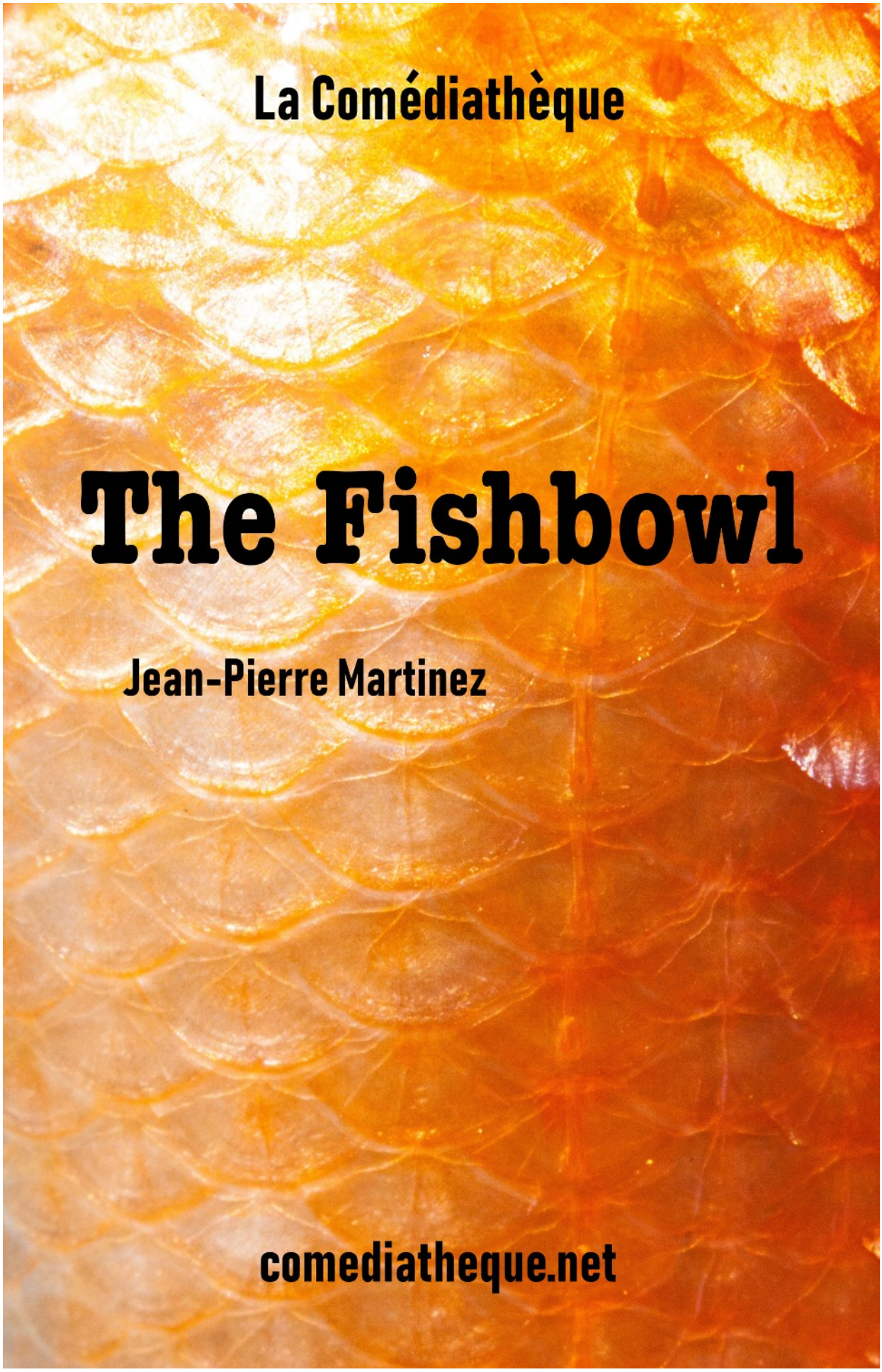

La Comédiathèque
The Fishbowl
Jean-Pierre Martinez
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The Fishbowl

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Translation by the author

Leaving the keys to your flat with a friend so he can feed your goldfish while you're away in August is perfectly ordinary. But when the friend is a little eccentric, and everyone has something to hide, a series of unexpected complications is bound to follow. Especially on the day Wallonia decides to declare independence...

Characters:

Marc

Vincent

Brigitte

Diana

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ACT ONE

The living room of an elegant modern Paris apartment. Above the fireplace hangs a Picasso, a variation on Manet's Luncheon on the Grass. Four goldfish swim in a bowl on a small table. A few houseplants are dying on the shelves. Classical music on the radio is interrupted by a newsreader.

Newscaster – We interrupt our music programme with the extraordinary news that has shaken Europe since this morning. For anyone who has spent the past twenty-four hours on a desert island, here is the bulletin we received overnight. To the surprise of the international community, in the middle of the summer holidays, Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium, has declared independence. It also intends to abandon the euro and restore the Belgian franc. Flanders, the Dutch-speaking north of Belgium, is on a war footing, and Luxembourg is reportedly moving troops towards the border. We'll keep you informed as the crisis unfolds. Whether history remembers it as the wave that swept Europe away, or merely a storm in a fishbowl, remains to be seen.

The music resumes, somewhat incongruously. Marc, a thirty-something financial golden boy in a suit and open-necked white shirt, enters his flat. Vincent follows him, the same age, dressed like a well-to-do professional on holiday: polo shirt, neatly pressed jeans and loafers.

Vincent *(hearing the music)* – Is somebody here?

Marc – No.

Vincent – I was worried I'd walk in on one of your mistresses. With Diana away for a month...

Marc – No chance. I have two rules about affairs: never with one of my wife's friends, and never under our own roof.

Vincent – And has that worked?

Marc – So far, more or less... Anyway, I'm on my best behaviour at the moment. I really can't afford any trouble. *(He switches off the radio.)* Diana must have left it on when we left for the Atlantic coast last week. For the goldfish.

Vincent – So they can keep up with international affairs?

Marc – She says they get lonely and depressed otherwise. Personally, it's the news I've been hearing all morning that's depressing me.

Vincent – Is it that serious?

Marc – Probably not the start of a third world war, but it's a disaster for business.

Vincent – So that's why you rushed back from your holiday without Diana.

