicemail about your permanent contract... You should call him back, by the way...

Christine – You really took us for fools, didn't you?

Patrick – So we're not good enough for you, is that it?

Christine – Well, that was before. Before we hit the jackpot!

Vincent – We're really sorry...

Christine – Come on, Patrick, let's go.

Julia – No, you can't leave like this!

Patrick – Are you getting the baby?

Christine gets ready to leave.

Julia – OK... OK, it's true, we messed up.

Vincent – We just couldn't take Brittany anymore. Surely you can understand...

Julia – You were born there, but we're not Bretons!

Vincent – When we come back at the end of August, we're so pale people think we take our holidays in September.

Julia – At first, we were just looking for an excuse to back out.

Vincent – Without offending you, because you're true friends.

Julia – Then things escalated...

Vincent – And yes, it got a bit out of hand.

Julia – It must have been the boat. We were afraid of getting tied down for years.

Vincent – I didn't want to tell you, but just thinking about it makes me feel sick.

Patrick – Thanks...

Vincent – No, what I mean is... I get seasick, that's all.

Patrick (*sarcastic*) – And you think you'd be less seasick on a thirty-metre yacht, is that it?

Julia – But who cares about that yacht, honestly!

Vincent – What we don't want is to lose you as friends, do you understand?

Julia – And surely a yacht moves around a lot less than a small sailboat, right? I mean, for seasickness...

Christine – We're very disappointed... I thought we were real friends. Friends for life.

Patrick – *Friends First*... Yeah, right...

Christine – Haven't we always been there for you when you had problems...?

Julia – Yes, of course, but...

A pause.

Vincent – So have we.

Patrick – What?

Julia – It's true, we've always supported you as well.

Vincent – Remember when things weren't going so well in your relationship, for example.

Julia – When Christine was thinking of seeing that guy from the hair salon... Before realising he was gay too.

Vincent – Why "too"?

Patrick – What's this about?

Christine – Thanks, Julia, you're such a good friend.

Patrick – No, seriously, what's this about?

Christine – Don't worry, I'll explain later... Can't you see they're just trying to mess with our relationship to get out of this?

Julia – I'm sorry... I really didn't mean to...

Christine – Always there to help us, my arse... You were just there for free holidays in Brittany, that's all.

Patrick – Why would they have gone anywhere else? We never asked them to contribute to the upkeep of the house, did we?

Julia – We split the grocery bill fifty-fifty, though...

Christine – And now, all of a sudden, they've realised you don't tan much in Brittany.

Patrick – Maybe they've had a better offer elsewhere, who knows...

Christine – In Saint-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse...

Patrick – It's Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, actually.

Julia – No, but that's not it at all.

Patrick – Or maybe it was when I asked you to pay half for the boat—that's when you changed your mind, wasn't it?

Vincent – I swear, it's not that, it's just that...

Patrick – Come on, Christine, let's go... Otherwise, I might end up punching this bastard in the face.

Vincent – Please... Let's at least avoid homophobic remarks.

Julia – Please sit down, I'm begging you. We can't end things like this, over a misunderstanding. Look, I've got a bottle of champagne chilling just for you...

Julia rushes to get the champagne.

Vincent – We can't let it go to waste, can we? Come on! In memory of all the good times we've had together. Then, if you still want, you can leave.

Patrick and Christine reluctantly sit back down. Julia returns with the bottle. Vincent grabs the flutes. Silence. He opens the bottle and fills the glasses.

Patrick – OK, we'll drink your bubbly. But that won't stop us from telling you exactly what we think of you.

Christine – Yeah, who do you think you are?

Patrick – Do you really think you're better than us?

Christine – Just because you've got... a wine fridge?

Patrick (*sarcastic*) – A wine fridge...

Vincent – OK, we get it...

Christine – Just because Vincent works in IT?

Vincent – Web marketing.

Patrick – And because Julia fancies herself as a writer?

Julia – Writing is my life, you see... And to succeed in this business, you need to network... That's why I wanted to... well... change the atmosphere a bit...

Christine – Change the atmosphere... So, we're suffocating you, are we?

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

Vincent – My career is important to me too. I admit, I'm ambitious... And maybe it made me forget, for a moment, what really matters... Like friendship... Right, Julia?

Patrick – You've always been jealous of me, that's the truth.

Vincent – Me, jealous of you? That's a bit much, don't you think? Why would I be jealous of you? I mean, before you got this inheritance, that is.

