

Sylvain Seccia

Désiré

Éditions Seccia

« When you start hiding from people,
it's a sign that you're afraid to play with them.
That in itself is a disease.
We should try to find out why we refuse
to get cured of loneliness. »

L.-F. Céline



Désiré, why didn't you draw anything?



Désiré, I asked you a question.



I don't know.



Look! All your friends drew a sun. You are the only one who did not.



But I have never seen the sun.



Why do you say that, my boy?



It's always night in my head.

1992



Ah... dear fellow traveller... I am so happy to meet you and to travel with you along this rocky path to let a surprising story unfold. Do not be too quick to judge! At least not before you know how it ends. This story is both rough and delicate... as repulsive as it is endearing... melancholy and joyful... but most of all, it is a tale that is deeply human and profoundly singular. So let me introduce this young, colour blind boy who, from birth, has only ever perceived the world in black and white. Colours, to him, are as abstract as faith to the atheist. Yet, they plagued his dreams, night and day! This boy's name is Désiré and his life path will surely surprise you. But enough chit-chat! Go and find out for yourself...



I'm not in the mood to walk on the beach. And I have to perform this magic so that my feelings are returned. I see no other way to change the hand I've been dealt. I will not leave until I have gone through with this.



I should read the spell again.



Page 17... « Spell to make anyone fall in love with you. 1: Make a small wooden box. 2: Write the name of your loved one on an egg. 3: Place the egg inside the wooden box and bury the box away from sunlight for a month. »





It's the most pathetic story I've ever heard... and you can imagine I've heard a few in my time!



You're making fun of me... not cool.



For good reasons! Don't you think you're just asking for it? If you make a rod for your own back, don't be surprised if someone uses it.



I'm hopeless.



I tell you what's hopeless... always talking yourself down... It's not like anyone died! Chin up even if you're alone! Ha ha!



There's this boy I like... although I like girls too. It's the first time I feel something for a boy at school. I don't understand what's happening to me... I feel completely lost...

What's more, he's such an effeminate boy.



You poor soul. Sounds like you're confused emotionally, that's all... Your desires are tainted by society. I try to avoid kitchen sink psychology, but... you should assert yourself within your entourage... you keep stum too often and you let your anxiety eat you up from the inside.



I feel so lonely among others, much more at ease in my own corner.



Do as you will... but I have to say that your voodoo magic is unnerving. Take charge of your life instead of waiting for the miracle that never comes.



But why am I also attracted to boys my age?



I don't have a bloody clue and I don't give a monkey's about your gay stories!... I've known you for a good while and I have always noticed, this lack of confidence that makes you doubt everything.



Hmm...



You're probably drawn to effeminate boys because you're scared to talk to girls. If you don't want to end up with a feather boa

up your proverbial, you're going to have to work at it.



Two men together... does that shock you?



Disgusting!... but that's only my opinion so don't take it badly. Makes me sick!... As the saying goes: to each his own. Ha ha!



Why are you called the Old Man? Don't you have a first name?



I am so old I cannot remember my name.



I don't believe you. Nobody forgets their name.



Ha ha! You gotta know, kid, that on this miserable rock of a planet... everybody lies!...



I don't.



Without exception!... Trust me!... Without exception!...



I wish I had a granddad like you. Unfortunately, I was born too late to have known my grandparents.



Don't forget your maternal grandmother.



Yes, but she died recently. The surgeons took one of her legs... gangrene... but they didn't warn her. When she woke up, she just couldn't take it. She let herself die. She would rather have suffered than lose a leg.



I'm so sorry.



All I have left is my aunties.



Such temperamental aunts!



I want to hear one of your fantastic stories.



Not today... my old bones are aching.



What should I believe in?



Does God exist? Are we alone here on earth? Is there such a thing as fate? Is death only a passing phase? All your existential questions are way beyond me. With time, I have learned one essential thing: expect nothing from life! Saved my ass a thousand times!



Why live, then?



We all have our reasons... who cares... I have mine! If I twist my ankle along the path, I'll just limp on.



Why do you always watch the same videos?



The more you focus on something, the more you learn. Sometimes, sequences I have watched many times before appear brand new to me. There's always that golden nugget that escaped us...



But you're missing out on TV.



There's nothing to miss! TV bores me stupid. No need to watch it to have already seen it all. It offends me. It's like being assaulted in my own home. It makes me numb in body and spirit... paralyzes me... it invades my personal space... I want to be able to move beyond any limits. I want to soar between the stars. I want to float, free of gravity... no crashing... no eating dust. I want to shape my destiny with my own hands. For all these reasons, I refuse to let these toxic waves poison me!...



I don't follow you.



Sorry for losing it a bit. Sometimes I forget your age... you're only twelve! Hmm... my words will resonate differently when you get older... You'll see... I'm certain of that.



Ballet is boring.



Wrong, boy!... It's far more interesting than you think!... These bodies in motion are so exquisite!... Such beautiful harmony!... Believe me...



It's corny.



Because you're just a kid and you don't pay attention to what's all around you. Stop looking at the world from the outside!... Dive in! You keep stroking the veil that obscures life. Tear it apart!... Get rid of it!...



So, what about you? What do you see when you watch the ballerina?



Lightness... yes, that's it!... Lightness... The subtleness of her steps fascinates me... it's a rare gift these days. You'll understand when you get older... when you learn to recognise how clumsy man is... I get lost in this clumsiness... I sink into the mire of this drunken heaviness...



David bullies me at school.



Who's he? The spotty kid you mentioned before?



Yes... he keeps bullying me to take advantage. He steals my stuff. All this because he knows I'm frightened of him.



What are you afraid of, exactly?



That he tells everybody my secret. If all my friends heard it, I would be ashamed for the rest of my life.



You got that right, boy!... it's crass intimidation!... He's older than you so he's got you by the balls... And I suppose you're stupid enough to go along with it.



I don't have a choice.



Bollocks!... don't be a stupid git... We always have a choice!... But you have to want it. It's simple. You either decide to throw caution to the wind and lay into him... which seems unlikely given your size and your lack of confidence... Or you play it subtle... with a light touch and some creativity... use your brain to counter-attack and hoist him on his own petard.



Please do me a favour... help me set a trap for him.



To each his own. It's your problem, not

mine. We face the harshness of life cruelly alone. I can't do anything for you... a few tips, but that's all.



What tips?



If I were you, I wouldn't beat about the bush. The best form of defence is to attack. To rid yourself of a bully, you have to sit on your scruples. And it's no holds barred!...



I'm not after revenge.



Got nothing to do with revenge, boy!... You're right. Revenge is a waste of time and energy, only fit for arseholes. I'm talking about respect and dignity! Find his weaknesses and humiliate him before he humiliates you...



His weaknesses?... hmm... Acne?



No, that's such a mean-spirited angle. Not his fault, poor guy. Look for a weakness only he can be held responsible for.



Hmm... Nope. I got nothing.



Guilty of something?



Not that I know of.



A secret vice?



Nope.



A bad habit?



Hmm... Yes! He has one! He jerks off several times a day. Can't help himself.



He he... there you go... Ruled by an addiction that girls won't find very enticing. Shut him up!...



Not really much of a secret. At school, everyone knows he likes big tits.



Use your brain!... have a little bit of imagination!... have a laugh for once in your sorry life!...



Hmm... Catch him red-handed, so to speak?



He he... love the idea but... how?



Rubbing one off in the school toilets?



He he... you're a fast learner... go on...



It won't work without witnesses.



Why not try to immortalise the scene?



With my father's camera? Then I'll use

his photo lab to develop the negative... and the picture does the rounds at school.



Ha ha!... Just be careful if you only have one print.



I'll use the photocopier at school. I'll have plenty to give out.



In your face, spotty!



I'm not brave enough to stand up to David.



Good heavens! Your balls are smaller than grapes! Face your fears and the rest will come naturally... I have no doubt you can deal with the little twerp!



I don't know if I can do it.



You want to be a wimp for the rest of your life?



No!



So find a way for him to beat off in the loo!... Take a discrete snap... then use your dad's photo lab to develop the negative... and make photocopies in the school library. Remember: it's your plan, so own it!



Yes, I'll get back now.



When's the bodybuilding competition?



In two months. It gets really hard in the last month when you need to weigh your food to watch your calorie intake.



A month is a long time. Are you going to make it?



I'll do everything I can to reach my goal. I won't give up.



I'll clap every time you're on stage.



Thanks a lot. That really makes a difference. Silence would really put me off... more so than if I got whistled and booed.



To that extent?



Silence is the most corrosive of acids.



What's the story with that gym?



Are you talking about the one where Arnie trains?



Yes, on a beach... is that true?



Venice Beach. It's a town in the States... on the West Coast. I'd love to go there.



Maybe we'll go one day... What about your project, owning your own gym?



When I graduate, I'll work hard and save to set up my own gym. Lucia will help me fund it.



Lucia changes her mind as often as her mood changes. I know by personal experience. She promises the moon and her inheritance, and at the slightest slip or faux-pas, she reneges on her word. I don't trust her anymore.



She gives me 50 thousand Liras every time I go to mass.



Not to me! You're her favourite.



It's different. Mum doesn't force me to go to church anymore, unlike you. It's just another way to force me.



Mum doesn't like it.



I know.



What are you reading nowadays?



I'm reading the third tome of "It".



What's next?



Not sure yet... if you have any good reads to recommend... Always interested!



Are we going to see "1492: Conquest of Paradise" with Depardieu at the movies?



Sure, if you want. I'll go to Bron and find out when it's playing.



Could you do me a favour?



Sure. Tell me.



Could you beat the living daylight out of a kid at school?



Of course not.



Could you scare him with your muscles then?



What's the problem here?



Nah, forget it. He's just not very nice to me.



Spill the beans, come on.



No worries. It's not important.



I can come to school with you and have a chat with him.



I'll think about it.



How long have you two lived together?



For as long as we can remember.



Did you play the slot machines this morning?



Yes... I won a lot but Aunt Nina lost everything.



Beginner's luck... We'll see tomorrow.



What would you do with the money if you hit the jackpot?



I would give a lot of it to the poor.



But most of the money is just thrown out the windows.



I earned my money by working hard my

whole life. Now I spend it how I want to, for fun. If I win, it's different.



Can I play with you?



Do you know the rules of Scopu?



No... I've never played.



Let us finish our game and I'll teach you the rules.



My turn?



Yes, hurry up, will you?



Wait... I'm thinking.



Have you had lunch?



Good meal at the Casino Vert. And you?



I'm not very hungry and the food in the school canteen really sucks.



Canteen food?



School meals.



Come eat at home this week.



Don't you get bored too much in France.



What?



Don't you miss Trani and Southern Italy?



The travelling was really tiring. I'm getting over it gradually.



Are you staying for long?



When are we going back, Aunt Lucia?



Why do you always ask the same questions?



I don't remember... maybe I have Alzheimer.



Nonsense! You don't make any effort to remember, that's the trouble. Three weeks! We go back in three weeks!



What are you doing?



Developing photos for a client of Walter's.



Can you tell me how to develop a photo?



Sure, but not now. I have to work. I'll show you tonight.



Do you need something? I'm going to the newsagents.



Hang on, yes, a packet of Marlboro please. Here's a 50 franc note. You can buy some sweets for yourself too.



This is today's paper: « Doctor Feinstein is suspected of molesting three young girls aged between eight to twelve, and to have recorded the events on tape according to the alleged victims. He was taken into police custody last night, following a complaint from his spouse. The police are actively looking for material proof. »



Can I have the latest Tilt, please?



Pardon? You want what?



It's a magazine.



What?... oh yes, I see... on electronic games?



Video games, actually.



That will be 28 francs! You got the

money?



Yes, I have a 50 franc banknote.



Here's your change.



Do you sell sweets?



Does this look like a sweet shop?



Do you know the sailor sitting on a bench over there?



That tramp? I want him to go!... his suspicious look doesn't agree with my customers!



He's harmless.



I should hope so! Stinky, scruffy and sickly is quite enough, thank you...



Could I have a packet of Marlboro please?



Aren't you a bit young to smoke?



I'm twelve, but they're for my dad.



Does it say stupid on my forehead?



Hello.



Hold on a minute... hmm... hmm...
hmm... I must finish writing my book of
poetry... *cough* *cough* What do you
want, kiddo?



You look exhausted.



Tell me about it! I've been working my
fingers to the bone for months... as if a
divine power forced me to write... I wouldn't
mind a nap if I could... but... *cough*
cough I must finish this book first - I'm
almost done... *cough* *cough* It's a never-
ending path.



Are you unwell, Sir?



Tell me about it! All my life, I've been
sailing around the ocean and today I am an

old sailor beaten by the wind. What about you kid, what brings you here?



I am looking for freedom.



Well, I'll be damned!... When I was your age, I spent all my time looking up skirts. We need more brave sailors like you on board!



What is your name?