Marc – The Paris stock-market index lost two thousand points in a single session. Can you imagine? I've tried to contain the damage, but right now all I can do is ride it out and wait for Wall Street to close.

Vincent – It's hard to believe. Wallonia declaring independence...

Marc – And bringing back the Belgian franc...

Vincent – Next they'll want the Congo back. Are you sure this isn't an April Fool's joke?

Marc – Unfortunately, it's August.

Vincent – Still, look on the bright side. It isn't your money.

Marc – It's my clients' money. I'm accountable to them. The relationship between a wealth manager and his clients is like a marriage. A husband and wife...

Vincent *(dryly)* – Is it now?

Marc – All right, a prostitute and her pimp, if you prefer. It's based on trust. I manage Diana's money too. She inherited quite a fortune when her father died. We couldn't leave it sitting in an ordinary savings account.

Vincent – Right...

Marc *(changing the subject)* – Come on, let's have a drink. It'll take my mind off things. And thanks for giving up your evening to keep me company.

Vincent – That's what friends are for. Besides, Neuilly is practically deserted in August.

Marc – Then why didn't you go away like everybody else?

Vincent – I'm the pharmacist on call. It had to be my turn eventually. And I don't really mind. Holidays on my own... No wife, no children...

Marc *(teasing)* – No mistress? A handsome man like you, single and able to supply slimming pills and antidepressants without a prescription... You must have women queuing round the block at the pharmacy. Unless they're after something discreet to poison their husbands with.

Vincent *(uncomfortable)* – Weren't you going to offer me a drink?

Marc – What would you like?

Vincent – A pastis. Plenty of water. It's boiling hot out there.

As Marc fetches bottles and glasses, Vincent pauses by a planter.

Vincent – Your plants look thirsty as well.

Marc – I gave Thomas the keys so he could water them and feed the fish, but you know what he's like.

Vincent *(amused)* – Thomas...

Marc – Have you seen him lately?

Vincent – Not for three months. Not since he borrowed a thousand euros from me. For a fortnight, supposedly.

Marc – One advantage of having penniless friends is that they never go away on holiday. It can be useful. *(He looks at the wilting plants.)* But Thomas... You really can't depend on him.

Vincent – He's probably gone on holiday with my money instead of paying his back rent.

Marc – Do you honestly think you can have a holiday for a thousand euros?

Marc pours the drinks. Vincent stops in front of the painting above the fireplace.

Vincent – At least your Picasso's still here. I'm not sure I'd have trusted him with the keys, if I were you. What's he doing these days?

Marc – Still an actor. Still unemployed.

Vincent – Isn't that practically the same thing?

Marc – He's a nice chap. He's just unlucky. Remember when he went to the Normandy coast for the day, three years ago, and his car was stolen from the beach?

Vincent – If you could call it a car. Almost none of the parts were original. Even if the police had found it, they wouldn't have known what make it was.

Marc – The thief must have been nearly blind.

Vincent – All his clothes were inside.

Marc – And all his papers!

Vincent – When we went to pick him up at two in the morning he was standing on the beach in his underpants, absolutely frozen. I thought we'd have to call an ambulance.

Marc – Instead I made him drink half a bottle of whisky to warm him up. God, we laughed.

Vincent – Speak for yourself. He threw up all over my Mercedes. It took months to get rid of the smell. Sometimes I wonder if that's why my wife left me.

Marc – That's Thomas for you. Admit it, he makes us laugh. Worth a thousand euros now and then, surely?

Vincent – He's a born comedian. Except when he goes on stage and actually tries to be funny.

Marc – Remember his last play?

Vincent – Vaguely. I fell asleep before the end of Act One.

Marc – And we couldn't even slip out. We were the entire audience.

Vincent – Oh God. I hope he didn't borrow my thousand euros to put on another play.

Marc *(appalled)* – Surely not?

Vincent – We should club together and give him two thousand to stop acting.

Marc – If only we could be sure he would. *(They drink.)* Remember that experimental drug you got him to test for a pharmaceutical laboratory?

Vincent – It was supposed to cure leprosy.

Marc – And he tipped off a broke actress he knew from drama school.

Vincent – He was lucky. He got the placebo. She woke up the next morning completely bald and covered in spots.

Marc – You'd forgotten to tell them about the side effects.

Vincent – She came to the pharmacy and caused a scene. Apparently she had an audition for a leading film role the following week.

Marc – You may have cost her the part of a lifetime!

Vincent – Well, they did pay her three hundred euros.

Marc – What was her name again?

Vincent – I can't remember. We called her Cherry Tart.

Marc – Six months ago, wasn't it? Poor girl, we've never seen her since.

Vincent – She probably doesn't dare leave the house. *(He turns to the fishbowl.)* Your goldfish don't look too cheerful either. It seems Thomas hasn't fed them. They look hungry.

Marc – How can you tell?

Vincent – The fourth one's trying to eat the other three.

Marc approaches the bowl and peers inside, astonished.

Marc – That's odd. I could have sworn there were only three when we left.

Vincent – I doubt the fourth one broke in. There'd be a crack in the bowl.

Marc – Oh yes. Two males and a female. I remember now.

Vincent – I didn't even know you could tell the sex of a goldfish. How do you know which is which?

Marc – The man at the pet shop told Diana. We took his word for it. I did wonder why she wanted two males and one female. I don't know if goldfish are much into group sex.

Vincent – Maybe they've bred.

Marc – And now the offspring is trying to eat his two fathers so he can have his mother to himself.

Vincent – Very Freudian.

Marc – Does the Oedipus complex apply to goldfish?

Vincent – Only if they have an unconscious mind. Which would mean they have a conscious one too.

Marc – I doubt it. They say goldfish have no memory.

Vincent – No memory?

Marc – Three seconds at most. Less than a microwave, anyway.

Vincent – Three seconds. Imagine that.

Marc – You'd never get bored.

Vincent – And you'd never feel guilty.

They gaze at the bowl, fascinated.

Marc – Or perhaps it's the cuckold taking revenge on the adulterers and destroying the evidence.

Vincent casts him an uneasy sidelong glance.

Vincent – Now that would make a proper bedroom farce.

Marc – Who'd have thought such horrors could unfold inside a little goldfish bowl? *(He raises his glass.)* To your love life. Come on, aren't you going to tell me?

Vincent – Tell you what?

Marc – Who is she?

Vincent – Who's who?

Marc – Don't tell me you've been living like a monk since the divorce.