Patrick – Oh yeah, right... How could *big Vincent*, who's just been offered a permanent contract at his telemarketing firm, possibly be jealous of a simple lifeguard?

Vincent – It's *web* marketing, actually... But yeah, why would I be jealous of you?

Patrick – I don't know... Maybe because I dated your wife before you?

Vincent – What?

Julia looks down but doesn't deny it.

Patrick – You didn't know?

Christine – Neither did I...

Julia – It was just a one-night thing, that's all.

Vincent – What night?

Julia – The night at that club, where we all went out together for the first time.

Vincent – We'd met that afternoon. I'm the one who arranged to meet you there!

Julia – Yes, well... Patrick arrived first. I didn't have contact lenses back then. I wasn't wearing my glasses and...

Vincent – And?

Julia – It was dark in that club. You two looked a bit alike. I mistook him for you...

Vincent – You think we look alike?

Julia – Back then, you did. And like I said, I wasn't wearing my glasses... I was already a bit tipsy. But as soon as you arrived, I realised my mistake...

Vincent – Thanks... That means a lot.

Julia – I did marry you, didn't I?

Vincent – Yeah... I hope you were wearing your contact lenses when you said yes...

Christine – So you were with Julia?

Patrick – I didn't know you back then!

Julia – It was just a case of mistaken intimacy... I mean, mistaken identity...

Vincent – I've heard of women who cheat on their boyfriends, but mistaking one boyfriend for another...

Julia – Wait a minute, it was before I was with you!

Vincent – It was the same night... You went out with two guys in one evening!

Julia – But I thought it was you! The guy I'd met that very afternoon, the one I'd fallen for right away. Of course, once Patrick started talking, I quickly realised he wasn't exactly degree-qualified.

Christine – After? After what?

Julia – It was only when I got out of his car and saw you in the parking lot that I realised my mistake...

Vincent – Out of his car? Oh, great... And to think I had to wait a whole month before you'd let me get anywhere...

Julia – Oh, go on then, call me a slut!

Julia starts crying.

Patrick – Sorry, I didn't mean...

Christine – Maybe it's best if we leave...

Julia – At least finish your poison... I mean, your portion...

They sit back down and eat in silence.

Vincent – Baked cod fillet with mashed potatoes.

Julia – It's fish fingers with mash.

Christine – Well, it's very good, anyway.

Patrick – And it goes surprisingly well with champagne.

Vincent – Shall I top you up?

The atmosphere is icy. Vincent refills the flutes and raises his.

Vincent – To your newfound fortune! You've certainly earned it...

Patrick – Earned it, that's a bit much... It's just an inheritance that landed on us out of nowhere...

Julia – I don't believe in miracles. You must have done something right to deserve it. That old lady who put you in her will clearly saw Christine was a good person.

A pause.

Patrick – Yeah... But now that we're billionaires, how do we know you're really our friends and not just freeloaders?

Christine – I'll go check everything's alright next door...

She leaves. They continue eating. Patrick's phone rings, and he answers it.

Patrick – Yeah...? Yeah... Oh, really...? No way... Thanks for calling...

Christine returns. Patrick puts away his phone.

Christine – She's asleep... What's going on?

Patrick (*crushed*) – There's been a landslide, in Concarneau.

Christine – And?

Patrick – The house... It's been swallowed up by the sea.

Vincent – Is this a joke?

Patrick – No...

Christine – Oh my God...

Patrick – Our holiday's gone down the drain...

Julia – Quite literally...

She laughs nervously. Patrick and Christine glare at her.

Vincent – But now, with that inheritance... The loss of that old shack in Concarneau seems less important, doesn't it?

Patrick – That old shack? It was my grandmother's house...

Julia – Oh, come on... It didn't even have an indoor toilet... Now that you've got a villa with a pool in Monaco...

Vincent – I imagine there are indoor loos there...

Patrick and Christine still seem devastated.

Christine – In Monaco...

Patrick – Don't tell me you really believed that rubbish...

Julia – What?

Patrick – We've been stringing you along too!

Christine – We're not scriptwriters, but we can spin a tale too...

Vincent – So you're not billionaires anymore? I mean... You never were.

Christine – That's right, we're still just working-class folk...

Patrick – And now, on top of it, we've got nowhere to go on holiday with the little one this summer.

Julia – So your salon client, she didn't die?

Christine – She did...

Patrick – And it's true, she didn't forget us in her will.

Christine – She left us her poodle...

Patrick – The grooming for that dog will probably cost more than her late mistress's haircuts.

