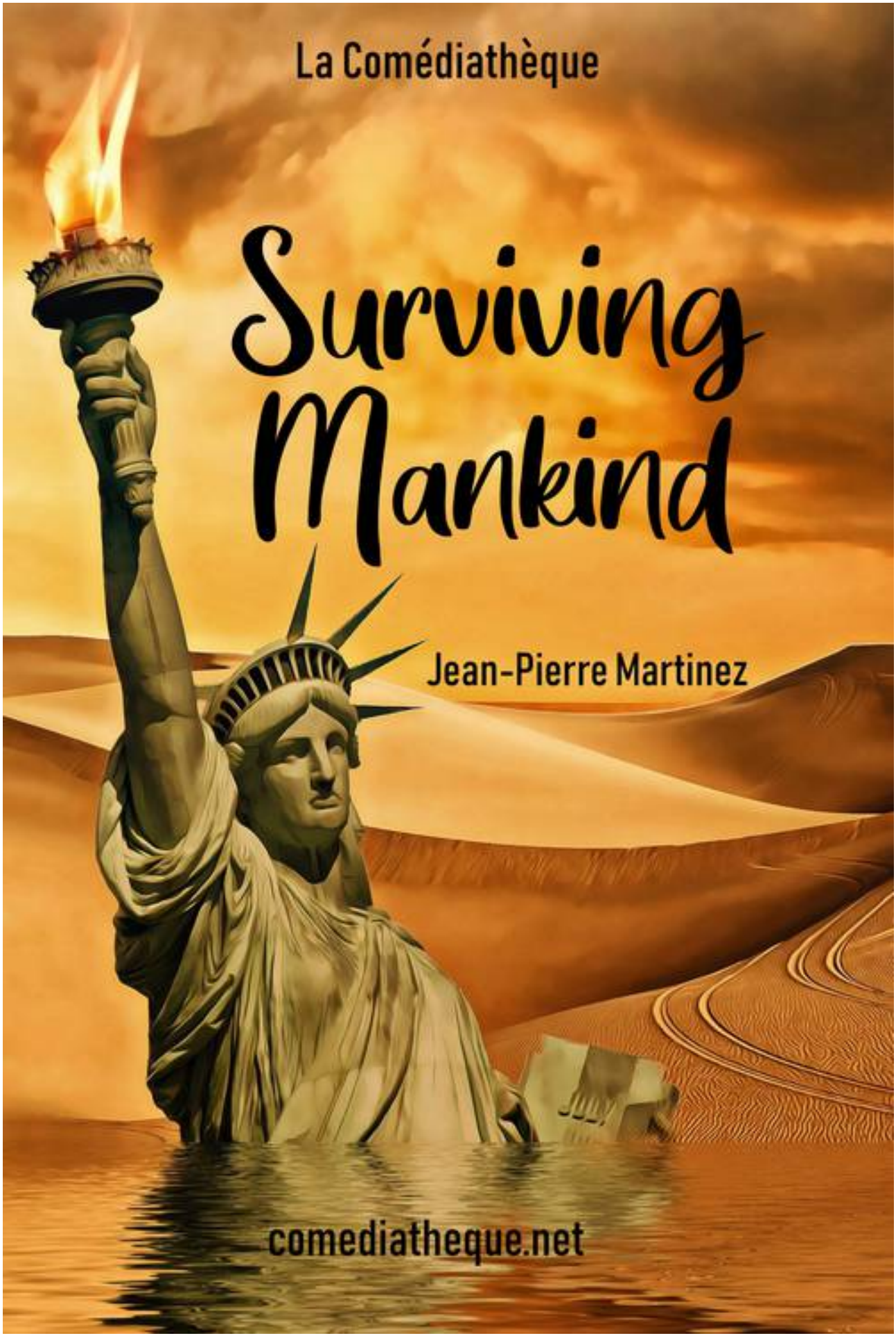

La Comédiathèque
Surviving Mankind
Jean-Pierre Martinez
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Surviving Mankind

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Translation by the author

On an Earth rendered uninhabitable by global warming, the last survivors of humanity are living out their final hours. Two men and two women prepare to take off in a spaceship bound for an unknown planet that may offer them their last refuge. Their mission is to give humanity a chance to continue after driving itself to ruin through reckless folly. But does a species like ours really deserve to be saved? Not everyone agrees...

Characters
Adam
Eve
Juliet
Romeo

2 men/ 2 women

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ACT 1

The control room of a spaceship called the Ark (the name may appear on part of the set or on the crew's suits). Juliet stands at a futuristic console with a screen, absorbed in a series of mysterious operations: adjustments, checks and measurements. Romeo enters.

Romeo – What's the forecast?

Juliet – The winds are still raging across the ocean. Taking off now would be suicide.

Romeo – I see... But the temperature keeps rising. The water directly above us has already reached boiling point. If we wait much longer, the cooling system won't cope.

Juliet – It's hot enough to kill us already... Anything else?

Romeo – I've found a leak in the launch silo. There's a crack in the concrete more than ten metres long, and water's pouring through. If the wall gives way, we'll end up like lobsters dropped into boiling water.

Juliet – A lull is forecast in five or six hours. We have to hang on until then. We've no choice...

Romeo – Okay. I'll keep an eye on that crack in the meantime.

Juliet – Unfortunately, there's nothing else we can do just now... *(She turns away from her instruments and rises.)* How on earth did it come to this...?

Romeo – I don't know.

Juliet – I wasn't really expecting an answer.

Romeo – I know...

Juliet – Do you think we're the last ones? Apart from our two team-mates, of course...

Romeo – According to yesterday's images from the few satellites still working, there's no dry land left anywhere on the planet.

Juliet – So that's it... Earth is nothing but a single ocean...

Romeo – The air temperature is several hundred degrees. Even people who managed to get aboard ships can't survive for long in those conditions.

Juliet – Maybe a few nuclear submarines, for a month or two...

Romeo – But unlike us, they can't hope to take off to another planet and escape this hell.

Juliet – Earth used to be a paradise. We created this hell ourselves.

Romeo – No ice left... Not a drop of fresh water... Nowhere to set foot on dry land... And the temperature just keeps climbing. The process has begun. This time there's no turning back...

Juliet – We should have stopped this runaway machine before it was too late.

Romeo – Yes... but now it's too late. We have to think about the future...

Juliet – The future?

Romeo – Whether we like it or not, it's the end of our world. The only thing we can still hope for is to save our own skins.

Juliet – We've driven every other animal on this planet to extinction. Now it's our turn. We're the last specimens of an endangered species. And if we die without children, humanity dies with us.

Romeo – "The Ark"... At least they kept their sense of humour until the end...

Juliet – I feel like one of the animals Noah took aboard his boat, shut up in a cage...

Romeo – The question is whether we'll be able to reproduce in captivity...

Juliet – And above all, whether we'll find somewhere to start a new civilisation. Do you really believe we will?

Eve enters.

Eve – We have no choice. We have to believe it. Y214 is the only potentially habitable planet within this ship's range. Assuming we can get the thing off the ground, of course...

Juliet – Another hurricane is passing right above us. We'll have a launch window in a few hours.

Eve – Two men and two women to save humanity...

Juliet – It feels like a reality TV show.

Eve – It's strange. We were picked by lottery from thousands of candidates... So why don't I feel lucky to be one of the four finalists?

Romeo – Do you think the Ark can get us there?