Cob O'Neil...



I'm Désiré.



Nice to meet you! So you're a marine explorer too then?



I'd like to... but I get seasick.



Ha ha!... Don't worry about that! When I went to sea for the first time, I threw up my guts as well.



Where have you travelled to?



Everywhere! If only you knew!... I've been to so many places! Little villages... extraordinary, breath-taking locations. *cough* *cough* and hot chicks that would give a priest a hard-on! I've crossed so many borders... I can tell you that I've explored every nook and cranny of our world.



Did you discover any islands?



Yeah, plenty! One especially... a heavenly one... err... in 1976... There were only three of us on board and we weren't disappointed... *cough* *cough* I could tell you about it for hours around a bottomless beer glass when I'm done...



Can I give you a few coins to help out?



There's a good lad! I haven't eaten anything for days. I could do with a good old ham sandwich.



It's not a lot; it's all I've got.



Are you kidding? It's very generous of you! *cough* *cough* Here, take this. To return the favour, I'm giving you my book.



Your manuscript?... The one you've been writing non-stop?



My bones are tired and my body is enduring its last few painful hours. *cough* *cough* I'll never be able to finish it.



I thought you were almost done with it?...



To be honest, I've got no idea. That's

what I keep telling myself to keep going. I'd rather stop now and relax before I finally rest in peace.



Why me?



You moved me, kid.



What is it?



I got it from the old sailor who's been hanging around the newsagents over the last few days.



He gave it to you?



Yes. I'll lend it to you if you want.



Where do you think you're going? Aren't you forgetting something?



I've already given you my Garbage Pail Kids collection.



That was last week!... I need something every week. You've already forgotten?... Need a reminder?



No, please... I have nothing to give you.



If you give me your Walkman, I'll leave you alone for a month.



Hmm...



Wicked!... A Sony Walkman auto-reverse with radio!



Why don't you leave me in peace?



Ever since I found out about your secret, it's been really useful.



It's not even true.



Yes it is. I know it's the truth. You're gay!



No!



I saw you in the toilets with Greg.



We were only talking.



Liar!... I saw you put a finger in real deep!



We only did it once, to see what it was like, I swear.



Bollocks!... If you don't want the whole school to know, you'll have to do whatever I say.



Hmm... What are you listening to?



Your music sucks so I'm listening to Fun Radio.



Can I get my tape back?



No way! I'm keeping it to tape Lovin' Fun tonight, with Difoal and the Doc.



What is it?



A radio program about sex!



Is it true what they say about you?




And what exactly do they say about me?




Err... that you are obsessed with sex.




Not true!




Apparently, you always have dirty mags in your bag.




So what? I like looking at naked women!... Is that a crime? I jerk off three times a day, if that's what you want to know.




Doesn't it become routine after a while?




So many different mags... it's endless. Without mentioning Hard Porn News on Canal+.




Have you ever made out with a girl?




Not interested in girlies! I like the real women in Playboy.




Maybe it's because of your acne.




Ha ha. Very funny.



Don't you get blisters jerking off so often?



Very funny, you colour blind retard. At least I'm not lazy.



Neither am I. And the exact term is achromate. I won't let you push me around anymore!



Easy tiger! I'm shaking in my boots...



The Old Man is right. I'm going to shut him up.



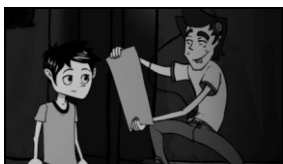
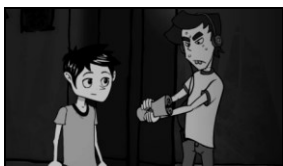
I may have something else of interest.

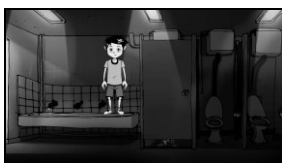
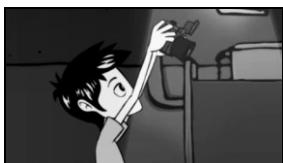


What it is?



She's sexy!





It's in the bag! Getting interesting...



I have been in this school since kindergarten and I still don't feel at ease here. Either too hemmed in or just out of place. The worst thing is that changing schools would distress me even more. The fact is we seem to want to hold on to our misery in spite of ourselves. It's sad. We even end up revelling in our own sorrow.



Shush! This is a library, not a coffee shop.



Sorry, Miss.



I am looking for a photography manual.



I think I saw one on the bookshelves.



Where?



Figure it out for yourself, Désiré. You're not in primary school anymore. You have the school library at your disposal.



Can I use the photocopier?



Do you need to photocopy administrative papers?



No, Miss. It's to copy a photo.



The photocopier is for the use of school

personnel only. Sometimes for pupils who have administrative documents to copy.



I couldn't switch it on.



You have a nerve! It's getting worse. New generations are less and less educated. When I was your age, I would never have dared use tools that didn't belong to me. Good manners are on the way out. Just so you know, you need an electronic pass to use the photocopier.



Do you like insects?



Not particularly. Why do you ask, Désiré?



No reason... to know if you have a fear of spiders, like I do.



They don't frighten me. I just squash them underfoot.



And rodents?



Don't talk to me about these horrible creatures! I was traumatised by one of those hideous creatures in my youth.




What happened?



I don't want to talk about it. Go and

study.





 I can't believe it!... Do you mind? I'm reading.


 Is it the photography book?


 Yes.

 Can I have it?

 Err... no ? You're getting on my nerves. Are you deaf or what? Can't you see I'm reading it?

 You're just pretending to be interested in it.

 Don't be insolent.

 What do you want in exchange?



Nothing, thanks.



Are you sure? What about sweets?



I'm too old for sweets.



I didn't know there was an age limit for sweets.



That's because you're an ignoramus.



Surely there's something you need, a favour I can do?



Can't think of anything.



God! Keep it down, you two!



Think about it... I'm sure I can make myself useful.



I said no!



Why are you so hard on me?



Because you're a dunce.



And you're top of the class?



Don't confuse wheat with chaff. You should know by now.



Nadège got a better mark than you in geography.



I know that already, thanks.



Does it annoy you?



I overestimated my knowledge of the topic... It's sheer luck Nadège beat me.



You can't always come first.



Of course I can!... I need to work harder. You're always at the bottom of the class, aren't you?



Hmm... Do you do anything else, apart from always being the best?



I do loads outside school. I play Scrabble in a club and I even won a prize last week.



Don't you ever rest?



I work to make my parents proud.



What I think is that you are very jealous.



I like winning.



You like wining just to keep one step ahead of everyone else.



Where's the harm?



You have a case of exacerbated jealousy.



Good, you learned a new word. Well, my exacerbated jealousy, as you call it, enables me to get the best average in class.



What's that got to do with anything?



Do you have a temperature or something?



Why?



Because you never say anything, usually.



I don't want to keep quiet anymore. Let me tell you a story.



I'm listening.



It's the story of twin sisters who played together in their room. They fought, like most siblings, except they were incredibly jealous of each other. One day, a fairy appeared and asked one of them to make a wish. But the fairy imposed a crucial condition before she would make the wish come true.



What condition?



She could ask for anything, but whatever she received, her sister would get double.



It's a trap.



The little girl thought for a while and answered: « I want to lose an eye! »



Your story is horrible.



I need this book.



Your problem.



Do you have a crush on Nicolas?



Err... What do you mean?...



Do you think he's cute?



Not at all.



Admit it... it's clear to everyone.



No... err... You're talking rubbish.



Come on; admit it! Great, because I have good news for you.



What?



Nicolas is a friend of mine. I can get you

a date if you want.



You'd do that?



Sure... if you give me the book.



Well... err... Hmm... Okay, you can have the book if you speak to him about me.



Done!



Shush!




I'll speak to Nicolas.



As soon as he gives me a date, you can have the book. But not before.



 Hello Father, I have come for confession.



Say the words you learned by heart.



Bless me Father for I have sinned.



I'm listening my son.



I took my dad's camera in secret.



Why did you do this?



I needed to take some pictures.



Why didn't you just ask for it?



Because he uses it for work.




Have you given it back to him?




No.


✝ Are you going to give it back to him?

 Yes, of course.

✝ In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I forgive all your sins.


 Amen. Do you have a card for the photocopier?

✝ Yes, as have all the teachers.

 Can you lend it to me?

✝ That's against school policy. Ask the main school supervisor.



 She'll never agree... she's incorruptible. But if I give the priest something in exchange... Hmm... I need more intel on

him.



Hi Nico. How's you?



Yo! Cool, man.



How do you manage to get so lucky with girls?



You need to learn to read the signs, their very personal way of showing you their feelings.



And that's enough?



Hold on... do you think it's a piece of cake? It's a high level sport!... I'm just starting out. The way you look is another factor... they all think I'm cute and it helps. And of course, without confidence, you don't exist in their eyes. If you play it shy, you'll be lucky to

get the crumbs under the table.



Girls are tough with me.



I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you got to admit... There are three categories of people: boys, girls and others. Not my fault, it's just the way things are... don't take it badly: it's a power struggle.



Explain it to me.



Boys rule at school and girls know it all too well... so they take it out on the third group: the weakest. Shy boys like you who dare not speak. They're the scapegoats... They get their own back as best they can... At worst, they revel in it...



Where did you learn all that?



My older cousins tell me their adventures.



Did you know Sophia liked you?



Sophia? Lord have mercy... not her!



Don't you like her?



Are we talking about the same Sophia? She's a total pest!



Could you do me a favour? I promised Sophia a date with you.



Are you stark raving mad? Why do you promise such horrible things?



I have my reasons. I only need for her to believe it for an hour or so.



It's not cool, what you're asking me to do.



Come on... if you help me out, I'll give you the latest Tilt.



Hmm...





Go on, please...




You're a pain in the butt. Okay. You're on. Give me Tilt now and I'll go kiss the witch later.



 Sophia's gone... let's make the best of it! Now, I don't need Nicolas' help anymore.


 « Introduction to darkroom techniques for photography

 1: Pour the developing fluid into an empty tray.

 2: Expose the negative to light using an enlarger.

 3: Bathe the photo paper in the tray for a few seconds.

 4: Leave to dry. »

 Keep quiet... and read my mind.



Nina is cheating.



What?



Look, she's put some cards up her sleeve.



Nina! How dare you cheat?



How dare you accuse me?



I catch you in the act and you dare deny it?



I didn't do it. I don't even know where this card came from.



From your sleeve apparently.



Maybe it just fell in of its own accord.



ARE YOU TAKING THE PISS?!



I didn't do anything!



PISS OFF!



Sore loser!... I can see you coming a mile off... You put the card there on purpose so we stop playing! You're afraid I'm going to win again!...



Ha ha! I must be dreaming!... Your usual bad faith!... You'll never change!...



PISS OFF!



Dad, there's a problem with the aunties.



What is it?



They're having a fight because Nina is supposed to have cheated at cards.



They're unbearable.





Oops...



Sorry about Sophia.



Nah, you're alright.



Do you ever confess in chapel?



Nope... only when the RE teacher forces us to.



Don't you find the priest a bit strange?



Not particularly... he's old, caustic and annoying. Apart from that, I don't detect anything strange. Why?



He's never said anything strange to you?



Yeah, once. I called him Sir and he lectured me... blah blah blah... must call me Father.



Nothing more personal?



Hmm... maybe, yes... One day, he complimented me on the way I looked. It was a bit weird. But, anyway, he's never tried it on with me if that's what you want to know.



Do you think he's the type to hand out sweets to the young ones?



Ha ha... as long as it's only the sweets, I'll have some. Has he ever offered?



No, never.



Hanging out with kids all day seeing those girlies all made up with their G-strings showing... Gotta have some effect on him. Don't know about you but I'm not attracted to that kind of girl. So, I've never had any problems with him.



Nothing ventured, nothing gained... apparently... Maybe I could find some unholy gift for him.



What do colours look like?



Well... err... how shall I put it...



Never mind. Do you know if scientist have found a cure?



No, Désiré, not to my knowledge. Doctors are working very hard I am sure they'll find a way to heal your achromatopsy.



But have they got any new leads?



I don't know, Désiré. I'm sorry.



I would so love to see colours. At school, they either feel sorry for me or laugh at me. I would like to see as they see.



Don't be sad, darling. Science does come up with miracles, you know. Doctors save

many children who have much bigger issues than you.



I don't see anything.



The other day, when I was speaking to your mum, I learned that you broke your silence with Dr Feinstein. That's great, you're making progress.



I don't like this psychiatrist. I talk, but he only pretends to listen.



Don't be silly Désiré. He's here to help you. Of course he listens to you.



I don't think so.



He tries to understand why you spend so much time with your imaginary friend.



He's no more imaginary than the psychiatrist himself.



Your mother is worried.



Because she's not sure about the psychiatrists.



She told you that?



It's not her cup of tea. I am not the only child to have an imaginary friend.