Vincent – I didn't say that.

Marc – Well, tell me about her. You never used to be so discreet about your sexual exploits. Even when you were married, I got the full account of every woman you slept with. When do we get to meet her?

Vincent – We?

Marc – Diana and me!

Vincent – Well... it's a little complicated.

Marc – Ah, she's married! You know me. My lips are sealed. Is she a friend of Diana's?

Vincent – You don't know her. She's... a customer at the pharmacy.

Marc – Handy. You can check her prescriptions to see if she's on the pill and doesn't have any sexually transmitted infections. Pretty? *(Changing tack.)* Over eighteen?

Vincent – I really don't want to talk about this now, honestly.

Marc – It must be serious, then. The only women we've never discussed as lovers are the ones we married.

Vincent, anxious to change the subject, raises his glass.

Vincent – To your business, then. Markets go up and down, don't they? Just because they're going through a bit of a slump... They'll perk up sooner or later.

Marc seizes on the remark, an idea forming.

Marc – Exactly. In fact, this crisis is a tremendous opportunity for shrewd investors to buy shares at exceptionally attractive prices.

Vincent – Is that what you tell the clients you've just ruined?

Marc – You invest when the market's down. The fundamentals are sound. It can only recover, just as you said.

Vincent *(wary)* – Hmm...

Marc – If you've got some money to invest for the medium term, now's the moment. Tomorrow could be too late. I could take care of it for you.

Vincent looks anything but enthusiastic.

Vincent – You said it yourself. Trust is everything between a wealth manager and his client. And I know you too well... I mean, money between old friends like us could get awkward, couldn't it?

Marc – You could double your investment in a few months.

Vincent – Then why not do it yourself? With your wife's money, for instance. You said the best time to invest was when the market was at rock bottom. It doesn't get much lower than this!

Marc – Unfortunately, I've already invested everything.

Vincent – When the market was at its highest.

Marc *(sighing)* – If financial advisers followed their own excellent advice, we'd all be billionaires instead of working our fingers to the bone at the bank for a miserable salary.

Vincent – Is it really that bad?

Marc – Let's just say I've taken risks. Calculated ones, but risks all the same. I put a lot into some promising start-ups with bold ideas that haven't quite taken off yet.

Vincent – Such as?

Marc – One's developing a revolutionary cure for baldness. That experimental drug trial with the poor actress gave me the idea six months ago.

Vincent – A shampoo to stop your hair falling out?

Marc – A pill that makes it grow back!

Vincent *(aghast)* – You're joking!

Marc – Think how many bald people there are in the world. An enormous market! *(Returning to reality.)* Of course, when markets collapse, ventures like this don't offer much protection.

Vincent – And how many shares did you buy?

Marc – I practically bought the company. For next to nothing.

Vincent – And what's it worth today?

Marc – Well... nothing. But once the crisis is over it'll take off, I'm certain. They're almost there. They tested it on Aboriginal Australians first, and now they're moving on to animal trials.

Vincent – On people? Before animals?

Marc – The company's based in Sydney. They've already managed to grow hair on a mouse!

Vincent – A bald mouse?

Marc – Of course! That was the whole point! I could sell you half my shares, if you like. *(Vincent gives him a horrified look.)* All right, forget it. But you might have just turned down the deal of the century.

Vincent – I'll survive. I've missed plenty of financial opportunities already. I favour safe, sensible investments, the sort you'd make for your family. The only problem is, I haven't managed to start one yet.

Marc – Well, fortune favours the bold in love as well.

Vincent – I'd rather sell antidepressants to people who'll never be lucky. It's a slower, less glamorous route to wealth, but a safer one. *(Marc swallows a pill with his drink.)* Speaking of antidepressants, you should take it easy. Mixing them with alcohol isn't a good idea.

Marc – Once you're at the bottom of the swimming pool, the only way is up, isn't it?

Vincent, awkwardly, tries to reassure him.

Vincent *(pointing to the painting)* – At worst, you could sell the Picasso. It may not brighten up the dining room, but it must be worth a fortune by now.

Marc doesn't look reassured.

Marc – It belongs to Diana too. She's very attached to it. Her parents bought it for next to nothing years ago. Perhaps I should have invested in paintings.

Vincent – Plenty of paintings never increase in value.

Vincent's phone rings. He looks at the number and hesitates.

Marc – Aren't you going to answer? *(Vincent looks uncomfortable.)* Ah, I see. It's her! I'll leave you alone. I'll get some ice. This pastis is getting warm.

Marc leaves with a knowing smile. Vincent reluctantly answers.

Vincent – Yes, Diana... Look, this isn't a good time. I'm with him right now... With Marc, your husband! He called and I couldn't really say no. In the middle of August it's difficult to pretend you're impossibly busy. Besides, he was my best friend... before you and I started sleeping together. Tonight? You're already on the ring road into Paris? Of course I want to see you, but I thought you were staying with your mother at the seaside. *(Tenderly.)* I know. Me too... *(Hesitating.)* Diana? I've got the results of your blood test. It's positive. Yes, it means you're pregnant. Whose baby? It's a blood test, not a paternity test! I know you take the pill. I'm the one who supplies it. This one must have slipped through the net. *(Marc returns with the ice.)* Look, I can't talk much longer...

Marc *(amused)* – You can go into the bedroom if you want some privacy. You know where it is, don't you?

Vincent – Of course. *(Recovering.)* I mean... I'm sure I can find it.

Vincent disappears towards the bedroom. Marc smiles indulgently and switches the radio on.

Newscaster – Fierce fighting has reportedly broken out around the Royal Palace in Brussels. The two sides appear to be fighting over whether the king of Belgium will belong to Flanders or Wallonia. *(Marc sighs anxiously, pouring two more drinks over the ice.)* Meanwhile, New York stocks are plunging. Investors seem deeply alarmed by the prospect of Europe breaking apart and the euro disappearing altogether.

Marc turns off the radio again and, still deeply worried, waters the plants.

Marc – They really were thirsty. *(He approaches the fishbowl.)* There are four of them, all right. Where did that one come from? It really does look aggressive. Maybe I should give them one of my antidepressants to calm them down.

Marc feeds the fish. Vincent returns, looking both startled and amused.

Vincent – Who's that new one?

Marc – I haven't the faintest idea. I swear she wasn't there when we went away. And how can you tell it's female?

Vincent – Even through the steamed-up glass, it's fairly obvious.