Eve – Who knows? It's never been done before. This rocket is a prototype, powered by an entirely new technology that's supposed to let us travel at the speed of light.

Juliet – But that revolutionary technology has never been tested under real conditions.

Romeo – No one's ever sent a crewed spacecraft anything like this far. Human spaceflight was abandoned years ago.

Eve – Not profitable enough.

Juliet – And we still don't know if our bodies can withstand such a long period of hibernation. The experiments lasted a month or two at most. We're talking about more than ten thousand years.

Eve – Yes, theoretically, it's possible. But I'm not even sure if I want it to work.

Romeo – Well, I do... It's our only chance of survival. However small, I'm not about to throw it away.

Eve – Yeah...

Romeo – Juliet?

Juliet – It's the only hope we have left. We might as well cling to it. Otherwise we may as well lie down and die.

Eve – I wonder if it wouldn't be better. At least it would be simpler.

Romeo – Come on, Eve, pull yourself together. We'll need all hands on deck to bring this ark into port.

Juliet – And that's why they chose us, isn't it? We've got a mission!

Eve – To save humanity...

Adam enters.

Adam – But does humanity deserve to be saved?

Romeo – Hang on, Adam. All I want is to save my own skin. I'm not in the mood for a philosophical debate...

Adam – If humanity had cared a little more about philosophy and a little less about profit, we wouldn't be here. Out of greed and selfishness, we sawed through the branch we were sitting on.

Eve – And finally they cut down the whole tree and the entire forest to make paper pulp.

Adam – And congratulated ourselves because the paper would be recycled.

Romeo – Okay, but once we've said that, what do we do? If we don't take off before tonight, we'll all be dead. Why not take our chances elsewhere?

Adam – Do you really think it would be a stroke of luck? For whom? Certainly not for the planet we're planning to colonise.

Romeo – It's a chance for the four of us. Our last chance. And we don't have time for idle chitchat.

Eve – Unfortunately, at the moment... apart from waiting for the wind to die down, there's nothing we can do.

Silence.

Romeo – Right, then, let's talk! Get to know one another a bit... There's nobody left on Earth but the four of us, so we'd better learn to get along, hadn't we? *(A pause.)* By the way... Adam and Eve, Romeo and Juliet. Those are code names, are they? At this point, surely we can use our real names. Mine really is Romeo. What about you? What are your actual names?

A pause.

Juliet – My name really is Juliet.

The other two remain silent.

Romeo – No? And that's a coincidence too? Well, I'll take it as a sign... Adam and Eve, Romeo and Juliet. Suits me. *(He gives Juliet a meaningful look.)* I volunteer to repopulate our new planet.

Adam – Well... That planet's in trouble already...

Romeo gives him a fiery look.

Romeo – Whoa, easy! I can take a joke, but there are limits.

Romeo steps forward threateningly, and Adam confronts him.

Adam – Until somebody else starts making the jokes? So the only jokes you find funny are your own bloody awful ones?

Juliet intervenes.

Juliet – All right, boys, let's keep the testosterone under control, shall we? Even if we reach that planet and it turns out to be habitable, this won't be a dating show. We'll have our hands full just staying alive, day after day, in a completely unknown world.

Eve – I agree with Juliet on that. On Earth, everything seemed simple because thousands of generations had passed down their experience to us, distinguishing edible plants from toxic ones, harmless animals from dangerous ones, hospitable regions from uninhabitable ones...

Juliet – We'll have to learn everything all over again. Danger will be everywhere. Every step will take us into the unknown. And with only four of us, we can't afford any mistakes.

Eve – We were selected for our expertise in medicine, aeronautics, astrophysics and biology... But what use will any of that be in a completely new, perhaps hostile, world?

Romeo – We know things. We're not starting from scratch. We're not cavemen.

Eve – All our knowledge is theoretical. What good is knowing how a car, a computer or a telephone works when we no longer have the industry to make one?

Juliet – We'll have to start from scratch. Learn to build a shelter, hunt with a bow, make fire with two flints, light a torch...

Adam – And prehistoric man knew a lot more about that than we do.

Eve – In two or three generations, all our cherished memories of the old world will be useless. They'll become fantastic stories, which our descendants will eventually forget.

Adam – Or they'll twist and embellish those stories until they've created a new Bible.

Juliet – Adam and Eve... There's something rather tempting about that...

A pause.

Romeo – Fine. We'll be castaways, then. Every child dreams of being Robinson Crusoe, don't they?

Eve – Yes... but Robinson's island was on Earth.

Romeo – At least I won't have to put up with Friday. If the aim is to keep the species going... two men and two women give us two possible pairings, don't they?

This time he looks intently at Eve.

Eve – If you don't change your tune, you'll spend the rest of your life having to satisfy yourself. Your flirting technique is badly in need of an upgrade.

Romeo – All right, so what shall we talk about?

Juliet – If you squeezed the whole history of Earth into twenty-four hours, human beings would appear at two minutes to midnight. And in those two minutes, we managed to make the planet uninhabitable. Surely that deserves a moment's thought?

Romeo – Sooner or later Earth would have become uninhabitable anyway. One day the Sun will destroy it. That much is certain.

Adam – Yes, but not for billions of years. Humanity could have died of old age. This is collective suicide. Homo sapiens was barely three hundred thousand years old. The dinosaurs ruled Earth for nearly 165 million years!

Eve – And they didn't bring about their own extinction by systematically destroying their planet.

Juliet – With billions of years to spare, we could have prepared. Organised the move. Instead, we're on the Raft of the Medusa.

Eve – And we're already at each other's throats...

Juliet – Are we really a hundred percent sure about Y214?

Eve – Not completely. On paper, it's Earth's twin, with almost exactly the same characteristics.

Juliet – In theory... But no one has ever been there to see.

Adam – And even if this spaceship works perfectly well, the journey to this possible refuge will be very long and uncertain.

Eve – We could collide with an asteroid at any moment.

Romeo – Of course we can't be certain until we get there, but so far all the indicators are green, aren't they?

A pause.

Adam – What if that habitable planet is already inhabited?

Juliet – Inhabited?

Eve – By intelligent beings.

Romeo – If that's the case, we're probably talking about a primitive civilisation. We haven't seen any signs of advanced life. Radio waves, artificial satellites, cities emitting light or heat...

Adam – They might be environmentalists...

Romeo – Or savages.

Adam – Savages?

Eve – Think of what the Spanish did to the Incas when they reached the Americas... Yes, there may be hope of salvation. But at what cost? Adam's right. We have to ask whether humanity deserves to be saved.

Adam – We might be doing the universe a favour by seeing that it isn't.

The other three give him a worried look.

Romeo – What do you mean, specifically?

Adam – Humanity is like a dying plant. Just before it perishes, it scatters its pollen into space, hoping to take root somewhere else after exhausting the soil it grew in.

Romeo – If we start using metaphors now...

Adam – But this plant is toxic, and we are the bad seeds.

Juliet – What are you suggesting, exactly?

Adam – Prevent that poisonous pollination. Humanity's future is in our hands. We can end its story. And choosing to do so deliberately would be our finest act.

Dead silence.

Romeo – They chose four people, and we end up with a fanatic! *(He looks to Juliet and Eve for support.)* What about you two? Are you in favour of collective suicide?

Eve – Collective suicide... it has already happened, hasn't it?

Romeo – Okay, so there are at least two in the sect. And you, Juliet?