Christine – And to think we hadn't even finished paying for the renovations.

Julia – What renovations?

Christine – Oh, didn't we tell you? We installed an indoor toilet.

Patrick – And now it's all been flushed away into the ocean. Like God's pulled the chain...

Vincent – I knew it was close to the sea, but I never imagined...

Patrick – With climate change...

Vincent – But you've got insurance, right?

Christine – We hadn't paid the bill. We were saving to pay for the boat...

They hear the baby crying.

Christine – I'll go.

Patrick – I'll help.

They leave.

Julia – Well, that's one way to solve the Brittany holiday problem for good...

Vincent – Yeah, with that kid crying all the time, imagine the sleepless nights we'd have had there.

Julia – It wouldn't have been much of a holiday, that's for sure.

Vincent – But still... If only that landslide had happened three hours earlier, we could've avoided all this...

Julia – No, we can't just abandon them...

Vincent – You think? I'll admit, the thought did cross my mind for a second. (*She gives him a reproachful look*.) But you're right, they're our best friends...

The others return.

Christine – She's back asleep...

Patrick – I don't know how we're going to manage...

Christine – First off, we'll have to forget about the holiday.

Patrick – But that doesn't solve our overdraft. I'd already taken out a small loan to pay my share of the boat...

Vincent – A loan? Really...?

Patrick – You can bet if I'd had enough to pay for it myself, I'd never have asked you to chip in...

Julia – And for the boat, can't you cancel the deal?

Patrick – I've already written the cheque. The guy was in a rush, had another buyer lined up. I just asked him to hold off a few days before cashing it – just enough time for Vincent to give me his half.

Christine – Can you believe it? We're stuck with a boat but no house in Brittany to enjoy it!

Patrick – I suppose I can always sail around the Seine on my own. Because I imagine you're not so keen to pay me back your half now, are you?

Vincent – Patrick, come on, who do you think I am?

Patrick – What?

Vincent – We're friends, aren't we?

Patrick – Honestly, I'm not so sure anymore...

Vincent – How much was the boat?

Christine – 6,000 euros.

Julia – Oh, wow...

Patrick – It was 3,000 each...

Vincent pulls out his chequebook and writes a cheque.

Vincent – Here, a cheque for 6,000 euros. Just wait until Monday to cash it – I need to drain my savings account first. The interest on it is next to nothing these days anyway.

Patrick – You're going to buy a boat on your own, a boat you'll never sail on?

Christine – But why?

Vincent – What's the name of this boat?

Patrick – *Friends First*...

Vincent – Well then!

Julia – And to hell with it, we'll sail that boat anyway. There must be cottages to rent around Concarneau for a decent price, right?

Patrick – A cottage? We'll never be able to afford our share of the rent!

Julia – You've been inviting us to stay in your... wonderful villa with sea views in Concarneau for years!

Patrick – Now it's more like under-the-sea view, but still...

Julia – This year, we'll be the ones inviting you!

Christine – You're mad! You'll bankrupt yourselves!

Vincent – I'll start by selling my wine fridge... You're right, it's not exactly essential...

Patrick – I'll pay you back, those 3,000 euros. Even if I have to sell a kidney.

Christine – Yeah, well, with all the alcohol you drink, I'm not sure your kidneys are worth much... Let's face it, we're not exactly sure we'll ever be able to pay you back...

Julia – Don't worry. Money between friends... That's not what really matters, is it?

Patrick – Honestly, we don't know what to say...

Vincent – Then don't say anything.

The other laugh.

Vincent – What? What did I say?

Christine – No, it's a joke.

Julia – What is?

Patrick – The house in Concarneau! There's nothing wrong with it!

Vincent and Julia look stunned.

Christine – You look almost disappointed!

Vincent – No, not at all, but...

Julia – Why spin us a story like that?

Patrick – Are you really asking that?

Christine – We just wanted to see if you were real friends or not.

Patrick – Now we know.

Patrick kisses Vincent, and Christine kisses Julia.

Christine – Now we know we can really count on you.

Patrick – And if you ever get tired of Brittany, just tell us, alright?

Christine – Rather than making up cancers, redundancies, divorces...

Julia – No, really...

Vincent – We'll all go to Brittany this summer, like we planned!

Patrick – And what about the boat?

Julia – What's the boat's name again?

Christine – *Friends First*.

Vincent – So, we're keeping it, right?

The baby cries.

Christine – Well, I think it's time for us to go now. We've had enough excitement for one night... I'll get the baby.