Marc *(staring into the bowl)* – Is it? You've got better eyesight than me. I can't tell at all.

Vincent – Oh, very funny.

Marc – And the curved glass makes everything look bigger.

Vincent *(bewildered)* – What on earth are you talking about?

Marc – The fish! The one that's moved into my bowl!

Vincent – I'm talking about the naked woman I saw through your shower door.

Marc *(stunned)* – My shower?

Vincent – You kept that quiet.

Marc – Kept what quiet?

Vincent – So that's why you came back to Paris without your wife in the middle of August and blamed the stock-market crash. You could have come up with a better excuse.

Marc – What?

Vincent – You sly dog! And I was beginning to feel guilty... But be careful. What if Diana comes home unexpectedly and finds that woman naked in your shower?

Marc – Why do you keep talking as if she's my mistress?

Vincent – Oh, don't act innocent. And you, with your rule about never doing it in the marital home. Don't tell me she's a friend of Diana's as well.

Marc looks utterly bewildered.

Marc – Are you having me on?

Vincent – You really don't know there's a naked woman in your bathroom? And she can't be your wife because... *(He catches himself.)* Because Diana's still on the Atlantic coast.

Marc – Vincent, honestly! If I'd arranged to see a mistress while Diana was away, would I have invited you here for a drink?

Vincent – Fair point. Then who the hell is she?

Marc – I swear I haven't a clue. Are you sure it's a woman? It could be Thomas taking his annual shower.

Vincent – It certainly isn't Thomas's voice.

Marc – Did she speak to you?

Vincent – She's singing!

Marc – What's she singing?

Vincent – Does that really matter right now?

Marc – No, you're right.

Vincent – Well, go and look!

Marc – I will. *(He starts off, then stops.)* But there's a complete stranger in my flat. She might be dangerous.

Vincent *(dryly)* – Dangerous? A naked woman taking a shower? How, exactly?

Marc – She might be a burglar.

Vincent – Yes, she broke in to steal your Picasso, then thought she'd have a shower while she was here.

Marc – I'm going.

Marc goes out. Vincent drinks some pastis.

Vincent – Perhaps I should get out of here before Diana arrives. *(Marc returns already, looking dazed.)* Well?

Marc – You're right.

Vincent – Do you know her?

Marc – She's still in the shower. I didn't dare disturb her.

Vincent *(grinning)* – You come home while your wife is away with her mother, find a naked stranger in your shower... Give her five minutes and perhaps she'll be in your bed. For once you could make an exception to your principles.

Marc isn't amused. He has other things on his mind.

Marc – This isn't one of your stupid jokes with Thomas, is it?

Vincent – A joke?

Marc – Are you sure he didn't borrow the thousand euros to hire a call girl and put her in my bed to test my principles?

Vincent – How could I have got her in here?

Marc – Thomas had the keys. He could never have thought up something that twisted on his own, though. And he certainly couldn't afford it.

Vincent – But I swear...

Marc – I'm warning you, I don't find this funny. Thank God Diana's away; she has absolutely no sense of humour about that sort of thing. And with everything that's happened today, a divorce is the last thing I need.

Vincent – I swear on Diana's life I had nothing to do with it. But you'd better ask that woman what she's doing in your flat.

Marc – At this point we might as well wait until she's finished her shower.

They both think for a moment.

Vincent – I've had nothing to do with it. But Thomas...

Marc – Do you know something?

Vincent – No, but he had your keys. He could have been using your flat as a love nest while you were away.

Marc – Thomas? We've never seen him with a woman. Apart from Cherry Tart! He's about as sexual as a goldfish.

Vincent – Perhaps his hormones suddenly woke up. Like your goldfish. You said they'd never reproduced before, then you leave three of them alone for a week and return to find a fourth.

Marc – Yes, but they're stuck together in a tiny bowl. They don't have much choice. Where would Thomas find a knockout like that?

Vincent – By convincing her this magnificent flat belonged to him. And how do you know she's a knockout?

Marc – I don't. I'm guessing. That would explain why Thomas had no time to water the goldfish or feed the plants.

Just then a scantily dressed woman enters the living room. She screams when she sees the two men.

Brigitte – What are you doing here?

Marc – I was about to ask you that. But I could call the police and let them ask for me.

Brigitte – I'm getting dressed first, all right?

She disappears. Marc and Vincent exchange baffled looks.

Vincent – You're right. She's quite a knockout!

ACT TWO

Marc – I swear I have absolutely no idea who she is.

Vincent – One of your wife's friends?

Marc – What would she be doing here?

Vincent – Maybe Diana lent her the apartment for August because she knew you were spending the summer on the coast.

Marc – Why would she do that?

Vincent – Perhaps she's a friend from another city, or from abroad, who wanted a few days in Paris.

Marc – Diana would never do that without telling me.

Vincent – Perhaps she forgot.

Marc – That's not Diana's style. She's never kept anything from me. She would have mentioned it. Besides, she wouldn't like someone she hardly knows sleeping in her bed. You don't know her as I do.

Vincent – Hmm...

Marc *(taking out his phone)* – I'll call her to be sure.

Brigitte returns, dressed in a rather provocative outfit. Marc, struck dumb, puts away his phone.

Brigitte *(with a deliberately pronounced French-speaking Belgian accent)* – Perhaps you'd be so kind as to explain what you're doing here?

Vincent – Did she sound Belgian before?

Marc – Between that accent and Belgium falling apart, I'm beginning to think we've wandered into another dimension. *(To Brigitte.)* Don't tell me you're a refugee from Wallonia!

Brigitte – As it happens, I live in Brussels. Is that a problem?

Marc – Right now, you're living in my home!

Brigitte – Your home? So you're Thomas? But you're supposed to be at my place!

Marc – Me, at your place? You're the one in mine!

Brigitte – Exactly. Me here in Paris and you at mine in Brussels. That's how a home exchange works, isn't it?

Vincent – You exchanged apartments?

Marc – Of course not! *(To Brigitte.)* Who arranged this exchange?

Brigitte – You did! Thomas! With me!

Marc – My name isn't Thomas. It's Marc!

Brigitte – Then what are you doing here?

Marc *(to Vincent)* – This is insane. What do I do? Call the police?

Vincent – I think I'm beginning to understand. *(To Brigitte.)* You arranged a holiday home exchange with a man called Thomas, who claimed this apartment was his?