Juliet – Obviously humanity's record hardly speaks in its favour. But agreeing to die without even trying... isn't that a bit extreme?

Eve – Humanity is like a colony of termites. It moves into a house, eats through the beams, and leaves when the roof is about to collapse.

Romeo – Well, to put it plainly, because I'm not into metaphors, I don't give a damn about humanity. What I want is to save my skin.

Adam – It's not that simple. If you save yourself, you may end up saving humanity as well.

Romeo – Right... What do we do, then? Put it to a vote? Kill ourselves or try to survive? *(He raises his hand.)* I vote we take our chances. Anyone else?

Juliet raises her hand.

Juliet – I vote for life. Whatever the cost. And yes, I'm afraid of dying.

Romeo – Eve?

Eve – Frankly, given our chances of success, I wonder whether it's worth it. Why not accept our fate and die with the others? At least our remains would rest on the planet where we were born... alongside those we loved.

Adam – That's also my opinion. Let the cradle of humanity also be its coffin.

Romeo – All right. Two votes against two... We're really making progress... But after all, if you're so determined to die, that's up to you. All you have to do is stay here. The exit hatch is right there.

Juliet – The ship will be much more difficult to manoeuvre with just two people. It will further reduce our chances of survival. Not to mention the survival of humanity, of course...

Adam – This isn't about saving four lives instead of two. It's about bringing the whole history of humanity to an end.

Romeo – Wait a minute, Adam. There's something I don't understand. We were chosen by lot from a pool of scientists to give humanity a chance to survive. If you wanted to die with everyone else, why put yourself forward?

Adam – Precisely to stop this cancer spreading its metastases throughout the universe.

Romeo – So you lied. You're a traitor. An infiltrator. A mole for the other side. And you've got the nerve to lecture us about morality?

Adam – I accept that I lied. The end justifies the means.

Romeo – Very well... *(Defiantly.)* But are you sure you've got the means?

They square up to each other again, and Juliet steps between them.

Juliet – We're not going to fight... But Romeo is right about one thing. What if we want to live? Do you get to decide for us? What are you going to do? Kill us?

Romeo – Knowing him as I now do, I suspect he has something more devious in mind. Sabotage, for instance. What if he caused that crack in the silo?

Eve – What crack?

Romeo – We were only four, and we had to end up with a fucking terrorist.

Juliet – Is that your idea of saving the world, Adam? By becoming a criminal?

Adam – I'd rather persuade you... But if that fails, I'll take responsibility for whatever I have to do. I'll settle things with my conscience later.

Juliet – And you, Eve?

Eve – No. I'll make that decision only for myself. I'm not God. If anyone wants to live, they're free to try. It's up to them whether it's worth the risk...

Juliet moves closer to her instruments.

Romeo – Any news?

Juliet – The forecast's changed slightly. The wind is already dropping. There'll be a lull in about three hours.

Romeo – It's now or never. We've got a launch window, and it'll be the last. Just enough time to prepare. Anyone who isn't with me is against me.

Romeo gives Adam a challenging look. Adam and Eve leave; it is unclear whether they are going to prepare for departure or to show their opposition. Romeo and Juliet exchange an anxious glance.

Romeo – I don't trust them...

Juliet – Eve won't do anything against us, but him...

Romeo – Do you think he would go as far as sabotaging the Ark?

Juliet – He's an idealist. He's capable of anything.

Romeo – In that case, we have no choice.

Juliet – What do you mean?

Romeo – It's either them or us.

Juliet – No, that's not an option.

Romeo – May I remind you we have a mission?

Juliet – But we no longer have to report to anyone. Except ourselves.

Romeo – We have a moral responsibility. We promised to save humanity. That's why we were allowed to live while everybody else died.

Juliet – A moral responsibility? You've got to be kidding me. Earlier, you said you only wanted to save your own skin...

Romeo – Maybe I did, but what about you? You're an idealist too. What are you willing to do to give humanity a chance to survive?

Juliet – Not to kill, that's for sure.

Romeo – I can do it. I don't mind getting my hands dirty. I'm used to it...

Juliet – But if I let you do it, I'll be an accomplice.

Juliet glances at her instruments.

Romeo – A problem?

Juliet – There's a short circuit in the engine room... Reactor number three won't ignite.

Romeo – We'll need every last bit of thrust to escape Earth's gravity... Can it be fixed?

Juliet – Maybe, but we need to act quickly, or we'll miss the launch window.

Romeo – What if it was him?

Juliet – It could also be a simple technical glitch...

Romeo – We don't have to kill them. We can simply... put them out of action.

Juliet – Neutralise them?

Romeo – A powerful sleeping pill, then straight into the deep freeze ahead of schedule. At least they'll leave us alone for a few thousand years.

Juliet – And this sleeping pill, how do you get them to take it? By force?

Romeo – There's a bottle of terrible champagne in the fridge. We could drink it to seal our grand reconciliation... To celebrate our departure... or our mass suicide.

Juliet seems hesitant.

Juliet – All right... But first, take care of the short circuit.

Romeo – I'll see what I can do...

He exits. Juliet tends to the controls. Eve returns.

Eve – I've just passed Romeo. I know about the fault.

Juliet – And, of course, you had nothing to do with it.

Eve – I've already told you. I won't do anything to sabotage the mission. But if an accident prevents us from leaving, it would solve all our problems once and for all...

Juliet – And Adam?

Eve – What about him?

Juliet – Do you think he could sabotage the ship?

Eve – I don't know... but I can understand him.

Juliet – You do seem very... understanding towards him. Be careful, Eve. We have a mission. Our feelings mustn't interfere with our decisions.

Eve – Are you jealous?

Juliet – No. But you'll have to choose sides. Are you with us or against us?

Adam returns.

Adam – So that's where we are?

Juliet – You're the one who wanted it this way, aren't you?

Adam – I'm not making it personal, if that's what you mean.

They glare at each other.

Eve – Taking it personally? What does that mean? Did you know each other before boarding this ship?

Awkward silence.

Juliet – I'll ask you once, Adam, and I won't doubt your answer. Did you cause this short circuit?

Adam – No.

Juliet – All right. That's good enough for me.

Adam – That doesn't mean I won't oppose this departure in one way or another.

Eve seems uncomfortable.

Eve – I'll go and help Romeo. It'll be quicker.

She exits.

Juliet – Did you know I would be on board?

Adam – No. Not for certain. But there were so few of us left that it was a real possibility. I saw your name on the shortlist. You had all the scientific qualifications. And you were very close to the military leaders who ruled us then...

Juliet – Don't tell me you did all this to get your revenge on me. That you'd sacrifice the whole human race just for the pleasure of bringing me down.

Adam – I loved you, it's true. Passionately. And you haven't changed a bit.

Juliet – Thanks.

Adam – It wasn't a compliment. Your ego is still... enormous.

Juliet – I think men call that ambition. And they consider it a virtue.

Adam – You're right. In fact, it's curious.

Juliet – What?

Adam – All those prejudices society imposed on us. Sexism, for instance. None of it means anything now society itself has vanished.

Juliet – Unfortunately, as long as there's one male chauvinist left, sexism won't have disappeared.

Adam – You're right. The worm's already in the fruit. Sooner or later it eats the whole thing from within. It's in our genes.

Juliet – So you think men are fundamentally bad?

Adam – They've proven it, haven't they?

Juliet – Some men, maybe. Not all.

Adam – Hitler, Pol Pot, Donald Trump...