I agree, Désiré. The problem is that you withdraw into a bubble with him. And this friend is not innocuous. We think he has a bad influence on you.



No, he never harms me! Can I go up to see the psychiatrist?



You don't have an appointment today and Dr Feinstein is away for the week.



Could I have a helium balloon?



Our lab's helium canister is empty. We're expecting a delivery soon.



Can I have a mouse?



I don't want any pets at home.



We can make an exception for a mouse



I know you. You'll only take care of it for the first few days.



I need it to show at school. The science teacher asked if a pupil could bring a mouse.



When is the lesson taking place?



Today.



Hmm... Alright, you can take one but bring it back tonight.



The Old Man is nice to me. He gives me advice.



I know you think he reassures you. But you are too solitary. You invent a whole world that prevents you from meeting others. I worry about you because your monochromatic vision really makes you sad.



I talk to him, he listens and he answers me!



There's nobody in that flat, as you know full well. You just don't want to admit it!



Hmm...



We're emptying the flat to put it on sale soon.



Why ?



We need to save, we can't afford to own two flats anymore. Since your father went freelance, we're finding it hard to make ends meet.



I won't see the Old Man anymore then?



You won't be able to get into the flat anymore. Maybe that will help you to move on. As I don't think the psychiatrists are helping much.



I would like to see the shrink today.



Why ?



I need to talk to him.



I thought you didn't like him. I'll make an appointment for tomorrow.



I would rather see him today.



No, you'll miss school.



It's really important. I need to speak to him.



Hmm... Alright.



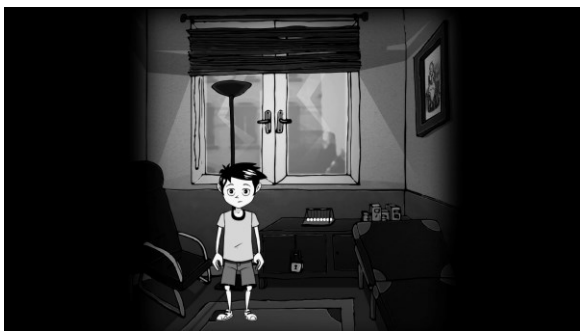
Thanks mum.



Can I go up to see the psychiatrist?



Yes, I spoke to your mum on the phone. Dr Feinstein isn't here but you can see someone else. You can go up now. Same office as usual.




This locker looks suspicious.




That's got to be the tape the papers were talking about this morning.




 I stole a video tape in my psychiatrist's office.


✝ Lord have mercy! That is very serious indeed! Why did you do such a thing?

 I don't know.

✝ Bring it back as soon as you can. What's on the tape?

 I didn't watch it but it has to be an adult tape.

✝ Hmm... now I understand your little game. It's a double sin. This kind of movie is not for people your age.

 Well, actually, there are kids my age on this tape.

+

What? Hmm... Explain yourself, boy.



On the cover, they look my age.

+

What you are implying is extremely serious. Are you making this up?



No Father, I swear.

+

Heavens! Do not offend our Lord. You mustn't swear by anything. Bring me proof that this tape exists.



You don't believe me Father?

+

I do, I do... but I am wary.



I did not lie about that tape. Look...

+

Hmm... Hmm... hmm... Ah... hmm...



Can I give it back to the psychiatrist?

+

Don't worry, I'll do it myself.



That really bothers me... I'd like to give it back to him and say sorry.

+

Good initiative on your part. It's noted. But it's now a problem that has to be dealt with by adults. Did you speak to anyone else about this?



Not yet.



Not a word to anyone, do you hear? Not a soul!...



Really?



Hmm... Is there anything you want that would make you forget this little chat?



Could you do me a favour?



Tell me what you want.



I need a photocopying badge to use in the school library.



Is that all?



Yes, and I'll give it back as soon as I'm done.



Agreed. And forget this tape.



He took to the bait!





Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah !...





2003



 Are you happy with our work over the last year?

 Absolutely! We started from scratch and now we've almost caught up with the competition. The problem is that we were short of resources to complete a project that was a tad too ambitious. Or a time extension... three to six months to achieve our goals. It's a shame.

 We lost a lot of time thanks to Management. We could have emphasised artistic value over the business model.

 Julian Foutriquet wasn't hired to talk art and literature. His job is to release profitable games... end of story. We know that for sure! He imposes timescales that are totally unrealistic. What's worse is that it works.



What's worse still is that their business model is far from dead. Julian knows all the tricks and how to make a mint out of video games.



Let's give him his due: he knows how to make money. As for the rest... I'd rather work with my wife!



They could put aside a small budget for experimental projects.



Why take an unnecessary risk? It's too much of a lottery. They prefer putting their money on a sure thing. They feed on the competition, nicking their ideas and concepts... even from the Indies.



That's stealing!



That's Foutriquet!



Any rumours about redundancies?



Yes. Some employees have been called in already... The whole production team in Paris is going. Our game is going over to the Canadian studio.



No more production in France?



No. They'll keep the Head Office here

but development will take place abroad. It's cheaper and they can put more pressure on employees there.



How are they going to let go of employees on full-time contracts? Especially with their market share and French labour laws.



Redundancy for economic reasons and a fat cheque to make it easier to swallow. So they're using the disappointing results of the first beta as an excuse. As soon as the team is out, they'll finish the game and release it.



What about you? Are you on the list?



If I accept their offer, I will finish the game for them in Canada. Afterwards, there will be short-term projects for me.



Are you going to take it?



I think so... but I'll mull it over first. Emigrating at a month's notice is a bit much.



I have to go. I am going to help a friend volunteering with the homeless.



Really? What are you going to do?



Soup kitchen. See you tomorrow.



I don't know how to talk to her and I just lose it in her presence... I am dazzled by her gaze, her curly hair, her golden skin, her body and her personality. She drives me crazy!... it's a bit stupid: I have only known her for two weeks. She's full of contradictions. It fascinates me... I feel trapped when I'm near her. Sometimes, I even perceive vague colours, in fits and starts. It's very destabilising... but very pleasant.



How long have you been volunteering?



About two years and I am seriously getting involved.



What made you commit?



A desire to help those in need, the most unfortunate among them, the sick and the frail, like the elderly.



You're brave... did you perhaps have a difficult childhood?



I went through some tough times when I lived with my parents. We had virtually nothing to eat. I left when I was 18 because I couldn't stand my mother any longer. I needed to become independent. So I moved in with a girlfriend from college. Then I had to temp to eat and pay the rent. And recently, I found a job I like, helping out with handicapped people.



You seem very mature.



I'm having my 20th birthday party in three weeks. Is it the first time you volunteer?



Yes, first time ever.



It's a very fulfilling experience.



I don't doubt it for a second. You need to commit time to it.



I work during the week and I try to help out weekends during the holidays. You need to want to help others. It's an altruistic pursuit.



I have always found overt altruistic

ventures somewhat difficult.



What?... What do you mean?... Come on... explain!



Well, I don't believe in free gifts... they don't exist! There is always an ulterior motive.



Rubbish!!! I don't do it for myself! I do it to help those most in need.



Don't take it personally. It's just my personal opinion.



Well, it's a stupid opinion... You'll see later. Maybe you'll understand what I'm talking about then.



Pierrot says you can sing...



I dabble... I also play the piano.



Oh, brilliant!... what kind of music?



A bit of everything... jazz, blues, soul.



Can I listen to your songs?



I don't like showing off my lyrics. They're very personal.



You play only for your own pleasure?



For fun and perhaps to make a career of it one day.



Is that a real project? Are you ready to work hard to succeed?



In a few years, perhaps.



Would you like to go to the movies tonight after the soup kitchen?



Sorry, I don't have any spare cash right now.



I'm paying... we could go and see the latest Woody Allen if you want.



I already have something planned but we can do it another time.



Sure, no worries.



Are you coping?



Yes, I'm doing alright, thanks.



Are we alone? I thought there were three or four of us?



Fanny and Jérémie will join us later. They called to say they were running late. Not a problem. I am starting on the soup to save time.



Do you need a hand?



No, it's all under control, thanks. Can you just check that nobody's waiting outside getting impatient?



There's nobody there right now. I know a nice little restaurant not far from my place. We could go there next week. What do you

think?



I have a really busy week. No free time at all. We'll do it another time. I'll let you know.



Great.



Could you fetch some herbs from next door?



Sure. I'll go.



Empty.



Ahhhh... Help!... Désiré!...



Elma? Is there a problem?



I want my daily ration... You'd better bring it over!...



Désiré! Help me!



Shut it!... give me my soup!... Do you hear me?... I'm hungry!... Dying of hunger here!...



No panic... there's got to be a way out of this. We can't serve you right now. The soup isn't ready yet.



I don't give a fuck!... I'm hungry now!...



You don't get anything! Do you understand? Nothing!



Are you mad? Why are you provoking him?



Sorry. I thought it would intimidate him.



He's drunk... haven't you noticed?



I did. He reeks.



No more than usual.



Calm down, mate... we'll serve you in a minute.



Give me my food!...



Sure, but let her go first.



Bring the food.



She's the one who's got the food... You have to let her go if you want to be served.



Don't take me for a fucking idiot!...



She won't be able to do anything unless you let her go. Take your hands off her first...



Bring the fucking food first!...



He's not listening.



Oye, you half-caste yuppie, if you got nothing in the kitchen for me... I'll have you for something else... know what I mean?...



Please don't hurt me.



No food? Gimme pussy instead!... I want to eat pussy!... I'm hungry for fuck's sake!...



This is not going to end well.



Come on, swing your hips, darling!...



Do something, I beg you...



Go on, do it!...



Twat!... I'm calling the police now.



Fuck'em!...



I need help NOW!



Do what I say!...



Shit!...



I beg you, Désiré... do something!...



I can't reach the knife... too far away. I need to find a way to neutralise him without getting injured.



Hey, you sick bastard!...



Talking to me?



You're nothing but a shitbag!



Mind what you say, you fucking brat!...



Don't provoke him! He's aiming the knife at my face.



Go shower!... You stink!



Looking for a fight?



Totally.





So come and get me if you have balls!...



Err...



Not feeling so brave, Snow White?



whoa, wait... we can sort something out... Give me the knife back.



Well played, Désiré!



Get the hell out of here!... right now!... Do you understand, you degenerate punk?



Stay cool... I have nothing against you... I'm going to leave you in peace... but can you help me out first? just give me some food... I swear I won't come back...



You're getting on my tits with your food!
Fuck off!



I haven't eaten in three days... be cool,
dude...



Piss off!



I don't have a penny... don't know
where to go...



It's my last warning!



Alright... alright... I'm going...



Is everything alright? You must be in shock.



I'm okay. Just getting over it. I was really frightened when he held the knife. Thank you for coming to my rescue.



It's the least I could have done. You were in danger. Tell me Elma... Have you planned anything for your birthday?



We're planning a big party on the eve of my birthday. We'll send out loads of invites. Would you like to come?



I'd love to. I can help you organise the party if you want.



Great. I'll let you know.



I had an idea for a present. What do you

think about singing a few songs and playing the piano in a restaurant?



What do you mean?



I know a guy who owns a restaurant.



I'm not sure. It's a huge gift... are you sure you want to bother?



No worries. I just need to call him.



It would be cool to sing in front of an audience.



We could do it on the weekend of your birthday, Saturday or Sunday evening.



Yes... I don't know... it's so rushed. I am not ready. I'll get stage fright.



I'm sure you can cope.



That's kind of you. I fear a month of rehearsal is a bit short but I'm going to try to practice.



The metro's coming at last.



I think I'll go back on my own after all.



Are you sure? Why? I can go with you.



Yes Désiré, I am sure. I need to go to my parents' to get some stuff.





Safe journey home, then.





Thanks for everything... see you soon.




 I dug a hole for myself with this present idea for Elma.

 Firstly: I don't know anyone who owns a restaurant.

 Secondly: I have no bloody idea how to get a piano.

 Thirdly: I don't have anyone to invite.

 And I have less than three weeks to sort it out.



I'm looking for a piano bar and restaurant for my friend. She's a musician and a singer and I'd like to help her get on stage for the first time.



Interesting... I have a pal who runs a restaurant at the Trocadéro.



Maybe he'd be interested in hosting a musical evening



Maybe... the problem is that he has to get rid of some tables to make room for the musicians. So he loses business... He's done it before but he hasn't always come out on top... out of pocket, I mean. He does it more as a favour to friends.



Could you ask him?



I'm not sure... he did me a huge favour

last time.



It would really help: the gig is in three weeks and I don't have a venue.



Alright... I'll call him as and when.



Hmm... Will you have time to call your friend?



Maybe.



Hmm... Any news of redundancies?



Yes Désiré. In fact, Foutriquet is waiting for you in his office.



Hello. You wanted to see me?



Hello, how are you? I have bad news for you. The project you've been working on over

the last year is no longer economically viable. Development costs are too high to allow for any profit margin.