Brigitte – Naturally! There were photos on the website. It was exactly what I wanted. I certainly didn't agree to share the apartment with two strange men. What do you take me for?

Marc – I don't understand a word of this.

Vincent – It's simple. You gave Thomas your keys so he could feed your goldfish in August. Yes or no?

Marc – Yes.

Vincent – Instead, he advertised your apartment on a holiday home-exchange website.

Marc – My apartment?

Vincent – Pretending he was the owner.

Marc – A home exchange...

Vincent – It's a cheap, friendly way to travel. Very fashionable these days. Assuming you have a proper apartment to exchange, of course, not a miserable attic room like Thomas's.

Marc – So where is Thomas?

Vincent – On holiday!

Brigitte – In Brussels!

Marc – This is ridiculous. Nobody goes to Brussels for a holiday!

Brigitte – Really? Brussels is a beautiful city. Why else would both the Flemish and the Walloons be fighting over it as their capital?

Vincent – I told you not to give Thomas the keys.

Marc – Right, I'm calling him immediately. And if this is true, he'll have some explaining to do. *(He dials.)* His mobile is switched off. He's probably forgotten to pay the bill. *(To Brigitte.)* I'll call him at your place in Brussels, then. What's your landline number?

Brigitte – Seventy-two, forty-seven, thirty-three, ninety-two... And remember the Belgian country code.

Marc – Which is?

Vincent – Plus thirty-two. Not that it'll improve our chances.

Marc completes the number while the others watch. Brigitte looks nervous.

Marc – The number you have dialled is not in service.

Brigitte – With everything happening over there, perhaps the phone lines to Wallonia have been cut.

Marc – Right. I've had enough of this!

Before he can lose his temper, the phone in his hand rings.

Marc *(sharply)* – Hello? *(His voice softens.)* Oh, Diana... Yes, I'm fine, it's just that I've had a difficult day. You know, with everything that's happening... And you? Aren't you with your mother on the Atlantic coast? In Paris? When? Why? I could manage perfectly well on my own, you know. I wouldn't want to spoil your holiday as well. Your mother's bound to be disappointed... Of course I'm pleased. It's just... When do you think you'll get here? Already? No, I'm not hiding anything! Not at all, it's just... All right, see you in a minute. Love you too. *(He puts the phone away, sighing.)* That was Diana. She's decided to come back to Paris.

Vincent – No!

Marc – She'll be here any moment.

Vincent – Why are you panicking? Surely I'm the one who should... I mean, why are you panicking?

Marc – You don't know how jealous Diana is.

Vincent – Oh, right...

Marc – If she finds this gorgeous woman here, she'll divorce me and make sure it's all my fault.

Brigitte – This gorgeous woman? Are you talking about me?

Vincent – Coming from him, it's a compliment. More or less.

Marc – Oh, hell! Maintenance payments would finish me off. And her lawyer would start poking into all our finances when we divided the assets.

Brigitte – Have you got something to hide?

Marc – No, but... *(To Brigitte.)* Are you still here? Don't you understand? I own this apartment. The man who exchanged it for yours is a compulsive liar!

Brigitte – So?

Marc – So pack your things and leave right now. Preferably by the service stairs.

Brigitte – Absolutely not!

Marc – What do you mean, no?

Brigitte – I exchanged my luxurious duplex in the heart of Brussels for this apartment. I've followed every rule. I came to Paris for a week. I'm staying for a week.

Marc – But it isn't Thomas's apartment. It's mine! *(To Vincent.)* Tell her!

Vincent is at a loss for words.

Brigitte – That's between you and your friend. You can sort it out when he gets back from Brussels.

Vincent – If he gets back.

Brigitte – Besides, where am I supposed to go at this time of night?

Marc – I don't know. Home!

Brigitte – There's no train to Brussels now. And have you heard what's happening in Belgium? I'd rather wait until things settle down before going back.

Exasperated, Marc takes out two fifty-euro notes.

Marc – Here's a hundred euros. There's a hotel across the road. Stay there tonight, then tomorrow take a train to Wallonia, Bosnia, wherever you fancy. Is that good enough?

Brigitte *(unimpressed)* – A budget hotel? In exchange for my duplex on the main square in Brussels?

Marc *(to Vincent)* – Do something, please, before I strangle her.

Vincent – What do you expect me to do?

Marc – Take her home with you! You're single. You don't have to answer to anybody.

Vincent – It's just that...

Brigitte – Do make yourselves at home, gentlemen. I arranged to stay with someone called Thomas, find myself in the apartment of someone called Marc, and now I'm being passed on to someone called Vincent. What do you think I am? Just because I sound Belgian doesn't mean I'm stupid!

Marc is about to reply when the doorbell rings.

Marc – Oh, hell! She's here already!

Brigitte – What, more women coming? You're a gang of perverts! I'm calling the police myself!

Marc – My wife! It's my wife! *(Desperately to Vincent.)* I can't very well hide her in a wardrobe!

Vincent – That's a tired old farce. Perhaps try the freezer.

Marc – Never mind. I'll think of something. *(He goes to answer the door, speaking offstage.)* Darling! Was the traffic all right? Here, let me take your suitcase.

Diana enters with Marc. He carries her designer suitcase.

Diana *(pretending surprise)* – Vincent?

Vincent – I came to keep your husband company. All alone in Paris in August... I had no idea you were coming back today. I'd better leave you to it.

Diana – I wouldn't want you to think I was throwing you out. *(Her smile disappears when she sees Brigitte.)* Hello...

Brigitte – Good evening.

Diana turns to Marc, expecting an explanation.

Marc *(to Brigitte)* – This is Diana, my wife. *(To Diana.)* And this is...

Brigitte – Brigitte. Brigitte Van Houten.

Diana *(coolly)* – Van Houten... Delighted, I'm sure. And what brings you here?

Marc panics for an instant, then takes the plunge.

Marc – She's Vincent's new girlfriend. You know, the one he was being so mysterious about. He finally introduced us. She's so beautiful, I can understand why he's been keeping her to himself.

Diana *(icy)* – So can I.

Vincent is aghast but doesn't dare contradict him.

Vincent – Well, you see...

Diana *(to Marc)* – So that's why you sounded so flustered when I told you I was coming home. For a moment I thought I'd find you in bed with a mistress.

Marc – We were just having drinks. Can I get you something?