Juliet – Mozart, Picasso, Bob Dylan...

Adam – In certain circumstances, anyone is capable of the worst.

Juliet – Or the best... If Hitler had passed his entrance exam for the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, perhaps history would have taken a different course.

Adam – But men would still have turned Earth into a massive extermination camp.

Juliet – I pity you, Adam. How can you hate yourself so much?

Adam moves closer to her.

Adam – If you'd loved me, perhaps I'd have learnt to love myself a little.

Juliet – So it's all my fault, then... The end of the world and everything. I did it.

Adam – Perhaps. Not just you, obviously, but people like you.

Juliet – People like me?

Adam – Those who, for centuries, decided to live carefree and led this planet to its ruin.

Juliet – All right. So you're the pure one, are you? You spent your life worrying, that much is true. But Adam, is life worth living without a little light-heartedness? Were you ever happy, at least? Alone in your ivory tower. I'm not talking about being happy all your life. I mean those little moments of happiness that make life bearable now and then. Were you ever happy, even once?

Adam – I don't know... Maybe during the few months I spent with you.

Juliet approaches him.

Juliet – I loved you too. Perhaps even more than you ever loved me. But it could never have worked between us.

Adam – Why not?

Juliet – That's exactly why. The very thing that still separates us. I need to believe in something, against all the evidence. I need lightness. And you... you'll never escape gravity. *(They are about to kiss, but she pulls away.)* Why don't you help me get this rocket off the ground instead?

He hesitates.

Adam – Sorry, but no... I'm not taking part in that.

Juliet – Then I solemnly ask you not to do anything to stop it.

Adam leaves without replying and passes Romeo on the way in. They exchange a wary look.

Romeo – It's fixed now. Fortunately, it wasn't so serious. This time...

Juliet – Adam swore he had nothing to do with it.

Romeo – He might be lying.

Juliet – I don't think so.

Romeo – How can you be sure?

Juliet – I have my reasons...

Romeo – He's got a crush on you, isn't he?

Juliet – Stay out of it. How's the leak in the silo?

Romeo – It's getting worse, but the wall could hold another two or three hours.

Juliet – You look worried. Is something else stopping us taking off? Something not connected with the rocket itself?

Romeo – None of the marine animals survived the heat. They're all dead, their bodies floating on the surface, piled tens of metres deep in places. And then there's all the debris swept up by the ocean when the land disappeared: buses, cars, shipping containers, tree trunks, animals, people... We'll have to break through a wall of rubbish and rotting flesh just to reach the surface.

Juliet – The rocket's structure won't withstand it. What do you suggest?

Romeo – Just before launch, I'll fire a missile to blast a passage through the barrier above us.

Juliet – Do we have any missiles?

Romeo – Remember, the military started this programme.

Juliet – But... why missiles?

Romeo – In case the inhabitants of the planet we colonise aren't quite as welcoming as we hope.

Juliet – I see... I didn't know that. And the other two, are they aware?

Romeo – I was the only one who knew. Until now.

Juliet – Then we'd better keep it that way...

Romeo – Yes, that's my opinion too.

Juliet – You seem to know an awful lot the rest of us don't... Who told you all this? You're a civilian, just like us. *(Romeo says nothing and looks uncomfortable.)* You are a civilian, aren't you?

Romeo – I was in the army. A colonel. The general who was meant to join us and pilot this ship died in an accident. Since then, I've been the military government's representative on board.

Juliet – The government? Where's that world government now? A few senile generals appointed to march us up to the edge of a cliff, two by two, in step, and without a word of protest...

Romeo – There were a few people in the resistance. I don't recall you being one of them.

Juliet – How do you know?

Romeo – I was in a position to know...

Juliet – I see... You were in the political police, weren't you? So you're another infiltrator.

Romeo – That's all ancient history. I'm here now, whether you like it or not.

Juliet – Yes... In place of that general. What happened to the poor man, anyway? You wouldn't have helped him to an early grave just to get a place aboard Noah's Ark, would you?

Romeo – It doesn't make any sense now anyway.

A pause.

Juliet – Are you sure you know how to fire a missile, Colonel?

Romeo – I never served in a combat unit. But how hard can it be?

Juliet – So it wasn't your scientific expertise that got you on board. You're the only one of us with no specialist skills at all.

Romeo – I'm handy with tools and I've got balls. The perfect husband, really. And as you said yourselves, when it comes to surviving and breeding in a hostile environment, that may be more useful than a doctorate in astrophysics.

Romeo busies himself at his control station.

Juliet – Do you think your missile will really clear a passage to the stars through the graveyard above our heads?

Romeo – We'll see. Do you have any other ideas?

Juliet – No.

Romeo – Then launch the bloody rocket!

Juliet *(ironically)* – Yes, sir, Colonel... I'll start the checklist. Then we can begin the countdown. I'm going up to the upper flight deck. Can you ask Eve to take over here? Someone needs to keep an eye on the weather... and the water level in the silo.

Romeo – Do you think we can trust her?

Juliet – I'll take responsibility for that.

Romeo – I'll send her in.

He exits. Juliet busies herself for a moment with her instruments. Eve returns.

Juliet – Thank you. We'll need you to launch this thing. I'm a biologist, not a rocket pilot. I haven't even got a driving licence.

Eve – The good news is you won't need one where we're going. Even if we somehow build a car and a road, there won't be a police officer to give you a ticket.

Juliet – Well, the end of the world should have some advantages...

Eve – Is there a problem?

Juliet – I pretended to know what I was talking about in front of Romeo by saying "checklist" and "countdown". The truth is, I haven't the faintest idea how to launch this rocket. Have you?

Eve – I had a few hours' training, just like you. It was rushed, just before the space centre went under water. But I did manage to save the flight manual.

She takes a booklet out of her pocket.

Juliet – Well, if we've got the instructions, we're saved. Humanity too. I hope they're easier to follow than the ones you get with flat-pack furniture...

They sit side by side, operating the controls and occasionally consulting the manual.

Eve – I think I've grasped the general idea. It doesn't seem so complicated after all.

Juliet – Yes, that's what Romeo was telling me about...

Eve – About...?

Juliet – I can't remember... Well, I'll trust you, then... Can I leave you for a moment? I need to go upstairs.

Eve – There are already two people in the upper cockpit. Do you think they need you?

Juliet – No... I need a wee.

Eve – All right. Go and have a wee, and then we'll save the world. But can I ask you something first?

Juliet – All right, but quickly... I told you, I'm desperate.

Eve – If Adam and I got together, would that bother you?

Juliet – If it would convince him not to oppose our mission, I'd even encourage you.

Eve – But then you'd be left with only Romeo...

Juliet – Put like that, I suppose... Romeo's an idiot, agreed. Possibly even a bastard. But at least he's alive.

Eve – It's funny. When there are only four people left on Earth, you suddenly become very forgiving of other people's faults.

Juliet – Well, now I really need to pee.

Juliet leaves. Adam returns.

Adam – So you've changed sides?

Eve – I'm not at war, Adam. I share your analysis. Humanity probably doesn't deserve to survive. But individual people...

Adam – What distinction do you make between the two?

Eve – Like you, I loathe the worst crimes humanity has committed. But I can't help loving certain human beings... You, for instance.

He seems a bit unsettled.

Adam – Believe me, I'm not the man for you.

Eve – I've always loved hopeless causes...

Adam – You deserve better than me, I assure you.