She goes to fetch the carrycot.

Julia – But what was the real surprise, then?

Patrick – Oh, yes, the surprise... We've set the date for Sabrina's christening.

Christine returns with the carrycot.

Christine – We were thinking of doing it in Brittany this summer...

Julia – Wonderful...

Patrick – And we were hoping you'd be godparents...

Vincent – No?

Christine – You're our best friends, aren't you?

Patrick – That's why we were so upset...

Christine – Well?

Vincent – Well what?

Patrick – Will you do it?

Vincent – Of course! Right, Julia?

Julia – Nothing would make us happier.

Patrick and Christine shed a tear.

Christine – You can't imagine how much this means to us.

Patrick – We'd better leave now, before we start crying...

The baby starts crying. Christine puts the baby into Vincent's arms, leaving him awkwardly holding it.

Christine – You're the godfather now...

Vincent – You're sure it's not too contagious?

They all smile sheepishly. Christine puts the baby back in the carrycot. They all hug goodbye. Patrick and Christine leave. Vincent and Julia are left alone.

Julia – Well, let's finish the champagne...

They fill their flutes and clink glasses.

Vincent – The good news is, I'm not getting made redundant, and you don't have cancer.

Julia – And most importantly, you're not gay and we're not getting divorced...

Vincent – The bad news is, we're not getting out of spending August in Concarneau with those two idiots.

Julia – And that baby crying day and night...

Vincent – And now, on top of it, we're godparents...

Julia – Yeah, we're practically family now...

Vincent – Which means we'll never get rid of them...

Julia – Friends, sometimes they're easier to make than to shake off...

They raise their glasses for a final toast.

Vincent – Well then...

Julia – To friendship!

They drink. A pause.

Vincent – Could be a bit cooler, don't you think?

Blackout.

End.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez first took to the stage as a drummer in several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then worked as a television screenwriter before returning to the stage as a playwright. He has written around a hundred scripts for television and 123 plays, some of which have become classics (*Friday the 13th, Strip Poker*). His plays have been performed in more than 100 countries and translated into around 50 languages.

Amateur and professional theatre groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his websites :

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

However, performance rights, which constitute fair compensation for the author's work, are a legal obligation. Whether you are an amateur or a professional, you must request authorization to perform the play and pay the corresponding royalties for the production.

Jean-Pierre Martinez is represented by the Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers (SACD).

To get in touch with Jean-Pierre Martinez and request authorization to perform one of his works, please use the contact form on his websites.

Jean-Pierre Martinez recently returned to music, writing original songs inspired by his poems and plays.

With **Jean-Pierre Martinez Music**, he extends that creative universe through original songs: short stories in musical form, humorous or melancholy, in which each song sometimes becomes a miniature theatrical scene.

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues
Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

Comedies for 2
A Thwarted Vocation
EuroStar
Heads and Tails
Him and Her
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Last chance encounter
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
Not even dead
Pentimento
Preliminaries
Running on empty
Russian Roulette at the Kremlin
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Dressing Gown
The Joker
The Rope
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3
A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cards on the Table
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Horizons
Ménage à trois
One small step for a woman, one giant leap backward for Mankind
The Ways of Chance

Comedies for 4
A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
A Skeleton in the Closet
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Déjà vu
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
Hangover
Happy Hour
How to get rid of your best friends
Is there a critic in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
One marriage out of two
Perfect In-laws
Quarantine
Requiem for a Stradivarius
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The Fishbowl
The Perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money
The Tourists
The Worst Best Man Ever

Comedies for 5 to 6
All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
Dead End Boulevard
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
The Castaways of New Year's Eve
The President's Draw
The Rebels
Traffic Jam on Graveyard Lane

Comedies for 7 or more
At the bar counter
Backstage Comedy
Blue Flamingos
Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
False exit
In flagrante delirium
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
Music does not always soothe ...
Neighbours' Day
Nicotine
Of Vegetables and Books
Offside
Open Hearts
Reality Show
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
Such a lovely village
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Most Beautiful Village in France
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches
Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Blackouts
Don't panic!
Dramedies
Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
Every Colour under the Sun
For real and for fun
Funny Stories
Him and Her
Hold on, Butterfly
Killer Sketches
Lockdown Shorts
Lost time Chronicles
Memoirs of a Suitcase
No Sense Off Limits
Now and then
Of Animals and Men
Open Hearts
Open Letters
Park Bench Shorts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays can be downloaded

free of charge from his websites:

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