Diana *(indicating the suitcase)* – I'll put this in the bedroom first.

Marc – No, I'll do it! You know the mess I make when you're away. I've left clothes all over the place. Vincent, would you look after the drinks? You're practically one of the family.

Marc leaves with the suitcase. An awkward silence.

Diana – I think I need something strong. Whisky, please. *(To Brigitte.)* And you? Lemonade? Something sweet?

Brigitte – I'll have... *(To Vincent.)* The usual, darling.

Vincent pours two whiskies.

Diana – So. Have you two known each other long?

Vincent – Well...

Diana – I can hear from your accent that you aren't French, are you?

Brigitte – No. I'm from Brussels. Aren't I, darling?

Vincent gives her a look of horror.

Diana – And you've come to Paris for a few days?

Brigitte – With you away, your husband kindly suggested we use your apartment. It's so conveniently located for seeing Paris. But now you're both back, we'll make room. Vincent and I can sleep on the sofa, can't we, sweetheart?

Marc returns just in time.

Marc – There, I've tidied up a bit. My wife's rather particular, you see. If she'd found all those... clothes spread out on the bed she'd have killed me. Does everyone have a drink?

Diana – I'm all set. *(She raises her glass to Vincent and Brigitte.)* To the happy couple!

Vincent forces a smile. They drink.

Marc – I'll fetch something to eat with our drinks.

Vincent – I'll help you. *(They head for the kitchen.)* What possessed you to say this woman's my mistress?

Marc – Sorry, it was the only thing I could think of. Imagine if Diana had gone into the bedroom and found Brigitte's underwear strewn across the bed.

Vincent – You could have told her the truth!

Marc – The truth? That I gave Thomas my keys to feed the goldfish, and he used them to swap my apartment with a Belgian woman's so he could holiday in Brussels in August? Would you believe that? There are moments in life when a simple lie is far more convincing than a complicated truth.

Vincent – Fine. And what about me?

Marc – What about you?

Vincent – I've never met this woman!

Marc – But you've got nothing to lose. You're single. And honestly, she's quite attractive. Pity about the accent. Still, you don't have to make her talk in bed.

They disappear into the kitchen. Alone together, the two women size each other up.

Diana – Are you really Vincent's mistress? Or my husband's? He's such a terrible liar.

Instead of answering, Brigitte smiles mysteriously, walks over to the painting and examines it.

Brigitte – Luncheon on the Grass. Manet's painting, reworked by Picasso...

Diana *(sarcastic)* – An art expert as well, I see.

Brigitte – Two men, two almost naked women... Do you know what Manet privately called it? *(Diana doesn't answer.)* A foursome.

Diana stares at her. Marc and Vincent return. Marc puts some snacks on the table.

Marc – So, have you been getting acquainted?

Diana – We were discussing art.

Marc – Wonderful. Why don't we have a little dinner for four? I can put some frozen pizzas in the oven while we finish our drinks.

Vincent and Diana are unenthusiastic, but Brigitte answers for them.

Brigitte – Why not? It might be fun.

Diana *(with heavy irony)* – And then we can all go to bed.

Marc – I'll be back.

Marc goes out again.

Brigitte – I'll give you a hand.

She follows him. Vincent and Diana are alone.

Vincent – It's not what you think, Diana.

Diana – You don't owe me any explanations. You're an adult, after all. And you're single.

Vincent – I'll explain. It's quite simple... *(He hesitates.)* Well, actually, not all that simple...

Diana finds his attempts at explanation pathetic and turns sarcastic.

Diana – And does she know about us?

Vincent – No! Why would I have told her that?

Diana – You're right. Hardly worth mentioning.

Vincent – But I don't even know her. This is the first time I've seen her in my life!

Diana – Then what is she doing here? Are you going to say she's Marc's mistress?

Vincent – Not even that.

Diana – Pathetic.

Brigitte returns, carrying plates and cutlery.

Brigitte – Give me a hand with these, darling.

Vincent looks devastated. Diana shoots him a murderous glance.

Diana – I'll see what my husband is doing in the kitchen. *(To Brigitte.)* You know what men are like.

Alone with Brigitte, Vincent glares at her.

Vincent – Don't you think you're overdoing it?

Brigitte – Your friend Marc asked me to pretend to be your girlfriend. Make up your minds!

Vincent – Yes, but there's no need to lay it on quite so thick.

Brigitte – Is it so awful that your friend's wife might think we're engaged?

Vincent – No, it's just... You couldn't understand.

Marc returns carrying the pizzas. Diana follows with a bottle of wine.

Marc – Here we are!

Vincent – I think this little comedy has gone on long enough.

To shut him up, Brigitte suddenly kisses him passionately. Marc and Diana watch. When she finally lets him go, Vincent is visibly shaken.

Brigitte – What were you saying, sweetheart?

Vincent – I've forgotten.

Marc – Isn't love wonderful?

Diana – Yes. It even causes memory loss.

Marc – They say love is blind, but marriage restores your sight! *(Indicating the pizzas.)* Now, nothing fancy, help yourselves.

ACT THREE

Dinner begins in a tense atmosphere.

Diana – So what do you do, Brigitte? Unless you're still a student?

Brigitte – I teach fine art at the University of Brussels.

Vincent – Really?

Diana – Didn't you know?

Vincent – Yes, yes, of course, but I thought you were teaching somewhere else...

Marc *(uneasy)* – Fine art? You mean paintings?

Brigitte – Modern painting, mainly.

Vincent – Well, in that case, Miss Van Houten, you must have noticed our friends' remarkable Picasso.

Diana – Miss Van Houten?

Vincent – What?

Diana – Is that what you call your girlfriend?

Vincent – I was only being polite. Wasn't I, Marc?

Marc – I wasn't listening.

Vincent – Anyway, darling, what do you make of this masterpiece?

Brigitte – Picasso made a whole series of variations on Manet's Luncheon on the Grass. The original caused quite a scandal at the time.

Vincent – Really? Why?

Brigitte – Because it looks rather like an invitation to a foursome, or so people say.

Vincent *(looking at the painting with new interest)* – I see... I'd missed that side of it. It gives the picture a whole new meaning. Did you know, Diana?

Diana – Well, yes...

Vincent – How much would a painting like that be worth?

Brigitte rises to inspect the painting. Marc hastily distracts everyone by approaching the fishbowl.