Eve – Of course I deserve better than you! But what choice have I got now? It's you or Romeo...

Adam – When you put it like that...

Eve – Is she your ex?

Adam – Who?

Eve – Juliet! There are only two other people left on Earth besides us. Unless you prefer men... which would further reduce the human race's chances of survival.

Adam – We had... an affair.

Eve – And it didn't work out...

Adam – I was married at the time, but not to her... And she thought I was too uncompromising.

Eve – No kidding...

Adam – She was the one who brought our... adventure to an end.

Eve – An adventure? I've always found that a funny word for a love affair. You picture a couple hacking their way through a jungle with machetes, avoiding all sorts of dangers, until at last they find treasure hidden in an Inca pyramid.

Adam – Whereas an adulterous affair usually means booking a room online in a seedy hotel where you can pay cash.

Eve moves closer to him.

Eve – Whether love is an adventure, I don't know... With you, it certainly would be.

Adam – If our love affair began on that unknown planet, it might well be the kind of adventure you've just described. Me Tarzan, you Jane. Though I'm not sure I'm cut out to play Tarzan...

Eve – So you are considering an adventure with me...

Adam – I'm mainly thinking about putting an end to all this. But if we somehow survive... Juliet and I are history. As you say, with only four of us, there's not much choice.

Eve – That's very touching. Very romantic.

Adam – I thought our mission was to reproduce.

Eve – Well, if it's our duty... Never mind. I'll take it.

Eve embraces him. Juliet returns.

Juliet – I hope I'm not interrupting the start of something...

Eve composes herself.

Eve – Conditions will be perfect in exactly two hours.

Juliet – I suggest you both get some sleep. We'll need everyone to get this thing off the ground.

Adam – You'd rather have us asleep, is that it?

Juliet – I promise I won't take advantage of it. To kill you both, I mean...

She exits. Eve moves closer to Adam again.

Eve – This may be the last time, Adam. The last night on Earth. The last chance for a man and a woman to prove that love conquers everything.

Adam – Why do I want to believe you?

Eve – Eros and Thanatos have always got on rather well. Nothing like the prospect of death to make you want to have sex.

Adam – Apparently, some men who are hanged even get an erection as they swing from the rope.

Eve – You really know how to talk to a woman. And you still wonder why Juliet left you?

She takes his hand, and they exit. Blackout.

ACT 2

Romeo and Juliet are at their consoles, busy making final adjustments.

Juliet – All my readings are normal.

Romeo – Mine too. And we can't wait any longer. The wall of the launch silo is about to give way. The water's rising by the minute. It's already reached the bottom of the rocket. We have to start the countdown.

Juliet – Shouldn't we wake them up first?

Romeo – Just to start the same pointless argument again? We offered them the chance to leave the Ark. Now, whether they like it or not, they're coming with us.

Juliet – All right. I'm starting the procedure. *(She operates a few controls.)* Here we go... Ten minutes to launch.

Romeo – I'll launch a missile to blast our way through that pile of shit.

Juliet – That pile of shit, as you call it, is also what's left of the entire human race.

Romeo – Yes, that's exactly what I was saying.

Juliet – Go ahead.

Romeo works at his console as Juliet watches anxiously.

Romeo – Missile away. Impact in a few minutes.

Juliet – Okay.

Romeo – You'll laugh, but I wasn't actually sure how to fire that missile.

Juliet – You'll laugh too, but I'm not entirely sure how to get this heap of metal off the ground...

Romeo – Three minutes to impact. All we can do is wait...

A moment.

Juliet – How on earth did we end up here?

Romeo – I think you've said that already. I said I didn't know, and you told me it wasn't really a question.

Juliet – How could we have let it happen? That's the real question...

Romeo – We did try to stop it. Time and again. Every time we took another step towards the end everyone could see coming.

Juliet – But the measures were always inadequate. Half-measures to tackle problems that had already grown worse.

Romeo – When those measures were actually carried out. Every government on the planet cheated.

Juliet – Always claiming there were more urgent priorities.

Romeo – Keeping the economy running.

Juliet – Feeding the planet.

Romeo – Not upsetting the voters too much.

Juliet – Until they did away with elections altogether.

Romeo – I think the beginning of the end came when Donald Trump took power. Do you remember?

Juliet – I wasn't born yet... but yes, I've heard about it.

Romeo – From then on, we were really done for.

Juliet – When a country full of idiots votes to make the biggest idiot of all its king, it's bound to end badly.

Romeo – After that, everything happened so fast. The nuclear war between India and Pakistan that triggered the Third World War. Religious fundamentalism. Dictatorships. Genocide. Famine. Accelerating global warming. Rising seas...

Juliet – And after that, there was no going back.

Romeo – I can't even remember who first came up with this last-chance programme that might save our lives today.

Juliet – I think everyone had forgotten the programme existed. That's probably the only reason we miraculously managed to finish it.

Romeo – Originally, they wanted to build a new Noah's Ark. In the end, there's only us.

Juliet – It's all so absurd. Such an appalling waste. Is there any point carrying on? I could cry...

For the first time, Romeo looks moved as well. He reaches out to comfort Juliet.

Romeo – Come on... Where there's life, there's hope.

Juliet *(holding back her tears)* – Funny how a stupid old saying suddenly makes perfect sense in certain exceptional circumstances...

Romeo – I've got plenty more where that came from...

Juliet – Like what?

Romeo – You only count the cowpats once the fair is over.

Juliet – You'll have to explain that one...

Romeo – It means that...

Juliet – No, but not right now. We've got to save humanity.

Romeo – Okay.

Juliet regains composure.

Juliet – Thank you... You're a philosopher after all, Romeo. The world just had to wait until the right moment to discover it.

A deep rumble is heard.

Romeo – The missile's hit. What's happening?

Juliet looks at her screen.

Juliet – The debris is a little thinner where it exploded. But it's still there. I hope it's enough.

Romeo – We have to launch now. There's no other option.

Adam and Eve return.

Juliet – Ah, here are Adam and Eve... *(With a mischievous look.)* Sleep well?

Adam – An explosion woke me up. What happened?

Juliet – I don't know...

Adam – Don't take me for a fool.

Romeo – I fired a missile to clear a path through the wreckage floating above us.

Eve – A missile?

Adam – I didn't know we were aboard a warship...

Romeo – Columbus's ships carried cannons too.

Adam – So you kept that from us as well.

Juliet – I wasn't aware, I swear.

Adam – I oppose this launch. I refuse to let the birth of a new humanity begin with the massacre of Y214's inhabitants. Because I imagine you also know that planet is inhabited.

Awkward silence.

Juliet – Romeo? What else do you know that you haven't told us?

Romeo – Any habitable planet is bound to have life. Nature abhors a vacuum. We don't know how advanced its civilisation is, but yes, there's... something there.

Eve – That changes everything.

Romeo – It changes nothing for me.

Eve – But for me, it does.

Adam – This is no longer simply about finding humanity a refuge. It's about colonising a new world by enslaving or exterminating its inhabitants.

Romeo – And what do you plan to do to stop it?

Adam – I could kill you.

Romeo – But you won't.

Adam seems hesitant.

Adam – Then let's make a deal.

Romeo – Well, well...

Adam – I won't stop the launch. It's what all three of you want, so I agree to let you go. I'll even go with you, and do everything I can to make the journey a success.

Romeo – But...

Adam – On one condition: every missile must be fired before we leave.

Eve – I agree. If we survive, I refuse to let it be at the cost of another massacre.