Yes, I heard that.



All production employees are to be made redundant. If you accept your redundancy and sign a compromise agreement, you will get financial compensation.



How much?



Three months salary on top of your notice period. The compromise agreement is confidential. You can take a week to think about it but the sooner you decide, the better.



I get the picture.



Unless I need the money, I would rather give some thought to possible recourse before signing anything.



Yo!



How are you, dude?



Doing fine, man! Do you need anything?



You have some really great gear here.



Too right, bro! We even have wicked hard guitars just the way I like them!... Took their virginity on my first day here. Couldn't help myself!



Cushy job, this...



Not half!... When business is slow, I play metallic shred solos from hell and beyond.



What are you doing now?



Learning tablatures by heart. Yeah, I'm listening, dude...



I want to hire a piano for the evening.



No problem... what are you looking for?



A grand piano, black or white, doesn't matter. It's for a singer playing a gig soon. Her first gig.



Oh yeah!... We have one wicked mother of a grand right here!... Play this baby right and you'll be listening to its soul... vibrating so hard that it becomes the essence of sound in its purest form. The clarity of each note, the subtlety of each tone...



Really?... How much?



Err... 800 I think... No, wait... shit... the mind's gone blank... So, yeah... no it's a thousand Euros for that one.



For a single evening?



Fraid so, bro... But hold on, man!... you get the full trimmings with that... We take care of everything... worry not! How are you fixed for transport?



That could be an issue.



Don't fret, dude. We'll deliver. Paris or the outskirts. Free of charge.



It's a bit beyond my budget.



Know what you mean, man... with my wages, I couldn't afford hiring the stool, let alone the piano. If you want, we can even send the piano tuner along with the delivery. There's always some tuning to do.



Can we do a deal on the price?



Sorry dude... I'm not the one in charge. No worries, I understand... it's hard for everyone right now. If it was up to me, I'd give you a discount cos' I like you. But you gotta talk to the boss.



Where is he?



Won't be easy, man... he's back tomorrow and he's not known for his generosity.



And a deal between you and me?



Shit, man... if I start negotiating prices myself... I've had it. I'm as good as fired. And no dough, no band.



Hmm... I'll think about it.



Sure. Makes sense.



I need to find a way to get the money.



I'll sign the agreement.



Let's do it right now.





I got the money for the piano at last.



Oh yeah!... Respect, man!



I hope I'm not wasting the money. I really want that evening to be perfect.





Well impressed... you really know what you want, bro. No time to waste! Let's go! Tons of paperwork to do... adminstrationally ball-breaking, this. After that, you can leave the rest to us.





That's the piano dealt with. I just need to find the venue and the audience now.





 Do you know about the restructuring plan?


 Yes, it's terrible!... you're all out of work. What about you?


 It's déjà vu all over again. Looking for work again.

 Do you have any leads?

 Nothing yet.

 I wish you the best of luck in your search for work.

 It's not going well with Kevin apparently?

 To tell you the truth, I don't talk to him much.



Why not? You don't like him?



Do you really want to know the truth?



Yes I do.



I can't stand him. He's a Neanderthal. He's sexist, homophobic and he's a...



...a what?



No, forget it.



Tell me. I want to know.



Well... he's a polluter who doesn't give a shit about the planet.



And I know that environmental concerns are important to you.



We should all take responsibility for nature, for our sake and for future generations.



So what should the daily green ritual be to save the planet?



I detect irony in your question. There's lots you can do... The most important... Well... for example... Switch off all appliances when not in use. Use energy-

efficient lightbulbs. Don't let the water run while you're brushing your teeth... and take showers rather than baths. I'll give you a full list if you're interested.



I heard that low energy lightbulbs are very polluting in terms of electromagnetic waves.



I doubt it.



And if I follow your instructions to the letter, I'll save our beautiful planet?



You'll certainly contribute to it. If everyone did the same, we could turn the situation around. And we'd save so much energy. Why waste it without reason?



I agree. Waste is becoming a real worry. All that food packaging that goes straight to the bin...



Exactly!



Its sole purpose is to catch the eye of the consumer and make him buy, again and again. Economic growth... always more growth... it's a vicious circle and it will end badly.



Economic growth isn't evil in and of itself. There's no progress without growth.



So, are you happy with the civil union law?



I have been campaigning for same sex marriage for over ten years!... And what do we get instead? A poor substitute.



At least the intention was good.



It's not enough! It is time to give all citizens the same rights and put an end to homophobia. Equality for all, once and for all!...



Is there no room left for being different in our society?



Of course there is. We're all different and it's up to us to manage our private life.



Well, exactly... it's not for politicians to legislate. I think we have a collective responsibility. We're becoming too individualistic. We're all promoting our individual rights... me, me, me.



As long as we have equal rights, it's fine by me. What would two men not be allowed to marry? Only homophobes support that position.



Are they necessarily homophobic?



Most of them, yes!



Harsh!



When the Socialists come to power, they'll move the boundaries.



Would you be happy if Kevin left the company?



Frankly?



Yes, frankly.



I won't lie to you... Hmm... I would be delighted.



Do you know about the restructuring plan?



Yes, I know. It involves the whole development team. I'm not worried about them. They'll find new employment quickly.



You're not wrong... there are still some attractive independent video games companies in France.



Have you started to look for work yet?



Nah. I'm doing my CV. It's a shame it has to come to this. It's going to feel weird. The offices will be empty... just the project managers and you... in the admin corner.



Not a bad thing. It was getting cramped in here, recruiting left right and centre in the same office space.



It was lively.



It's a pity that Kevin isn't on the goodbye list.



Don't you like him?



I can't abide his Neanderthal attitude anymore. Or his macho jokes.



Do you know Sebastian well?



I have work to do. I can't just sit here and chat.

Earn her trust...



Can I confide in you? I remain sceptical about the outcomes of the feminist movement.



Do your research on feminism and you'll see that our cause makes sense.



Thanks for the advice. Simone de Beauvoir was a figurehead of feminism.



I agree with you completely. She did a lot for the emancipation of women. Today, we have to walk in her footsteps to erase the inequalities that persist.



The final struggle?



Ha ha... I don't know. In any case, it is the gender equality struggle that must go on.



The gender battle is one that never shed any blood.



It's absolutely true. Feminism is one of those rare movements that shuns violence.



I fear that a new form of ultra vulgar feminism is bound to take over one of these days.



The male chauvinist pig is a millstone around the neck of feminism.



That's clear!... They're too bloody stupid.



An emancipated woman worst enemies are her family and kids.



Exactly!



I really think the feminist struggle obscured many of the real social issues we face.



Pfff... so you find it acceptable that with equal competence for a job, women are paid

less than men?



It's totally unacceptable!



That's reassuring! But then, how do you feel about gender equality?



It's a good thing. All citizens - men and women - should have the same rights.



And about gender conditioning? And pink for girls, blue for boys? Codes imposed by society. Are you aware of that?



Yes.



We have to shed those codes that format us from our earliest youth.



It's a waste of time. It's only my personal opinion. I'm not saying I'm right.



Right, well, I guess you're alright after all. I've changed my mind about you. I was wrong... I think you're trustworthy.



Do you know Sebastian well?



I got to know him over the years. We used to get on.



What happened?



We fell out because of personal stuff and we've been avoiding each other since then.



Personal stuff? What do you mean?



None of your business!



Tell me something about Sebastian? I need him to do me a favour; it's really important. But I just don't know how to get him on board.



Hmm... Don't go telling everyone... He has a thing for sadomasochism.



Err... how's that supposed to help?



To be honest, he told me about it because he fantasised about me, back then. He made a pass at me and I turned him down. I'm not a slut.



Anything that would help you change your mind?



You have a nerve!



Forgive me... that's not what I meant... I didn't mean to offend you. But please understand... I am desperate... I have to find a solution, and quickly... If I understood correctly, you'd like Kevin to leave... Well, I

might have an idea.



I didn't say that... But... err... Yes...
What's your point?



I can get him fired.



That's a bit harsh... Hmm... and in
exchange?



You agree to a session with Sebastian.



Are you asking me to agree to an SM
session with him? Out of the question!...



Well, if you prefer enduring Kevin's
spiel?



He's unbearable but getting him fired?
That's going too far.



It's all about balance in a company. Isn't
it what you want?



It is... but it's getting too real now. It
makes me think twice...



Think about a near future in which
Kevin doesn't feature. In your team, nobody
seems to like him. It's a way of doing
everyone a favour. In the end, it's for the
common good.



Hmm... Let's say I'm in... how would you do it?



It's better than you know as little as possible. I won't harm him though.





Very well. When Kevin is officially out, I'll go and talk to Sebastian.





That's the deal!





 On that score... I mean, err, about Kevin... I talked to Cécile about... err, how should I put it? Well... since I don't seem to have much of a future around here... I'm happy to take the risk of getting Kevin fired, without putting him in any danger.

 Hmm... Tell me more...

 He's insufferable to everyone. All I need is a little help to get it done.

 To tell you the truth... it would also suit me if he went. How can I help?

 What do you suggest? I thought I could catch him by the rule book.

 Right... drinking while on duty? They're very strict on this kind of thing around here.



Will it be enough to get him fired?



I don't think so. Let me think about it... How about stealing computer equipment? His fate would be sealed if he also stole confidential data.



Very good idea. Better two traps than one. You're into attending demonstrations, aren't you...



You can say that again! Would you like to campaign with us? Attend the next Gay Pride for a start.



No, thanks. I'd like to print some flyers for a jazz evening. Do you know how I can get a decent price?



Of course! You're doing us all a favour and I'll return it. I'll find a way to get you a thousand flyers for free. All I need is the flyer template on a USB key.



That's really good of you.



No worries.



It's a meeting room. I don't have access.





The company purchased newer, faster hard disks to replace these old ones. I'll take them.





It's Kevin's desk. He spends most of his time sitting in front of Julian Foutriquet's office reading L'Équipe. It's Kevin's rucksack. He's left his keys inside. I'll borrow his keys for a few minutes.




 Do you know about the restructuring plan?


 Yep. Bummer. Though your game's brilliant. It rocks!

 The atmosphere will never be the same again.

 I'm going to get bored big time without you guys. I often had lunch with Sam, Vincent and Oliver.

 I know.

 And the sessions on the PS2 and the Xbox between 12 and 2...

 Weren't you supposed to get another job at some stage?



Didn't work out... but I may have another opportunity. Wait and see... as one says.



You still support the PSG football club?



For sure!...



Would you have a USB key to lend me?



Yes... If you win the quiz...



What quiz?



A little football test. If you get all the answers right, I'll give you my USB key.



Right, well go on then. Quiz on.



Question 1... During the 1950 World Cup in Brazil, India was qualified but pulled out. Why?



The rules forbade teams from playing barefoot.



They pulled rather than break with tradition.



Question 2... 1990 World Cup semis. Italy versus Argentina... the referee forgot to blow the whistle at the end of the first half.

Why did he forget?



He forgot to check his watch.



As a result, the teams played eight minutes longer. At the time, he was considered the best international referee in France.



Question 3... What happened on the 4th of May 1949 late afternoon in Turin, Italy?



A plane crash?



That's right: the Italian champions were on board. Bad visibility on landing was to blame.



Question 4... Who said: « To get to the penalty area and not be able to take a shot... is like dancing with your own sister. »



Diego Maradona.



Yes.



Question 5... Who said: « When the seagulls follow the trawler, it's because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea. »



Éric Cantona.



Yeah, easy. It's over.



Did I pass the test?



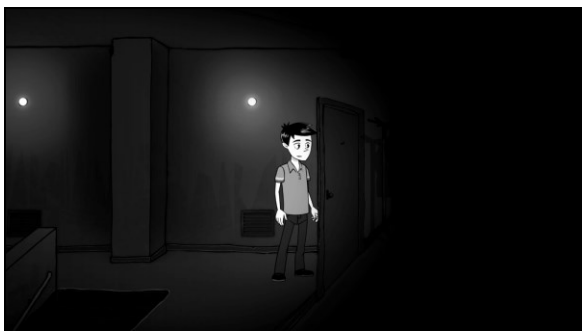
Yes! You're good! You should play football. A promise is a promise... here's the USB key.



Thank you Désiré. I'll starting working on the flyers tonight. You'll get them the day after tomorrow, latest.



That's the audience dealt with. I just need to find the venue now.



I can't do this!... It's evil!... Kevin is going to lose his job and it's all my fault.



So you're just going to give up?



What? Who is this?



It's me... or should I say... It's you.



What do you mean? Your voice resonates strangely... Where are you?



I am your internal voice.



Is this a prank?



I wouldn't dare play a trick on you.



What then? Am I hearing voices now? Have I gone mad? Off to the asylum!... what's happening to me?

♥ You're just feeling a bit lost and abandoned, is all. Don't you have anyone to confide in?



Are you the voice of my Schizophrenia?