Marc – Good God! Whatever's going on in here, it's certainly not a love-in. It's a massacre! The new one has already eaten the tails off both males. And I fed them earlier!

Diana – What new one? *(She looks into the bowl and almost chokes.)* There's a fourth fish in there! And it's a carnivore!

Marc – That's impossible! How could three vegetarian fish produce a carnivorous baby?

Diana – Then it must be an intruder!

Vincent – An intruder in a fishbowl? How would it get in?

Diana – That's exactly what I'd like to know.

Brigitte looks embarrassed.

Marc – First we need to get it out, before your three goldfish are nothing but bones.

Diana grabs the little net by the bowl and struggles to catch the predator.

Diana – Come here, you little bastard. You're not getting away!

Brigitte takes the opportunity to speak privately to Marc.

Brigitte – It was me...

Diana – What?

Brigitte – I put the fourth fish in the bowl.

Marc – You?

Brigitte – Three didn't seem a very nice number. So I bought a fourth at the pet shop downstairs. I didn't know it ate the others.

Marc – You're a one-woman Belgian invasion!

Brigitte – I was trying to do something nice.

Diana finally catches the fish.

Diana – Got you!

She throws the fish onto the floor and stamps on it savagely. Marc, Vincent and Brigitte stare at her in horror.

Diana – Intruder eliminated!

An appalled silence.

Marc – Well, we can finish dinner now. More pizza, anyone? *(No answer.)* Shall we move on to dessert?

Marc goes to fetch dessert.

Diana *(to Brigitte)* – So, has he proposed already?

Vincent – Well...

Diana notices Brigitte's very conspicuous ring.

Diana – Is that an engagement ring? Very pretty. A bit showy perhaps. If Vincent bought it, at least he didn't ruin himself.

Brigitte – Really?

Diana – It's a fake, isn't it? You can tell. The Queen of Belgium might own a diamond that size. The rest of us have to make do with glass.

Brigitte – It is a fake. Just like the painting hanging in your living room.

Marc reappears with a cake and freezes.

Diana – You're mistaken. That painting came from my mother. She knew Picasso personally.

Brigitte – One of his many lovers, perhaps? Picasso was quite a womaniser. Who knows, you might even be one of his secret descendants. Come to think of it, I can imagine you looking rather like a Picasso portrait in a few years.

Diana – My mother bought the painting from a gallery back when his work was still almost affordable.

Brigitte – Then the dealer cheated her.

Diana – I'm telling you, it's genuine!

Brigitte – And I'm telling you it's a copy.

Marc looks distinctly uncomfortable. Brigitte approaches the painting.

Brigitte – You can tell at a glance. The paint's practically still wet.

Diana is stunned.

Diana *(to Marc)* – Well? Say something!

Marc – Of course it's genuine!

Brigitte – I teach fine art at the University of Brussels, remember.

Vincent – But how could a fake Picasso have ended up here?

Diana – Perhaps the same way as that carnivorous fish. You told me you left your keys with Thomas to feed the goldfish, didn't you?

Marc – Yes, but...

Diana – I've always told you not to trust that loser. He could have stolen my Picasso and replaced it with a copy.

Vincent – Thomas could never do anything like that!

Diana – Perhaps that murderer put the piranha in the bowl too.

Marc – Don't be ridiculous!

Diana – He could be fleeing the country with my painting right now!

Vincent – Perhaps to Belgium...

Diana – Why Belgium?

Vincent – Why not? It's nearer than Bosnia.

Diana – We must call the police! Have an international arrest warrant issued!

Vincent – It can't be Thomas. He's not terribly bright, but he's no crook. He's not ambitious enough.

Diana – Then why not her?

Vincent – Brigitte?

Diana – I'm sure she isn't visiting for the first time. Do you think I'm stupid? You're both sleeping with her, aren't you? Is she a call girl giving you a discount for two?

Brigitte – Madam, really...

Diana *(to both men)* – Were you planning to end the evening with a little luncheon on the carpet?

Brigitte – If I'd stolen the real painting, why would I tell you this one was fake?

Diana – That's enough. I'm calling the police. They can sort it out.

She moves towards the telephone, but Marc blocks her way.

Marc – No. It can't be her.

Diana – Why not?

Marc – Because it was me.

Diana and the others are stunned.

Marc – I needed cash to cover my stock-market losses, so I pawned the painting. But I swear I've never been unfaithful to you! *(Digging himself deeper.)* Not with this woman, anyway.

Diana – I've heard enough! I'm going back to my mother's at the seaside. My lawyer will contact you on Monday.

Diana prepares to leave.

Marc – Diana, please...

Diana – I had my suspicions about the affairs. But stealing my inheritance? Mother's Picasso! I'll have you put in prison, I promise you!

Marc's phone rings before he can reply.

Marc *(looking at the screen)* – It's Thomas! *(To Diana.)* He'll explain everything. Thomas? Where the hell are you? You've got me into a terrible mess! No? You swear? All right, I believe you. I'll call you back. *(To Brigitte.)* Thomas never arranged a home exchange behind our backs. He hasn't even been to Belgium. He

broke his leg falling off the stage while rehearsing Molière's The Imaginary Invalid. He's stuck at home with a plaster cast.

Vincent – Poor man. He really has no luck.

Marc – He passed my keys on to an actress he knew from drama school to feed the fish for him.

Vincent and Diana turn towards Brigitte.

Brigitte *(without the accent)* – All right. I'm not Belgian. *(The others stare.)* And I don't teach fine art.

Marc – Then how did you know the Picasso was a fake?

Brigitte – I was bluffing.

Marc – Bluffing?

Brigitte – It looks fake, doesn't it? Besides, I couldn't believe anyone would keep a real Picasso in their living room.

Vincent – Then why all this performance?

Brigitte – You really don't recognise me?

Marc – No!

Brigitte – Imagine me covered in spots, and without a single hair on my head.

Vincent – Cherry Tart!

Brigitte – At first, when Thomas gave me the keys, I simply wanted a roof over my head for a few days while the apartment was empty.

Marc – Somewhere to stay?

Brigitte – When my boyfriend saw me with my bald head six months ago, he thought I had cancer and dumped me. I've had nowhere to live since.

Vincent – I'm sorry.

Brigitte – When I recognised the pharmacist with his mad-scientist face, I decided to get my own back.

Marc – But I had nothing to do with it!