Juliet – So do I. We cannot build a civilisation on the ruins of one we've destroyed to take its place.

Eve – We'll try to live alongside the inhabitants. If we can't, then we'll be the ones to die.

Romeo seems hesitant.

Romeo – All right.

Adam – Then launch them now.

Romeo – All right. Time for the grand finale. We need to clear a path through all that rubbish anyway. The first missile wasn't enough.

Romeo works the controls.

Eve – What rubbish?

Juliet – I'll explain later...

Romeo – Impact in ten seconds. I'm getting the hang of it...

Dead silence. A few distant rumblings can be heard.

Juliet – So?

Romeo – I think the way is clear now.

Juliet – Perfect... Four minutes and twenty-one seconds to launch.

Adam – That's not all.

Romeo – What else?

Adam – I've no objection to the four of us surviving.

Romeo – Thanks for your generosity.

Adam – As long as humanity dies with us.

Romeo – Well, well... And what do you propose?

Adam takes out a vial and hands it to Romeo.

Adam – Permanent chemical sterilisation.

Romeo – Is this a joke?

Adam – I'm a doctor, remember. We developed this drug to reduce birth rates in India. It's completely painless and one hundred per cent effective.

Juliet – This isn't funny, Adam.

Adam – It's not a joke.

Eve – You're going too far.

Adam – I've always believed humanity didn't deserve to exist. Now its survival is in my hands. I won't let this one chance to end the human race slip away.

Romeo – And you couldn't come up with anything better?

Adam – A promise won't do. I'm a doctor. I can sterilise myself and Romeo.

Romeo – You want to castrate me? What do you think you are, a vet? And what am I, some mongrel?

Juliet – I think he thinks he's God. That's always been his problem.

Adam – I said sterilisation, not castration. You'll still be a man, don't worry.

Romeo – How very kind of you...

Eve – You've gone mad, Adam. How can you propose such a horrible thing?

Juliet – No, Adam. We won't agree to live as the last of our kind. If that happens, it happens. But we can't choose it deliberately. At least, I won't. Yes, humanity is capable of the best and the worst. That's what freedom means. And we haven't found anything better than freedom to make life worth living. What would you prefer? To be ruled by our instincts, like animals? Or to be perfect, the way only robots can be? If humanity survives, of course we'll probably make the same mistakes again. Commit the same atrocities.

Adam – Even Auschwitz?

Eve – Perhaps another Auschwitz. Perhaps not. That's called free will. It's what makes us human.

Adam – Yes, we could have made Earth a paradise or a hell. And which did we choose?

Romeo pulls out a futuristic-looking gun.

Romeo – That's enough.

Juliet – Where did you get that weapon?

Romeo – You want to die? I'll grant you your wish. But you won't stop us living.

Adam – Are you sure you know how to use that? Be careful, you could hurt yourself...

Juliet – He's not bluffing, Adam. He knows how to use a gun, and he's used this one to get rid of people who stood in his way. He was in the military police.

Adam – A copper. I should have guessed...

Romeo aims the gun at Adam.

Eve – Don't shoot! He's mad, but he doesn't deserve to die. And from what I can see, you're no better.

Juliet – You'll kill him. Then what? Are you going to kill us too?

Eve – When you're the last human being alive and there's nobody left to disagree with you, what will that have achieved?

Juliet – We need him, Romeo. We need all four of us. Two couples is the absolute minimum if humanity is to have any chance of surviving.

Eve – And just to survive in a completely unfamiliar environment. Do you really think four of us is too many?

Juliet – He's a doctor, remember. You may regret killing him when you're injured or ill.

Romeo seems hesitant.

Romeo – Lucky for you you've got a fan club... Tie him up.

Juliet approaches to tie Adam up.

Juliet – Sorry, you leave us no choice.

Romeo – Whatever happens, we need to hurry. How's the countdown going?

While their attention is elsewhere, Adam lunges at Romeo. After a brief struggle he wrests the gun from him and aims it at him.

Adam – Stop the launch procedure. Now. We're not going anywhere.

Juliet presses a few buttons.

Juliet – Procedure cancelled.

Adam points his gun at Romeo.

Eve – Don't shoot!

Adam – Give me a good reason not to shoot!

Eve – I'm pregnant.

Adam, who was staring at Romeo, turns to Eve.

Adam – By him?

Eve – Of course not! Can you imagine me sleeping with that idiot?

Romeo – Thanks...

Adam – From me?

Eve – We've only just made love. How could I possibly know I was pregnant by you? Are you sure you're a doctor?

Romeo – Well, well... He wants to sterilise me, and he's already got half the crew pregnant...

Adam – So, who got you pregnant?

Eve – My husband, of course. He was supposed to come with me. He died three weeks ago. You took his place...

Romeo – When you say he took his place, do you mean...?

Eve – You shut up. Otherwise, I swear I'll kill you myself.

Romeo takes the threat seriously. Adam is shaken.

Romeo – Since when have you known?

Eve – A month. Given the circumstances, I didn't think it necessary to inform you.

Juliet – It's a sign, Adam. Are you going to condemn this child, or give it a chance to live? You're a doctor...

Adam hesitates before lowering his gun. He puts it down.

Adam – All right. I'll cooperate... Even with all four of us working together, our chances are very small.

Juliet – I'm restarting the launch sequence.

Eve – I'm going up to the upper flight deck.

Adam – I'll come with you.

They exit. The other two start working to prepare for take-off.

Romeo – So Adam and Eve are a couple. It was bound to happen.

Juliet – Yes. But Eve's already pregnant, and Adam isn't the father. Not exactly a match made in heaven...

Romeo – Jesus wasn't his father's son either.

Juliet – And to think they were lecturing us on morality right up to the end...

Romeo – In any case, now we have no choice... I mean, the two of us...

Juliet – That's the worst proposal I've ever heard.

Romeo – Romeo and Juliet. We were destined to meet, weren't we?

Juliet – As I recall, Romeo and Juliet didn't end too happily...

Romeo – Oh, really? Still, given the circumstances...

Juliet – You’re right... Could a story that began as badly as ours possibly end any worse?

Blackout.

ACT 3

Romeo, Juliet, Adam and Eve are at their stations, concentrating on the launch preparations.

Romeo – This is it. The moment of truth.

Eve – Thirty seconds to launch.

Sound and lighting effects to signal ignition.

Juliet – All four engines are ignited.

Romeo – All the indicators are green.

Eve – Here we go.

Adam – We're clear of the launch silo.

Juliet – We're accelerating.

Eve – Less than a hundred metres to the surface.

Juliet – We're about to break through the layer of debris floating above us. This could be bumpy...

The ship shudders again.

Romeo – We're through! We're in Earth's atmosphere!

Juliet – I hope the structure's survived and the hull isn't damaged.

Adam – All readings normal. We're gaining altitude.

Eve – Five thousand feet.

Juliet – We're leaving Earth's atmosphere.

An emotional moment. They exchange a look of relief mingled with gravity.

Adam – Look carefully at that planet as it recedes. Earth, which we turned into a vast graveyard. This is the last time you'll ever see it.

Eve – And our children will never see it again.

Juliet – Not for hundreds of generations, anyway. Assuming humanity survives long enough to build another spacecraft like this.

Romeo – To do that, we'll have to rebuild a whole civilisation. An industrial base.

Eve – And make sure the next industrial revolution doesn't bring us to the brink again.