♥ Don't be a drama queen. I am a part of you... the part that seeks your comfort and happiness. Listen to your heart. Follow to the love that flows inside your veins... Listen to the words...



What do I need to hear?



Be guided by love.



The more I listen, the weaker I grow... Here is the truth... When we wake up in agony, it's not the heart that's responsible... The body is much better at doing that... and unlike the heart, the body's no traitor! And above all, it's not fair to let Kevin pay. He's done nothing wrong... he doesn't deserve this.




Consequences for him will be minimal as he's looking for another job anyway.




I don't want to take part in a malicious plot.


♥ Kevin is a loser.

 A loser that deserves back-stabbing?


♥ Can one live without love?

 We find our way in life according to our means.


♥ You have never perceived colours more clearly than now. Elma is the only one with whom you experience this strange sensation.

 That's true... But is it a good thing that my sight is altered in her presence?

♥ Of course!

 I'm not sure...

♥ Do you really believe it's all a coincidence? You have been waiting over twenty years for this moment!... perceiving colour at last...

 Except I cannot control it... My vision remains chaotic.

♥ Give it time... it's still new. It's her... Elma!... your soulmate!... It's so obvious!

 Hmm...

♥ And you're going to walk right by it without trying anything?



Hmm...

♥ It's your choice but there will be no second chance, unfortunately. Up to you to do something about it...



Hmm...



I'll create an eBay ad to sell the hard disks, using his account and password. I'll mention the serial numbers in the ad too. I'll put them on the table. And I'll take him bottle of Whiskey.



Sorry to disturb you...



Hmm...



I have important information about Kevin.



Hmm...



I caught Kevin stealing the company's hard disks.



Why would he do that?



To sell them on the net.



Do you have any proof?



I read his post on Ebay.



How can you be sure those hard drives are from here?



He included the serial numbers. They're meant to allow you to check the guarantee with the supplier. Besides, he brought a bottle of Whiskey to work again. I think he's been drinking too much lately.



Hmm... Leave that with me. My assistant will take care of everything.



It's terrible... I really am becoming a bastard. Whatever... I can't go back now.



It's done. Kevin has been fired.



I know. Nathalie sent me an email... news travels fast. Congratulations.



Now you can talk to Sebastian... you know, about the SM session.



To be honest, I didn't think you'd have the balls to go through with it.



What does that mean? You're not going to hold to your end of the bargain? You're going back on your word?



I never had the intention to agree to Sebastian's offer. I told you... I'm no slut! But as you did me a favour, I may have the solution to your problem.



Go on...



I know a dominatrix in BDSM circles. She organises gang bangs regularly.



Gang bangs?



There are a few things I didn't tell you about him... Sebastian is drawn to a very particular deviant practice...



Which is?





I'll leave you to discuss this with Ruby... The dominatrix. Believe me, you won't be disappointed... that's exactly what he was looking for back then. I'll give you her address. She lives towards Nation. I'll send her a text message to let her know you're on your way.





What have I got myself into?




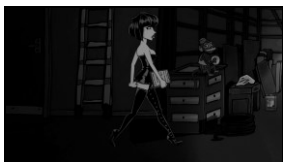
 Hmm... Yes, Cécile mentioned you.
What are you expecting of me?

 A special request...

 I'm listening.

 Well, in fact... err... it's not easy to
say... it's to do with a friend... err... let's just
say I am searching for...

 One second... Oye!... You'd better not
spoil the evening! If you suffocate, I'm going
to have to punish you!!!





Stop whining, you wimp.



He didn't do anything.



Look at him... He's already losing patience...



Is the sub ready?



Not yet, I am taking care of the final details.




In fact, I'd like to learn more about your soirees...



About once a month, I organise a gang bang, in my garage, with several girls and a sub.




What kind of girls?




Friends, acquaintances, applicants who responded to internet ads. It's a long list...




And what happens during the evening?



The sub is tied up and the girls take it in turn to defecate in his mouth.




Yum yum...



Once they're done, they wear gloves and force him to swallow. If he spits it out, they'll make him swallow that too.




That seems dangerous.




He could be in for indigestion, but that's not my problem.




How can he possibly swallow so much?



We make him swallow soap first. That tones down the taste and helps him bear the whole session. In any case, those subs just love swallowing caviar and champagne... It's just a question of boundaries.



It's always about boundaries. How long have you been doing this?



SM for five years and the more deviant stuff, about a year.



Why do you do it?



I do it for myself, above all. And I give women the opportunity to humiliate men. I give them liberation. Payback at last!



Does it excite you?



I like to dominate a man. To humiliate him, see him as he really is.



Why?



That's all they deserve. Men are cowards and they're disgusting.



Don't you find it all a tad unhealthy?



No desire is unhealthy if the participants are consenting adults. To become free, you have to experiment with all your desires. My body belongs to me alone and I do what I want with it. I have no taboos and I encourage my friends not to have any either.



Do you also participate as a dominatrix in your own events?



If I feel like it or if there aren't enough girls.



What about tonight?



Yes. I'm going first tonight. Tonight, I have a lot planned for my sub.



I know a guy who would be very interested in attending one of your private parties.



Is he already an SM adept?



More of a fantasy, really.



I don't do beginners.



I can assure you he really wants to take the step.



That's not enough. I already had a wimp who fled at the first fart. I had to cancel. Ever since, I have had to have a stand-in sub on hand.



So there'll be another sub in tonight?



Not tonight. The stand-in is a Chief Executive and he was called abroad. That's why I'm paying particular attention to that one. If I lose him, I'm up shit creek...



So to speak. A CEO? That's unexpected.



Why?... Are you surprised?... Men with great responsibility often have an inferiority

complex.



He's not a neophyte. He practices regularly... err, how can I put it... solo.



What do you mean?



You know... he's liked caviar from a young age.



I see. Tell him to come and see me, then. If I like him, I'll take him on in a couple of months.



Nothing sooner?



Sorry, I'm going on holiday.




I heard the doorbell ring.



Did you? Probably Tania bringing some toys. Keep an eye on him. Don't let him do anything stupid.





 Should be enough to make him puke without burning his stomach. Got to hurry before she gets back.





What's the matter with him now, wriggling like that? Stop that!... You're going to break the equipment!



I don't think he's feeling very well.



Stop wriggling! Don't be a wimp.



Maybe he's afraid of heights.



Unbelievable. That's all I need. Right, let him down.



Fuck!... What the hell did you do? Why are you puking like a pig?



I'm afraid he doesn't look up to it.



Bloody loser!... fuck!... tonight's session is ruined!... This asshole's ruined it. What

am I going to do?... I don't have a stand-in sub.



Not looking good.



I'm cursed!... The girls will be here any minute now... They're going to hate me... I'll be single for rest of my life...



It's not the end of the world.



It is... I'm a stupid bitch. A stupid bitch who can't even discipline her sub.



Postpone the party.



Not possible... tonight was a special. The girls and I had a bet... and if I lose, I have to be submissive to a man! My life is ruined...



I have an idea.



I'm telling you: it's game over for me.



The guy I told you about earlier...



Don't you understand?... it's too late. I'll never have time to get him ready.



No need... he's available... He could be your toy for tonight.



What?... Your friend?





Yep. He could easily stand in for this wimp. I'm certain he'll do great. He's got a strong stomach.




You're saving my life!




 I'm really embarrassed that you know about my little perversions... even though I don't try to hide them.

 No skin off my nose... I'm not judging. And if it makes you feel better, I'm leaving the company anyway.

 I'll take care of the restaurant... my friend will call you to set the date.

 Thanks.

 That's the venue dealt with. Great... I have everything I need for Elma's present.



Hi, are you alright?



Yes. Aren't you working today?



It's not very busy right now.



Same here.



It's done, Elma! It's all confirmed! I got the go-ahead for the restaurant. I found a great piano and I'll start putting a good crowd together.



Really? Is it true? It's fantastic!



Good evening.



Do you need any help? You seem a bit lost.



Does it show that much? I'm worried about something.



Why so?



I organised this music gig for a singer friend of mine... She hasn't turned up yet... I don't even know what she's doing right now... getting stressed out.



Is she not answering her phone? It's a woman's prerogative to turn up late.



I sent her text messages and left voice mail. I find it a bit harsh on her part.



Wait a while longer and see what happens.



Do you think life has any meaning?



Sorry?



Forgive me... I'm losing it a bit. I tend to think too much when I feel lonely.



«Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more: It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing », William Shakespeare.



Who would have thought it?



What? That the quote is Shakespeare?



No, the fact that you can quote the Bard.



So I must be uneducated because I work in a restaurant?



I know. It's silly.



It's prejudiced.



I'm sorry.



Nah, just messing with you... I do this

job to pay for my acting course. And this quote is from Macbeth. We rehearsed it recently. I don't have any preconceived ideas on that score and I'm not so educated.



I don't know any quotes. And is life worth living?



As far as I'm concerned, life is a gift from Heaven. So yes... undeniably...



Hmm...



I'm certain.



Who's the singer sitting at the piano?



She's a friend of the owner. He thought it would do her good to attend this evening. She's a young artist... I think she's really talented.



If Elma doesn't turn up, it won't all have gone to waste.



I'm sure she'll come.



Why isn't she singing?



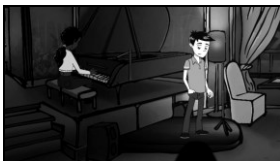
Bit of a problem with the equipment. I think the technician is trying to find a new microphone.



Any news from the technician?



No. He's been gone half an hour.



If you want something done, best to do it yourself.



This one's new.



What the hell are you doing?



Err... me? Nothing.



Try not to touch the gear. Nothing personal, dude. I just don't want any trouble later.



Yes, I understand.



Ah, you found a new mike, then?



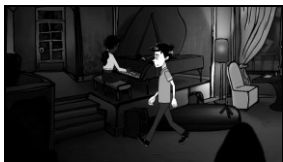
Yes.



I'll tell the technician to get the show on the road.



Elma still hasn't arrived. Paris by night is magical, usually... Except tonight. Hmm... it's good to forget everything else for a moment... To believe I can dream my sorrows in art... But that is, after all, human weakness... we let are take over without concession... to the bottom of the rabbit hole... Art does not heal anything... Hmm... so... I need some fresh air.





Good evening. Sorry to disturb you.



Not at all... you're not disturbing me.



Are you waiting for someone or are you here for the session at the Spleen?



I come here alone to watch the night lights.



Sorry, I am intruding...



You're not intruding at all... on the contrary... Sometimes, breaking the silence is wonderful. But?... What is it, dear friend? I can sense that you are upset.



Well, let's just say that I have a problem.



Sit down comfortably and tell me all about it... Don't play shy.



Hmm... Well, in fact... My problem is Elma!... I think it's the same old story repeating itself since times immemorial Stories of the heart that sadden us a little more each day...



I sense you are sliding into a somewhat depressed state...



Not sliding... hurtling!



You know... I have known so many young men like you go crazy on account of a derriere... That makes me sad. If you want my advice, learn to become detached. Let go of romantic passion. The game's not worth the candle. Other types of passion are much healthier...




Are you referring finding The One?



Yes. Maybe it's an illusion one that has to experience at least once in a lifetime.



And soul mates? It's what we're all looking, isn't it?

 Rubbish peddled by Hollywood movies and the commercial music industry!... The whole system will crash of its own accord... you'll see... And on that day, general disillusionment will set in.



Am I ridiculous?... pathetic?... crazy?



Your only folly is to be in love with a girl you hardly know.



So according to you, I shouldn't be in love with her?



You don't have enough distance to assess Elma's true personality. I assure you... it doesn't look so great from the right distance.



You don't even know her!



Granted. But you, I know very well... And I know full well she's not your ideal woman. This unhealthy, lecherous fascination for her seductive appearance... comes from a lack of self-knowledge and confidence.



So as far as you are concerned, I don't love her...



You're just having desires for what

society demands that you admire.



I see colours when I'm with Elma. I mean... I have been colour blind from birth... but in her presence, for the first time in my life, I have perceived colour.



Interesting...



But this new perception remains chaotic. I don't understand. Explain it to me...



No need! You answer your own questions perfectly adequately. Don't be afraid to think it through to its logical conclusion. Face reality without fear!



Hmm...



Your vision is chaotic because you're not on the right path, my friend. Either everything clicks first time, or they never fit and they fitter away... If you are in doubt about your vision, it means you're not going the right way. Do not just think it through... feel it through too!



That's easy for you to say.



Learn to put things into perspective and to enjoy life. From time to time, the company of a charming lady brings pleasure back to

life.



You have also been heartbroken before?



I am certainly not the only victim of this sordid poison.



Did you become bitter?



Quite the opposite, dear friend... I too have known an extraordinary woman.



She left?



Her soul flew away. You know... I don't look my age... In reality, I am a very old fogey who led an extraordinary life and is now peacefully awaiting his end. All I can do now is to reflect on this new world in its infancy.