Brigitte – Of course not. You certainly had a good laugh when you saw me like that in the pharmacy with your friend, didn't you? I was so disfigured you didn't even recognise me today!

Marc *(in disbelief)* – Cherry Tart...

Brigitte – And don't get me started on the audition you ruined. It was for Esmeralda in The Hunchback of Notre-Dame. With the face I had back then, they offered me Quasimodo instead!

Vincent – I'm truly sorry.

Brigitte – When I saw you two looking like schoolboys caught misbehaving, and then heard your wife carrying on like an opera diva, I thought it was my turn to enjoy a little comedy.

Marc – That opera diva happens to be my wife.

Diana – Not for much longer, believe me.

Vincent – Congratulations. You're an excellent actress.

Marc – Better than Thomas, anyway.

Brigitte – You made a wonderfully easy audience. And we do a lot of improvisation in drama school.

Vincent – But why pretend to be Belgian?

Brigitte – The idea came to me when I heard the radio.

Diana – Well, I hope you've had your fun. It's certainly opened my eyes about a few things.

Brigitte *(to them all)* – Didn't you find it funny? It was child's play. I felt as if I'd stepped straight into a classic French bedroom farce, with a wife, a lover and a cuckolded husband.

Marc – Who's cuckolded?

Diana – Don't change the subject. *(To Brigitte.)* And I suppose you're not Vincent's girlfriend either?

Brigitte – Why does that matter so much to you?

Diana – The one thing that's still true is that you're a failure, Marc. And a crook.

Marc *(to Diana)* – You're not really leaving me, are you?

Vincent – Could we put on some music and calm everyone down?

Vincent switches on the radio. Jacques Brel's Ne me quitte pas (Don't Leave Me) begins to play.

Brel – Don't leave me... We can forget the past, even our misunderstandings...

For a moment the four listen, each lost in private thoughts, eating the last of the pizza. A news bulletin abruptly cuts off the song.

Newscaster – We interrupt this programme with the latest chapter of the crisis that has shaken Europe. Wallonia is now requesting incorporation into France as an overseas territory. Flanders, much of which already lies below sea level, is to be returned to the ocean and converted into an oyster farm.

Music resumes with another song by Jacques Brel, Le Plat Pays (The Flat Country).

Brel – The North Sea, the dunes, the flat land stretching as far as the eye can see...

Vincent changes stations.

Female announcer *(sugary voice)* – With L'Oréal's shampoo for curly hair, I come out of the shower every morning looking like a freshly groomed poodle. L'Oréal. Because apparently I'm not worth it.

Marc's phone rings. He looks at the screen and switches the radio off.

Marc – It's a market alert I set up. *(He reads it and his face lights up.)* The little start-up I invested the value of the Picasso in has managed to regrow a German shepherd's fur!

Diana – You mean a dog?

Marc – They've been authorised to start human trials! Can you imagine? Bigger than Viagra! There are far more bald men in the world than impotent ones. The market is enormous!

Vincent – Don't get carried away. They're only starting human trials. Remember the drug I got Brigitte to test.

Marc *(tapping his phone)* – True. As they say on the stock market: buy the rumour, sell the news! The shares have multiplied a thousandfold in two hours. There! I've sold the lot, with a profit of...

Diana – How much?

Marc *(staring at the screen)* – Good God! My phone screen isn't even big enough to show all the zeros. We've hit the jackpot!

Diana – And my Picasso?

Marc – Yes, I pawned it to make that final risky investment. But now we can get it back. And buy half a dozen more!

Diana – Half a dozen?

Marc – And I'll buy you a diamond as big as Brigitte's. A real one, I promise.

Diana *(tenderly)* – I've always believed in you, darling. And I'm so glad everything's all right between us, because I have wonderful news. You're going to be a father!

Vincent looks faintly sick.

Marc – An heir! This calls for champagne!

He goes to fetch a bottle.

Diana *(to Brigitte)* – Shall we make peace? You don't tell my husband about Vincent and me, and he's all yours. Agreed?

Brigitte – Who says I want him?

Diana – You won't be disappointed. And if you don't want to end up like poor Thomas, you'd better invest in a place of your own before you need to invest in a facelift.

Marc struggles to uncork the champagne. Vincent moves closer to Brigitte. Diana leaves them and goes to help Marc find champagne glasses.

Vincent – It's a pity about the accent. I rather liked it. Would you do it again for me sometimes?

Brigitte *(with her Belgian accent)* – Is that an invitation?

Vincent – Why not?

Brigitte – I'm not sure we have very much in common.

Vincent – I had plenty in common with my first wife. Starting with an enormous tax-free life insurance policy. And we divorced.

Brigitte – And Diana?

Vincent – You've seen for yourself. The moment the stock market recovers, her husband is suddenly more attractive than I am.

Brigitte – And what makes you think I find you attractive?

Vincent – You need somewhere to live. I have a large apartment in Neuilly, one of the most expensive parts of Paris.

Brigitte *(dryly)* – You certainly know how to charm a woman.

Vincent – Besides, I helped you lose all your hair before we'd even met. My stock can't fall any lower. From here, it can only go up.

Brigitte – At least we won't be honeymooning in Belgium. It doesn't exist any more.

Diana returns carrying the glasses.

Diana – Goodbye, Belgian chocolate.

Vincent – Belgian beer.

Brigitte – All those jokes about Belgians.

Diana *(philosophically)* – Belgium was rather like this fishbowl. Too many different fish in too little space. Not enough fries to go round.

Marc's phone rings again. He passes Vincent the champagne bottle so he can answer the call.

Marc *(to Vincent)* – Open this, will you? *(Into the phone.)* Hello? *(He listens.)* No... Oh, hell. All right, we're coming. *(As Vincent wrestles with the cork, Marc puts his phone away.)* That was Thomas. For a change, he's in trouble.

Vincent – What sort of trouble?

Marc – He's stuck in his bathroom with his leg in plaster and can't get the door open. He wants us to rescue him.

Vincent finally pops the cork. It strikes the fishbowl and knocks it over. Water and the (fake) fish spill across the floor.

Diana – I suppose those fish weren't meant to live together for very long either.

Blackout as Jacques Brel's Bruxelles plays.

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The cast return to take their bows, carrying a banner: NO REAL GOLDFISH WERE HARMED IN THIS PERFORMANCE.

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About the author

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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

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

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

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues
Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

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

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

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

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

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

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

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays can be downloaded free of charge from his websites:

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