Romeo – We've escaped Earth's gravity. Switching on artificial gravity.

Juliet – Earth is already far behind us. We're going to pass round the Moon.

Eve – The fate of humanity is in our hands.

Adam – For better or for worse. It's up to us to choose.

Even Romeo looks moved. He steps forward and offers Adam his hand.

Romeo – No hard feelings, Doctor.

Adam accepts the handshake.

Adam – You can count on me.

Eve – We've no choice. We'll have to work together.

Romeo – I'm aware of the responsibility we have. I've also lost my whole family. My friends.

Adam – We must write all this down for future generations. So they don't make the same mistakes.

Juliet – But will they believe us?

Eve – In a way, it was all there in the Bible. The Flood. Noah's Ark...

Juliet – We dismissed those stories as fairy tales...

Eve – Even without believing in God, we should have understood the symbolism in a book handed down from the distant past.

Adam – How can we make sure our message reaches our descendants unchanged? In thousands, perhaps millions, of years...

Romeo – I don't know.

Juliet returns to her command post.

Juliet – I've switched on the autopilot.

Romeo – I managed to save a bottle of Russian champagne.

Juliet gives him a disapproving look.

Juliet – Do you really think we've got anything to celebrate?

Romeo – You're right. We'll open it when we arrive.

Eve – We'd better get into the hibernation pods now, to save our oxygen supplies. We'll need them when we arrive.

Adam – If we ever wake up. Anything could happen over the next few thousand years, travelling through space at the speed of light.

Juliet – And if we do wake up, we've still no idea whether we'll find paradise or hell...

Eve – Meanwhile, the ship's computer will deal with anything that comes up and make decisions for us.

Adam – Let's hope it makes better decisions than we did.

Juliet – Well, it's time to say "see you later".

Eve – Or goodbye...

They embrace.

Adam – Good luck.

Eve – And may God's grace be with us.

Adam – I don't believe in God. But I hope He believes in us.

Juliet – I suppose we'll soon find out.

Adam – See you... in sixteen thousand years. Perhaps...

Blackout.

ACT 4

Adam and Eve slowly awaken from their long sleep.

Eve – Adam?

Adam – Eve?

Eve – Are you alright?

Adam – I think so.

Eve – At least we're still alive.

Adam – Yes... At least, I think so...

Eve – It's strange. I feel great.

Adam – Me too. I've never felt better.

Eve – Perhaps it didn't work...

Adam – What?

Eve – The hibernation. How long were we asleep?

Adam – No idea... Feels like an hour.

Eve looks at a dial.

Eve – Exactly... sixteen thousand, two hundred and fourteen years, seven months, three weeks, two days and one hour.

Adam – Right. Quite a lie-in...

Eve – Now that's what I call sleeping late.

Adam – I'm not even going to ask what day it is.

Eve – Back on Earth, it would be Friday.

Adam – But none of that means anything any more...

Eve – Our home planet is thousands of light-years away, and there's probably no life left on it at all.

Adam – Have we reached our destination yet?

Eve – Not quite. The computer was meant to wake us as we approached this new solar system, twenty-four hours before we entered Y214's atmosphere.

Adam – And the other two?

Eve – They're still asleep, apparently.

Adam – This would be a good moment to get rid of them. *(Eve gives him a disapproving look.)* I'm joking.

Eve – Let's give them a little longer. Cryogenic hibernation is a delicate process. We shouldn't rush it.

Adam – And your baby? Is it moving yet?

Eve – It was only an embryo when its mother was frozen sixteen thousand years ago. It won't start kicking for a while yet.

Adam – The longest pregnancy in human history... What shall we call the baby?

Eve – Not Cain, that's for sure. First we have to find somewhere for it to live.

Adam – Y214... We'll have to give our new planet a name as well...

Eve – Just think... What an extraordinary moment. For the first time, human beings are about to come into contact with an entirely unknown form of life.

Adam – It's exciting, that's true. And it's also frightening...

Eve – I feel like Christopher Columbus just before he landed in the Americas.

Adam – America was at least on the same planet.

Eve – Are we going to be able to adapt?

Adam – And will this planet, and whatever lives there, be able to adapt to us? Even to the viruses we'll inevitably bring with us?

Eve – We'll find out soon enough.

Adam – It could have been a wonderful moment. Pity humanity had to destroy itself before we got here.

Eve – We're approaching the first planet of this solar system. Apparently, it's completely uninhabitable. Too far from its star.

Adam – Everything suggests Y214 really is habitable. The atmosphere and gravity are very similar to Earth's. Gravity's slightly weaker, but only by a fraction.

Eve – The easy way to lose a few kilos... Change planets.

Adam makes a tender gesture towards her.

Adam – You look wonderful. Sixteen thousand years and not a wrinkle...

Eve – Thank you...

They kiss.

Adam – Maybe we should wake them up.

Eve – Go ahead... I'll watch the navigation. We're approaching our final destination... Assuming the computer hasn't taken us somewhere else. The navigation system's not working at the moment...

Adam approaches the hibernation pod where Juliet is supposed to be lying.

Adam – I feel like I'm about to wake Sleeping Beauty.

Eve – Don't you dare kiss her...

He leans over the pod.

Adam – No...

Eve – What?

Adam – The pod's empty.

Eve – That's not possible...

Eve goes to the pod where Romeo ought to be lying.

Eve – His is empty too...

Adam – Could they already be awake?

Eve – They might be up there...

Adam – I'll go check.

Eve – Don't leave me alone too long. This is really frightening. Couldn't I come with you?

Adam – Someone has to stay at the controls.

He goes out. Eve works the controls. She looks surprised, then alarmed, and checks several instruments.

Eve – Oh, shit...

Adam returns a little later, looking devastated.

Eve – So?

Adam – Yes, they're up there...

Eve – But...?

Adam – They're dead.

Eve – Dead? Tell me you had nothing to do with it.

Adam – I had nothing to do with it.

A pause.

Eve – But how did they die? How long ago?

Adam – I don't know exactly. A very long time ago, by the look of it. I'll spare you the details...

Eve – What could have happened?

Adam – I don't know. Something must have gone wrong with their hibernation. It was interrupted accidentally. They probably woke up when we were halfway here.

Eve – Too far to turn back, and too long a journey to survive awake.

Adam – They survived for a while. Months, perhaps years. And then they died.

Eve – They couldn't go back into hibernation. They died of old age.

Adam – That's incredible... They could have woken us up... Killed us... There were only two working pods left.

Eve – They could have sacrificed us to save themselves.

Adam – But they didn't. They let us sleep for sixteen thousand years.

Eve – You see? People can be capable of the best as well.

Adam – Yes... Or perhaps Juliet stopped Romeo.

Eve – We'll never know exactly what happened.

Adam – I hope at least we'll find a place to bury them.

A pause.

Eve – So now we really are alone in the universe... Just us, and this child I'm carrying.

Adam – Thank goodness it isn't mine. If we have another child and expect the two of them to carry on the species, at least it'll only be half as incestuous.

Eve – Given the circumstances, that's hardly our biggest worry.

Adam – Besides, the Bible wasn't terribly strict about it... Adam and Eve's children must have married one another to carry on the human race, mustn't they?

Eve continues to look at her instruments.

Eve – There's something I don't understand.

Adam – What?

Eve – We're not where we ought to be.

Adam – Where are we, then?

Eve – The instruments are dead, and we've almost run out of electricity. I can't tell where we are.