I don't know what to do.



You've already done it!... You have already chosen!... As you didn't come to me by chance... The only reason for my presence here is to help you make this decision. You wanted to hear your own words out loud. That's all.



Thank you. I have to go.



See you very soon, dear friend. It has been a pleasure talking to you. Know that I

have great faith in you.



This man is very strange.



Sorry. I went out for some fresh air and lost track of time. The singer's already left?



You've just missed her. She was brilliant!



I heard the first song.



The boss asked if your friend was going to play tonight.



Unfortunately not. I just had a text message from Elma. Last minute issue: she won't make it.



I'm really sorry.



What's worse is that I know full well she's going to spend the night with another guy... She prefers a one-night stand to what I prepared for her.



Truly sorry.



I'm devastated... I organised this whole gig for her and her only. She could at least have acknowledged that. Now, I'm regretting it.



And why is that?



It's a long story... I put a work colleague in trouble with my stupid ideas. Anyway... I am going to make up for it starting tomorrow.



Time to make a fresh start. A drink to forget? The drink's on me.



I wouldn't say no to some booze... Thank you. Look, I wanted to ask you...



Go on...



The guy outside near the kiosk... do you know him?



What kiosk?



Over there... just in front of the restaurant.



I don't know what you mean. There are no kiosks around here.



What do you mean?



I don't see a kiosk... there's nothing outside.



Hmm... Another mystery... never mind. None of it matters anymore. I don't give a damn! Yeah... Back on the road.

2011



A pubic louse bouncer?



Fuck off!



My God... it talks.



Yep, I bet that made you want to scratch your balls...



Just seeing your face makes me itch.



What do you think?... I always have that effect on people...



You're hideous and you stink!



I don't give a fuck!... it's not as if I ever saw my own face!... And FYI, the smell doesn't come from me... All my colleagues fled because of the stink...



Where did they go?



Exploring other pussies in the neighbourhood... Hard to survive!... bushes are becoming rare these days... Have to say: this is a time of unprecedented penury... I think my ex-colleagues are probably dying on some butt hair!...



Why do you stay here?



I'm a faithful soldier, not a deserter! I'm no faggot! And it's my destiny...



There must be greener pastures in the neighbourhood...



Too risky...



You prefer living with this stink forever?



I've lost the sense of smell. And I'm too old for new conquests.




It's purgatory!




Oh no... not at all! It's a piece of cake compared to what I had to endure three pussies ago...





What, worse than this?


 Yep. That hellish place was full of scumbag lice... the likes of which I never want to see again. Always watching you, always close by... Just waiting for you to drop your guard... then they pounce and take your place. Always pushing you closer to the edge, sucker punching you!... So you just grab a hair and hang on for dear life... No time for second thoughts or hesitation!... it's a matter of survival! This would make a cockroach puke, but... I can take it easy... nobody left to contend with...


 Can I come in?


 I see through your little game...

 I just want to come in to see what's inside.

 Nobody pulls the wool over my eyes. I've been around... I sweated blood and tears to hold on to this filthy hair... and I intend to stay put.

 I'm only passing through.

 Not another step, you little snot!

 What's inside?



I don't know. I never looked.



Were you never tempted to look inside?



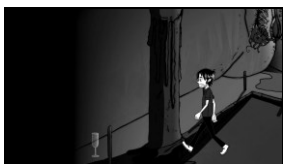
I'm not curious, if you want to know. I am not attracted to the unknown. The only thing that matters is the hair I hang onto. As long as it holds... I don't give a rat's arse about anything else.



I thought lice more adventurous!



I'm too busy watching out for bad luck.



Why does this glass move by itself?



Being here for so long doing nothing... I ended up practicing telekinesis.



What can you do?



Not a lot, truth be told.. I can move small objects... and sometimes I can blow out candles



Show me with the candle.



That requires a lot of concentration.



I have time.



But I'm busy doing nothing...



Just the once... I'm curious!



Nope... Hmm... Alright. Depends...



Depends on what?



There's good and bad in solitude...
Hmm... Sometimes, I think to myself it
would be good to play a game.



Do you want to play?



I call this game naughties and crosses...





Maybe...





If you win, I'll blow out the candle...

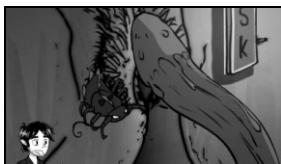



 You're not bad.


 Go on. Blow out the candle now...

 Hmm... Just a second... let me concentrate... Hmm... Hmm... hmm... Ah... Hmm... There you are! So, what do you say?

 Not bad.



 Stop it, you snotty bastard!...

 Will do if you stop moving the glass

around...



Go scratch your balls somewhere else!...



Stop... it's going to get all over my face!



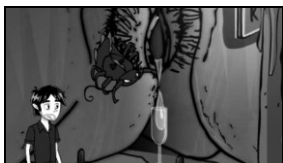
Let me take the glass...



Snotbag!... Don't play with me!...




Argh... Ok... Take the fucking glass...
And leave me alone!...



Have mercy... don't let me die... I beg
you... help me get back on my legs... If you
don't, I swear gouge your eye out with my
legs!!!



 Murderer!...

 That will teach him to insult and threaten me.



Things are not always as they appear.



Are the women pretty here?



They're divine...



Do you come here often?



I am a faithful customer and a great admirer of feminine beauty.



Are you married?



Of course... I have a wife and kids...
But as you can see... I still patronise this subtle and enchanting place... to be close to these charming, mysterious and lavish ladies... not to mention the carnal pleasure they give me. This is my Garden of Eden.



Which lady do you recommend?



I don't know what takes your fancy, but... Camille is irresistible... she will fulfil all your fantasies! You will succumb to her charms immediately...



It's true she looks lovely.



Between us... I don't like seeing her with other clients. The atmosphere of the place just draws you in.



It's true that the atmosphere of this place draws you in.



Absolutely!... It's the first time I see you around here, I think.



You wouldn't believe me if I told you I come from another time.



It hardly matters anyway as this place stops time altogether.



Hmm...



I can assure you... The very concept of time vanishes as you walk through the front door. Is this your baptism of fire?



No... not really. I find ephemeral joy on the internet.



Internet ?



Err... Let's just say that I visit young ladies in their homes.



I see.



I'll leave you in peace...



Happy encounters!



May I get you a glass of something?



You may. Thank you. Hmm... But your glass is empty...



Err... Have whatever you want...



What do you recommend?



Well, I'm not sure... I don't drink.



What would you advise?



Well... You could have a glass of Champagne. A classic... timeless. May I see your face?



Only my clients can see my face...



This place is so... Err... restful and... how can I put it...



Conducive to the exaltation of your senses?



Exactly... couldn't have put it better myself... It's strange... Here, I feel so at ease expressing all manner of deeply buried emotions. My body is floating... I have a strange sensation... I feel vibrations...



Hmm...



Life is miserable.



Life is full of charm.



of cruel charm?... Littered with pitfalls and strife.



Oh!... you wouldn't be a pessimist by any chance?



If I were a pessimist, I would say that love strips us of our dignity.



Look on the bright side.



I look at it from the side I'm on.



Then focus on the horizon... and you will perceive differently... You will pick up nuances of colours so subtly poetic.



Funny you should mention colours... I'm an achromate from birth. As far back as I can remember, I have been chasing these illusions, which have brought me nothing but sadness and disappointment.



They're the sorrows of life.



My life is falling apart.



Why is that?



I can't cope anymore... I have lost all strength!... I'm slipping... sliding... floundering... being skinned alive...



Persevere...



Good grief!... nothing helps... nothing, no hope... I am falling over the cliff!... Holding on for dear life with the very last spurt of resolve...



What do you see?



Hmm... I see her... alone... I see her walk away without turning around... unreachable... Her silhouette fading away, bit by bit... and a bit more... a little bit more... and then the mist takes her... and nothing...



What do you hear?



The same melody, always audible... so much so that it just becomes a buzzing sound in my ears... to remind me I am still very much alive... and that it's unlikely to end soon. Who holds on gets the prize!



What do you feel?



Loneliness... I think she helped me face my fears.



Who is she?



Our paths crossed at a crucial time in our lives, three years ago. We were searching for each other, without knowing it... We gave each other the strength and courage to transcend our fears...



What happened?



It was only a stage in her life, a transition period towards her destiny... But without her... without her love... it's all coming back... I'm being torn apart... I want to escape... Escape from myself...




Who's stopping you?





My vision... It's that greyish veil that prevents me from joining her world...


 Who's stopping you?


 Ma vision.


 Who's stopping you?

 I told you... my vision!

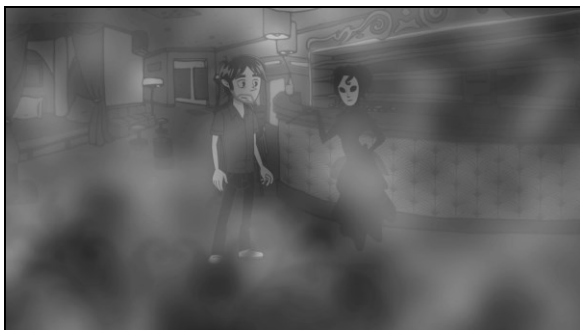
 Who's stopping you?

 I don't understand...

 Who's stopping you?

 I'm telling you it's my fucking vision!!!


 Who?








 So, what's happening? You don't look well!


 I haven't been sleeping well.


 Why did you tell me it couldn't wait?

 I haven't had news from Damien in days.

 That's normal... when he goes through difficult times, he has a tendency to disappear.

 But he still gives news so we don't worry.

 Hmm... I really think you're worried about nothing.

 That's what I thought to start with but Andy can't get in touch with him either.



Maybe his phone is off the hook.



Maybe...



So what do you intend to do?



I think I am going to go over to his place tonight.



Hmm... Alright. How are you doing, otherwise? We haven't seen each other much lately.



I know... I have been feeling a bit lost, lately... I'm finding it hard to move on. Not sure where I'm heading...



Are you still seeing Jesse?



Jesse ?



Yes, did you see her again?



Err...



You don't want to talk about it?



I do... It's just such a mess in my mind... It's like I'm constantly looking for strong emotions that will heal my vision. It's pathetic... I find myself consorting with prostitutes just to fill a void... To project

myself into a doomed relationship with Jesse... To hold on to everything and anything...



To be honest, I don't see a solution with Jesse, because of her job... But if what you truly want is a ladyboy like her, then go go go! If you think you'll be happier with her, you must own up and accept who you really are. I have been feeling so much better since I accepted who I really was. I am fulfilled, at last.



With Jesse, my vision is lightly tainted, as if a filter was applied to it. It's nice though... she gives me pleasure... I can't deny it. But it's not MY vision... I can't explain it. It's as if... It looks like... Reality gets bent. There's a gap between my actions and...



and what you're attracted to?



and what I really want deep down.



Hmm...



You know... about Jesse... I think of her as a woman... even though it's a mirage. That's not the issue... With a little bit extra that just makes it more exciting... something I cannot find in another woman. But in truth, it doesn't suit me!... I know that... I say it

again!... So why do I tell myself otherwise?



What's missing?



Something's missing inside me... the problem does not come from other people. I experimented often enough to know that only a woman can make me feel whole... Nature dictates it... Only a woman can help me see colours clearly!



So why hesitate?



It's not all that simple... I need to get to know myself better...



Ask yourself questions... Dig deeper... listen to your heart... Look for answers inside yourself.



No... I've done that and it's like going around in little circles... I will only find answers through others.



Hmm...



How's Rocco?



In fine shape... I think he's as fulfilled as I am.



Still not talking to Andy?



No... I can't stomach what he said to me.



That's just the way he is... he says whatever he thinks, the stupid bugger!... But he doesn't mean any harm.



Well, he really did hurt my feelings... I wasn't expecting that from a friend...



His idea of how you should live your life is different from yours... I feel the same, by the way...



I know you don't approve of my choices, but at least you're not judging me. And above all, you don't insult me!



He didn't insult you!



He thinks I'm disgusting. People are less reserved when they've been drinking.



Hmm... I'm not saying this on behalf of Andy... I'm not defending him... I am just trying to understand why you focus on a relationship that is so... err...



Unhealthy?



Hmm... I find it hard to understand, that's all. In your shoes, I'd look for a man

with the same perversions. I mean, we all have our weaknesses, but there are limits.



It's not deviant! Love knows no boundaries. I love Rocco and I am totally fulfilled.



Hmm...



To be honest, I have no desire to be in a relationship... I'm not stupid!... I know I am missing out... But you see, right now... I'm happy and fulfilled for the first time. I really don't want to spoil it by being with a man who's not worth it.



It's up to you...



And Rocco brings me that security I never found with men.



What security?



I feel protected at night, for example.

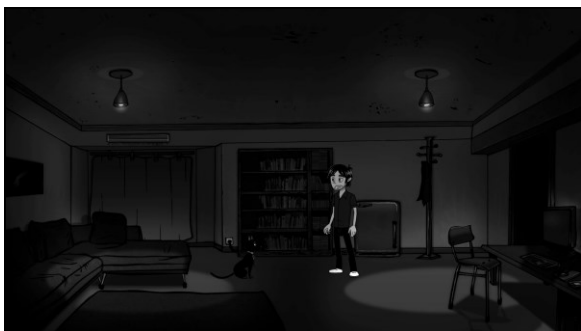


Time to check out Damien's place.



The door is shut.





There was a time when he had several more bookshelves... Many books, CDs and films. He threw out a lot... Few works stand the test of time.



It's his chequebook. Hmm... According to the stubs, he made regular contributions to a charity for abused children. I didn't know that.





It's Damien's cat. Oh oh... there's a key on its collar... Come here kitty kitty kitty... Easy tiger! Looks like it's famished.




What's this key for?





 An anonymous letter, typewritten, it seems.


 « ...I know what you are! What you do! You're going to pay! I haven't called the cops yet... I'll let you stew for a while... No more sleeping tight, you vicious perv! I'm watching you now... don't be under any illusions... No way I'll let you slip through the net!... »


 That sucks big time... This guy has to be involved in Damien's disappearance. This makes no sense though... it doesn't sound like Damien at all. I have to speak to Andy about it.




 Yeah! I bet it's him. He has to have something to do with Damien's disappearance.


 I don't know.


 There's something weird about him... Whenever I come across him, he gives me the kind of look that says: « Oye, cripple, don't even think of running your wheels across my lawn! »

 We have no evidence.

 So we need to find some.

 How?

 We need to go through his stuff.

 Breaking and entering?!



Invite ourselves in... that's all.



Hmm...



Listen... Damien may well be held by his crazy neighbour... and we're on borrowed time. We can't just sit here and do nothing... and regret it later if we find out something's happened to him.



What do you think this guy is accusing him of?



Hmm... it's quite vague...



I didn't know about the letters and I can't see what he could have done that was so bad.



I never knew about the letters either but... I think I know what it's about...



You do?... What is it?



I've known Damien a long time... Back in the day, he confided in me... I saw in his eyes he wasn't lying... He was baring all and I understood that day that he was a good guy. And above all, that he would never get into trouble.



What do you mean?... Are you saying he

had a dangerous character trait?



I don't feel comfortable speaking on his behalf... But we have to do something before it gets worse. Alright, this is what I know...



Yes... I'm listening... no worries...



Damien never did the deed!... I'm telling you straight because I'm 100% sure. I'd stake my life on it. But that's the way it is... he's always been attracted... to kids.



Ah... I see...



We all have our crosses to bear... But he confronted his demons head-on. I hardly face mine sideways so hats off to him. I have no idea if I could have dealt with it as he did.



Why the threats? If he hasn't done anything wrong, why is this guy after him?



I don't know... Vigilantes always think they are fighting for the greater good. They should start by looking closer to home.



I am beginning to understand about the cheques...



The cheques?



That's why Damien gives to those

charities.



Of course, that's a cause close to his heart! He earns a very good living... so he contributes in his way. He told me he wanted to help lessen children's suffering.



Hmm...



Let's go!... We have to hurry! We need a plan and fast!



Any new gadgets on your wheelchair?



I threw all the gadgets away! But I got myself the mother of all engines... controlled by the tablet.



So you drive your wheelchair like you would a car?



Better...



Hey, you could win gold in the Paralympics with those wheels...



Participate in that circus for the benefit of fat sponsors? No thanks. Not in a million years! Or to encourage hamming sports commentators... and give them a good conscience... Nah... not for me, thanks.



It's true it's a bit of a show.



A bit? It's sickening!... Enough already with the image cult and constant compassion! I'm handicapped myself but I don't want it inflicted on me on the small screen. There's no personal accomplishment in that. A smaller circle would be better... you know, like handicapped support groups. The greed of some and the pride of others do not sit well together.



Don't you think you went a bit far with Élodie.



When?



The other day, when you told her a few home truths full on.



Oh, that... I regret being so direct... you know me... when I drink, I tend to go on verbal crusades... I wasn't intending to hurt her feelings.



Yes, I know... I did tell her.



But you got to admit that her deviances are nauseating! Bloody hell!... There are limits to indecency beyond which we're not human anymore! It's her body... she does what she wants with it. But she should be ashamed of it and hide it.



You don't like her.



I have nothing against her, she's a reliable friend. I just don't do hypocrisy... I say what I think... even at the expense of friendship. She deserves better.

A few minutes later...



Right, here's what I think we should do.



I'm listening!...



You'll create a diversion. Knock on his door, tell him your phone has run out of battery... and that you need call a taxi to get home.



And then?



He won't be able to say no when he sees the wheelchair. Then, after the fake phone call, talk to him.



I don't think he'll be in the mood for a cosy chat.



Hmm... Then tell him you need to use the toilet. That will give me time to sneak around upstairs. And as soon as I find something, I'll beep you on your mobile.



What is it?



Err... sorry to disturb you so late, Sir...
I have a problem and wondered if you could help...



So?



I need to call a taxi to get home... I have a mobile but the battery's flat.



And?



Err... Would you please let me call a cab from your landline?



Hitchhiking not working for you?



Well, it's just that... with the wheelchair, it's complicated...



Hmm... I can see that. Alright but be quick... it's late.



Don't worry... the taxi firm is open all night.



Yeah, yeah... I just don't want to go to bed late, that's all!



Sure, I'll make it quick!



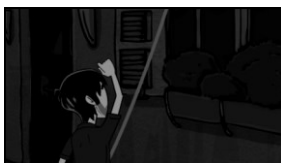
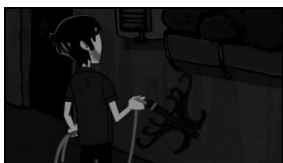
So get in already!



Thank you. That's really good of you.



Phase one completed successfully! Let's go rummage through his house.





All good?



Yes, thank you.



You can go now.



Yes... One last thing...



What now?



Could I use the toilet?



Hmm...



I'm about to burst...



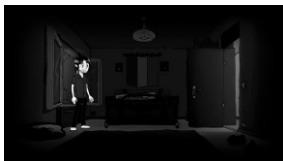
You're not going to like it... Loo's upstairs so if you want to take a leak, you're gonna have to crawl up there. And I ain't helping you do that.



Shit... that wasn't part of the plan.



Plan? Take this bottle. It's a gift. Spare me the details... go out to do your business!






Too easy! It's working out perfectly.





Oh God... this plan sucks! If Désiré is caught, he's up shit creek without a paddle. And I left my mobile at home. Time for plan B!



 Hmm... Hmm... hmm... Same font, similar content. Andy was right... he's the one! This letter is a torrent of insults!



 Andy... I'm in his office... I found proof! Get out of here... I'll climb out of the window.

 I hope he'll get my message quickly.



YOU SON OF A BITCH!!!



What?



What are you doing in my house?!
Planning on robbing me, you bastard?



No... don't shoot!... I am not a
burglar...



BOLLOCKS! I'm going to blow your
brains out!



Do you hear me?!



I didn't steal anything!... I bloody hope
so!... What do you take me for?! Hell will
freeze over before I let a little yobbo like you
rob me. I can even smell krauts from miles
away... They'd better not show their pink
arses around here!...



The war's over.



The war is never over!... I am always standing guard... I was in the resistance from the word go!... Do you hear me?! From the word go!!! I was awarded the Legion of Honour for having helped France to hunt these bastards... Aren't you a bit of a kraut yourself?



No, you're mistaken... I'm French...



Hmm... It's true you look skinny... Hmm... hmm... You're probably a collaborator... who knows!



I'm nothing of the sort...



I don't care... You are still going to regret stepping into my territory!



Wait!...



Give me one good reason why I should spare your ugly mug!




Let me explain...




You have one minute and not a moment longer.





I'm on your side..


 Really? Are you a third generation socialist?


 Err... no.

 I knew you were a fascist!


 I'm not that either.


 What are you then?!


 Just a guy at the other end of a gun handled by an old nutter.


 Take it back you little cunt or I'll shoot your arse!


 I got lost, I'm looking for my friend.


 Looking for your friend my arse...

 Let me go...

 And in exchange?

 A tenner?

 Nah... mucho dineros!

 I don't have much cash on me...

 Your loss then.




Do you believe in premonitory dreams?



I only believe what I see with my own eyes! And what I see is a little punk inside my house!





 Enough! I have heard enough, you bastard! Now you're going to taste lead!

 No!... wait!

 What now?!





Huh?... What was that noise?



Noise?... I didn't hear anything.



Sounded like someone biting the dust.



Not very reassuring.





riing* *riing

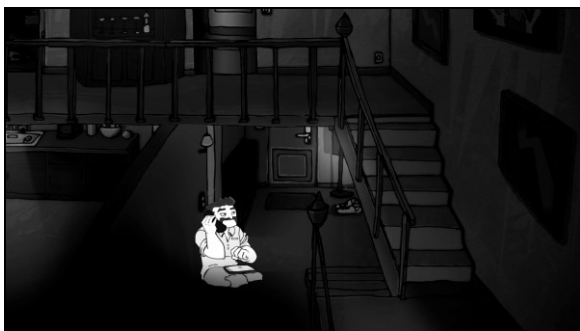



Your friends are getting impatient it seems... Are they waiting for the money you were going to steal from me?... too bad.

riing* *riing



What are you waiting for, you bastard? Answer it!... let's have a laugh...



 Yeah... It's Andy... I ran into trouble... but don't worry... I'm on top of it now. Hmm... You just need to get the old nutter out of the door... I have a little surprise for him... Hmm... Ok? Perfect... do your thing!

 Now we wait.



Let me show you something...



What?!



It's in my pocket... can I show you?



Hmm... Easy does it...



What? What does that mean?



We know you're threatening our friend, sending him abusive letters. And that you're holding him prisoner here!



What?... me?... You're nuts... I'm not

holding anyone captive.



I have proof.



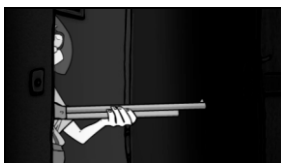
What?



Stuck for an answer?



Wait!... Are you trying to trap me with your dirty tricks?! You want me to carry the can for some dirt?! You got nothing, loser! You have no link between me and this damned letter! You're bluffing...



Really? What about this letter you were writing before I found you out? Same font... same insults... game over!



I knew you were a thieving snitch! Give it back! And even if I wrote these letters... I have nothing to do with kidnapping.



 Bullseye!



Why are you harassing Damien?



He's sick in the head! I saw him watching some disgusting movies!



Are you spying on him?



No... I was outside his house... Outside the window... I saw everything.



And that gives you the right to harass him?



Predators need to be watched.



You don't even know him but he's guilty without trial?



You can talk with your baseless accusations of kidnapping!



He's no predator.



He's a public menace... With them sickos, you never know when they're gonna jump into action.



Where is Damien?



How the heck should I know?!



Did you assault him?



Negative.



I don't believe you.



I think he's telling the truth. If he'd been involved in Damien's disappearance, he wouldn't have been drafting another letter of abuse.



Hmm...



Legless is right... I am not a criminal. I chase criminals. He must have run away far from here... terrified, if you ask me!



What's your problem?



I'm gonna press charges!



If we let you go... are you going to cause

us trouble again?



Hmm...





We've got you by the balls too!





Hmm... I don't want any trouble... I'm old... Get the hell out and don't ever come back.





 Hmm... I don't know what to say... Best to sleep on it. Why don't you get some sleep and give it some thought in the morning?


 I have to act quickly. I must have missed something...


 No... you did everything you could. You should call the police now.

 Hmm... Maybe he lied?

 The neighbour? No, I think he's telling the truth... you did more than just intimidate him. What you did to him is serious!

 Hmm... Damien is probably still in danger...


 So call the police!




Hmm... Could you leave Rocco with me for an hour?




What for?



I think he can help me find Damien.




I have a bad feeling...



I'd like to take him with me to Damien's place.




To find him how?



I don't have time to explain.




Hmm... I'll come with you then.




No... I prefer going there alone. It's better that way... believe me, I would prefer to be wrong about this.




To be wrong about what?



Please, Élodie...



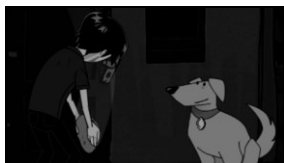
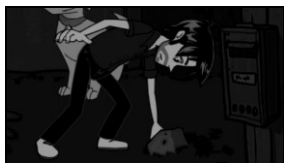
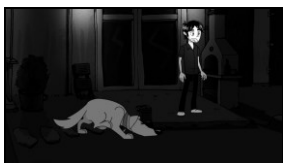
I'm afraid he won't feel at ease if I don't come along.