Adam – Let alone where we're going...

Eve – So what do we do?

Adam – There's nothing we can do but wait. The autopilot's still working. We'll see where it takes us.

Eve – Let's hope it's somewhere safe...

Blackout.

ACT 5

Adam and Eve sit at their consoles, concentrating on their work. Both look worried.

Eve – We've entered the atmosphere of an unknown planet, and its gravity has us in its grip.

Adam – Most of our instruments are still out of action, but the automatic landing procedure seems to be going normally.

Eve – I've managed to repair one of the solar panels. The batteries are charging. We should start getting readings soon.

Adam – About time. The ground's coming up fast.

Eve – If we land on a dead world, that's the end of us. We're out of fuel. We can't fly anywhere else. This planet will be our refuge or our grave.

Adam – Let's hope it really is Y214...

Eve – It would be a miracle if the ship's computer had found another habitable planet.

Adam – We're only ten thousand metres above the surface. I can make out something with the naked eye.

Eve – Looks like a vast ocean with a few islands.

Adam – Assuming it's water. And that we can breathe the atmosphere, and live on whatever land there is.

Eve – You mean that human beings can live there. There may be life that's perfectly adapted to this planet, even if it's deadly to organisms like us.

Adam – I can see patches of colour. Mostly green.

Eve – Vegetation?

Adam – Maybe. If there's vegetation, there could also be animals.

Eve – Even an intelligent life form.

Adam – Intelligent? You mean a species like ours, capable of destroying its own planet in a few centuries?

Eve – Let's say a sensible species, then.

Adam – We're starting to make out the details.

Eve – Yes, that's it. An immense ocean dotted with islands covered in lush vegetation.

Adam – There's no sign of civilisation...

Eve looks at a screen.

Eve – At last. The batteries have enough charge. The computer's starting to send us data.

Adam – And?

Eve – It's incredible how much this planet looks like Earth.

Adam looks at the screen over Eve's shoulder.

Adam – It has exactly the same characteristics.

Eve – Yes... It's a ninety-nine per cent match. Extraordinary...

Adam – Is there a problem?

Eve – In a manner of speaking...

Adam – What?

Eve – The computer's finally worked out where we are.

Adam – And?

Eve – We're not where we're supposed to be.

Adam – We're not on Y214?

Eve – While we were asleep, the computer must have decided Y214 wasn't actually habitable, so it changed the flight plan.

Adam – Or maybe it was them...

Eve – Them?

Adam – Romeo and Juliet. They realised the journey was taking us to our deaths, and they changed course.

Eve – Then they decided to turn back.

Adam – Turn back?

Eve – This is our own solar system. The planet we passed earlier was Neptune. And we're heading for Earth.

Adam – Earth?

Eve – We'll be landing in a few minutes. After sixteen thousand years travelling through the galaxy.

Adam – All that way, just to come back here... So we're going to die on the planet where we were born after all...

Eve – Not necessarily...

Adam – What?

Eve – According to these readings, Earth has become habitable again over the past sixteen thousand years.

Adam – Earth isn't one vast ocean any more. There are whole chains of islands.

Eve – The polar ice caps have partially reformed.

Adam – What is the surface temperature?

Eve – Still about eighty degrees at the equator, but much milder elsewhere... Around twenty degrees on the island where the computer plans to land us.

Adam – The ocean is no longer boiling.

Eve – The planet's habitable. In places, at least...

Adam – Habitable... but uninhabited.

Eve – No... Apparently, there's nobody left. No sign of human life...

Adam – Maybe a few animals, though.

Eve – Fish, probably. Species that survived in the deepest waters and are gradually evolving into amphibians again.

Adam and Eve look towards an imaginary porthole on the audience side of the stage.

Adam – We'll have to start everything from scratch.

Eve – Trying not to make the same mistakes again...

Adam – I can see where we're going to land. There's even a palm tree.

Eve – Are you sure it isn't an apple tree?

A rumble is heard and a warning light flashes.

Adam – What's that?

Eve – The autopilot isn't responding. I'll switch to manual control.

Adam – We'll try to land smoothly.

They work frantically at their consoles. Another rumble, and another warning signal.

Eve – What's happening now?

Adam – The manual controls aren't responding either.

Eve – The Ark's out of control. We're changing course. If we don't eject now, we'll come down in the middle of the ocean...

Adam – The shuttle won't survive the impact.

Eve – At best we'll be stranded at sea with no way of reaching land.

Adam – What should we do?

Eve – We have to eject and go down by parachute.

Adam – So much for the last relics of our old civilisation. We'll arrive on Earth wearing next to nothing.

Eve – Almost dressed like Adam and Eve.

They put on their parachutes and move to the front of the stage, as though they are about to jump out on that side. They take each other's hand.

Adam – Welcome to the Garden of Eden. Ready to reinvent humanity with me?

Eve – If we survive, it's up to us whether we turn this world into paradise or hell all over again.

They take one more step forward and freeze.

Adam – Go?

Eve – Go!

Blackout.

Flashback: sixteen thousand years earlier (optional)

Romeo and Juliet slowly wake in their respective hibernation pods.

Romeo – Already?

Juliet – We were supposed to hibernate for sixteen thousand years...

Romeo – Feels as if I've only been asleep an hour or two.

Juliet checks a dial.

Juliet – We've only been asleep three hours...

Romeo – That's impossible!

Juliet checks the screen on her pod.

Juliet – Somebody's changed the settings I entered...

Romeo – Adam?

Juliet – Who else...?

Romeo – That bastard... and he's still asleep.

Juliet – Eve too... *(She checks the display on their pods.)* They're set to sleep for sixteen thousand years.

Romeo steps towards Adam's pod.

Romeo – Not if I drag them out of their freezers.

Juliet stops him with a gesture.

Juliet – Wait a moment...

Romeo – What do you suggest?

Juliet – I'm thinking...

Romeo – Why don't we reprogramme our pods?

Juliet – Unfortunately, it's not possible.

Romeo – Why not?

Juliet – These pods can only be used once.

Romeo – What if we take their places?

Juliet – It would rob them of their chance to reach the new Earth alive, but it wouldn't save us.

Romeo – So, we're doomed...?

Juliet – I told you. These pods only work for one cryogenic cycle. If we wake them, we condemn them to death, just like us. But we still can't take their places.

Romeo – The bastard... He wanted to wipe out humanity. He's got his way at last...

Juliet – Not if they survive.

Romeo – Believe me, they won't survive for long.

Juliet – And if you condemn them, you condemn the entire human race!

Romeo – I don't understand... Why would he do this?

Juliet – Because he's a devil. This way, he won't have killed anyone himself. He wants to turn us into murderers. He's put humanity's fate in our hands.

Romeo – And what will happen to us?

Juliet – We can't go back to Earth. There's nothing left for us there.

Romeo – And we're still sixteen thousand light-years from our destination...

Juliet – We've only got enough oxygen and food for a few weeks... All four of us were meant to be in hibernation.

Romeo – I'm going to kill him...

Juliet grabs the gun.

Juliet – No. I'm the one who has to kill you.

She aims it at him.

Romeo – But... why?

Juliet – So the two of them can live. And so humanity still has a chance, in spite of everything...

Romeo – Please, don't do it.

She fires. Romeo collapses. Juliet moves to the window and faces the audience, gazing at the stars. Music.

Blackout.

The 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 the savage beasts
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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https://comediatheque.net/

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