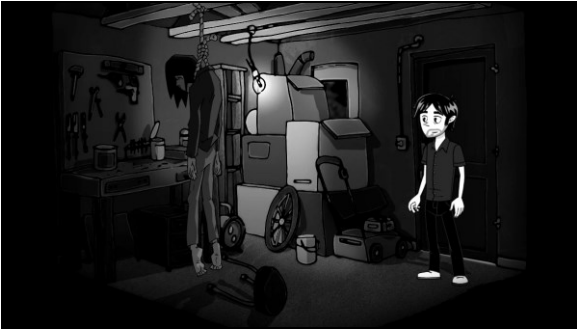


Don't worry... he's no poodle. We have to hurry, Élodie... If you disagree, just say it... I'll find another way.



Hmm... Well... One hour but no longer!







Damien !!!





Fuck, he really did it!





 I am having hallucinations again... long time no see. What are you doing here?


 Isn't it obvious?... I'm eating! Making myself comfortable and eating.


 But why here?... in Damien's place... On his sofa?

 Well, it's spacious and he doesn't need it anymore.

 What?... You know about that?... You know everything?...

 Hmm... I've heard rumours.

 Doesn't it make you sick?

 What is done is done.



A man is dead! And he hadn't done anything wrong!



That's a matter of perspective... it's quite subjective.



Subjective?! Are you on the same side as that old nutter?



I'm on nobody's side but my own. If you think about it, that old fogey is not that bad... Somewhat deranged thanks to his values and overzealousness, is all.



You're a sight for sore eyes.



I have to tell you a story... something very interesting happened to me once. When I was younger, I yearned to plumb the depths of human nature... so much so that I dedicated myself to it with full abandon. I probed human nature down to its deepest sordidness... and I got trapped in it. Now, I am a shadow of a human being.



What did Damien do wrong?



Possession of indecent photos of children... that's not something to play with lightly! That can go far...



He was no apologist for it. That was for his own private consumption...



I know... no skin off my nose... the problem is that... you do realise it is totally illegal? So your dead friend is not all innocent.



Who is? I'm not saying he was a saint... just that we cope the best we can with our issues... And he never hurt anyone. And what could he have done?! What organisation could have helped?! How could he seek help without putting himself in danger?! What specialist could he have consulted?!



Take it easy... nerves and digestion don't mix well.



What is subjective?



To each his own. We'll see who comes out on top...



So what to do?



Come back to earth!... do as I do... Put on weight so you don't soar up the heights of your conscience... Take advantage of everything at your disposal without moving a muscle... Become a couch potato and take life as it comes. Do you know that

consumption is an intimate pleasure? It's the height of luxury! As for the rest... let others worry about it.



People should mobilise to go after the real criminals!



Who's going to rally around your story? Talking about a guy getting off on child porn!... Not a good start... unacceptable even to picture the scene. Whether he acted upon it or not, it's a taboo nobody wants to hear about. It's human after all... protecting ourselves by refusing to see the atrocities committed by our own species.



It's cowardly!



Isn't it the same thing? Open your eyes... How can you live life without basic trust. How can you expect to sleep soundly in a comfortable bed otherwise?



It's up to intellectuals to make the finer distinctions. Where are they?



Ha Ha... You make me laugh with your questions. Do you want to know the truth?



Sure!



The real problem is the top civil

servants.



Top civil servants?



The untouchable elite, as they say...
Your dead friend...



Don't call him that!



He's a perfect scapegoat for these people. They cover for each other... it's a close-knit family at the top.



What are you talking about?



Isn't it obvious? The rats infesting our society are out of sight! Our society is sick to the core. Ask yourself why scandals about paedophile networks are hushed and covered up... Double standards... it's blatant! Police raids make the headlines... on losers exchanging internet content... while top dogs exchange children for real with impunity... That's the Republic for you... expense accounts included! The French cut off the wrong heads.



Without proof, it's hard to rally public opinion.



I'll tell you straight! Looking for proof on such murky business is suicidal. Don't go

there! Take my advice... Mourn your friend and get over it by raising your blood sugar level big time.



Hmm... In any case... we cannot change the world alone.




Exactly... so forget it.





Sometimes, our conscience gnaws at us... but we take no action... and we always end up forgetting... It's sad. That's humanity for you... unsavoury.


2020





 Tell me Angolo, how much for the small wooden cup.


 Fifteen thousand francs exactly!

 That is the price on display... Any room for improvement?

 I never barter with white people. You have money.

 I have become as skint as you are. I am no longer the white boy, after two years around here. And we've known each other a long time...

 Ha ha, but your face is still as pale as a jellyfish.

 I have sensitive skin... Go on... meet me half way... I need to get back to France

and I want to get a souvenir. Let's say five thousand.



Thirteen thousand.



Six thousand?



Twelve thousand.



Seven thousand?



Twelve thousand, last offer.



Hmm... I'll think about it.



I have all the time in the world.



Do you have any aspirin?



What's the trouble?



Muscle ache... I did too much.



Chill out... you fret all the time!



I've been feeling tired lately... trying to exercise a bit more.



Just a sec, I'll look...



I only have one tablet left... here, keep the tube.



Thanks.



Do you still have mosquito spray? Tiger mosquitoes are eating me alive right now.



I'll look for some...



No, none left I'm afraid.



So... how's tricks?



Not too bad.



And your love life?



Comes and goes... And you... colours?



Colours? Still nothing... I haven't seen a hint of colour for nine years. I don't even remember what colours feel like. I had a dream last week. I felt something really strange... I remembered something buried deep inside me. A manuscript written by an old sailor I met when I was a kid. I lived in Lyon then and this old sea dog I crossed paths with in the street gave it to me.



What was it about?



That's the point: I don't know. I never read it.



And you don't have it anymore?



I talked to my parents... they gave it to the Emmaüs charity not long ago... just goes to show...



It's a shame, you'll never know what it said.



I will, because I intend to find it again. This dream was so strange... I couldn't begin to describe it... Everything has been blurry in my head since I came to the Congo and now, suddenly, it's different... Everything seems to make sense... It all seems so obvious! This manuscript is the key! I just know it!



Ha ha... you white people never rest.



We do... I got some rest here... without this break, I wouldn't have had this dream.



I told you Africa was magical.



What about the elephant tusks up there? If I find you a customer, do I get a commission?



I'm in no hurry. If I'm meant to find a buyer, one will come.



Hmm... What about a swap?



Ha ha, depends on what you're offering.



What do you want?



Hmm... jewellery!



Hmm... not the sort of thing you find on the ground.



Neither is ivory.



These tusks would buy me a plane ticket back to France... with enough left over to hire a car locally.



How much for the metal detector?



I can't sell it in that state. It's a broken metal detector.



It's out of order?



No, but the batteries don't last long.



Can I take a look? Maybe it can be repaired.



Hmm... I tried that already.



You could fetch a good price for it refurbished.



Whatever... you can have a go.



Never tried it but I'm told you can discover buried treasures with one of those... but mostly scrap metal.



Nothing here... Ah ah!!! It's beeping! It's a cross pendant. Maybe it's a lucky charm.



Hmm... It's fake!



So you don't want it then?



Hmm... For that, I can give you... a hook!... Ha ha... now you can be Captain Hook in the school play...



Without the ivory, I'll never be able to get back to France!



Are you sure you have no mosquito spray left?



I'll check...





Nope, all gone.



It doesn't matter... I'll find another way.
Ciao... gotta go.

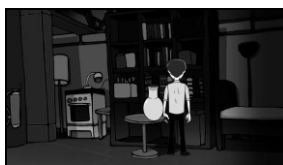


See you soon!





It's a car I hired... small budget, small car.



“The Red and the Black” by Stendhal...
“The Idiot” by Dostoyevsky... Kundera’s
“The Unbearable Lightness of Being”...
“Despairing” by Léon Bloy... Rebatet’s “The
Two Standards”... Gogol’s “Dead Souls”...
“Tales of ordinary madness” by Bukowski...
“The New Testament”... I can see another
book at the back... I recognise the cover...



Let's see... Hmm... Hmm... hmm...
Yep, I spoke too soon... It does look like the
old sailor's manuscript. But it's badly written
and does not have the poetic style of the
original.





Sorry about the vase. I'll pay for the damage.



No, it doesn't matter.



I was intrigued by the book behind it.



Be careful next time.



I am looking for a manuscript that looks very much like this one.



I wouldn't know.



Hmm... has it been on sale for a long time?



I couldn't say... I'm new here... I have just started. Ask my boss when he gets back.



I'll take it anyway. When is your boss due back?



Hard to say... In a couple of hours, I guess.



Do you have his phone number?



No.



I'll come back then.



Hmm... Are you from around here?



No, but I grew up in the Lyon suburbs.



Hmm...



Why do you ask?... Are you from around here?



Hmm... no particular reason... Your face seems familiar.



Really?



I've always lived here.



Have a nice day.



Wait... Come back, please...



Yes...



Err... now that I think about it... I remember the guy who gave us this manuscript.



I thought you were new here?



Hmm... err yes, I have just arrived... I live in this Emmaüs boarding house now. Before that, I only worked here part-time... anyway... doesn't matter.



Ah...



Your man is a faithful customer here. Spends a lot of time in second-hand shops. He's a collector I think.



Do you have his address?




Yes, hang on a sec... It's not far from here... There you go...




Thank you... I'll go right now.




 Either he got the wrong address or he's having me on.


A few minutes later...


 I heard a noise. Hmm... can't see anything. I heard a noise again! Is anyone here? Hmm...






 Who is this nutter?! Shit, he bashed everything in! I can't start the car anymore. If I get out... he's going to set the car on fire.

 Now do you remember me? Have you woken up yet? Doesn't my ugly mug remind you of someone?


 Well, just like that, right now... err... no. You really laid into me with that shovel.

 Oh... sorry about that... couldn't resist! Been dreaming about it for years...

 Hmm...

 So? Still no clue?

 Hmm... Give me a hint.

 A friend from school, long ago...



Hmm... wait... No?! David?



Bullseye! See, being hit with a shovel helps to remember!



Have you gone stark raving mad? Put the flame out! You're not thinking of taking me out, are you? Cut it out! You want to intimidate me? Well... job well done! But put the lighter away... you're gonna blow us up!



The way I feel... couldn't care less about the consequences!



You didn't turn out too well.



It's all your fault!



What are you going to do to me?



Can't you guess? I poured petrol all over your rusty old car. And with just one lousy lighter, I'm going to turn you into fireworks!



No... you're pranking me, aren't you? What's the deal? Why are you trying to kill me?



I am going to make you pay for the years of misery you caused me.



That I caused? You're losing your

mind... we only knew each other in school.
At least, explain it to me...



What the hell do you care?



My life hangs on it...



Pfff... and my life, do you care about that?



Hmm... yes, tell me.



My arse!...



Tell me anyway...



Pfff... Hmm... what do you want to know?



What happened that brought you so low?



Everything started because of you, at school!



I don't understand... I...





You want to know?!... then don't interrupt!



Sorry.



Everything started with your sorry little photo prank. Do you remember that? I got expelled!



So did I.



Except that for me, I could never get past the humiliation! Those bloody kids passed the word on when I switched schools. It ruined my life. I couldn't bear the look on their faces.



What happened after that?



After that? I had it rough! My father died of cancer, my mother was made redundant after twenty years of loyal service. You know the drill... workforce outsourced abroad and all the bloody consequences! The bastards had it easy in their limos while my mother was skint. All she had was her social security allowance to live on. But for how long? So I decided to leave school to work as a mechanic. I couldn't do anything else and time was running out.



So in the end, it was alright, then...



It got worse! I was the ideal slave of liberalism! Too much to lose to complain. I just shut it for years until I could find a better job... all that time believing, naively, that I had broken free of this shit life.



Meaning?



I met a woman who became my wife, and the mother of my two kids.



That's rather positive, isn't it?



Yeah, she was all sweet in the beginning... but when I got her up the duff, the bitch blew a fuse! Started behaving like a duchess... and became more and more authoritarian and hysterical. Kept lecturing me about the patriarchal society she loathed. I didn't give a fuck!... I just wanted a bit of happiness with her and our kid. Hmm... But anyway... I held it all in... they meant everything to me. Every night, head on my pillow, I told myself the storm would pass.



And...



Hmm... and...



...and?



She got off the pill the next year without telling me. She wanted two kids close to each other in age, and get the giving birth lark over and done with.



That's ugly. Why did she do that to you?



I wasn't keen on a second child... Because I didn't earn enough... because of the uncertainty... because she had changed. I wanted to step back. Except that she was the one with the money... well, her parents, anyway.



So what did you do?



I said nothing, as usual.



How did it end?



Badly! Trouble enough to give a sloth insomnia! Our relationship went down the tube... it was becoming unbearable. I got violent once... I hit her... fuck, that was stupid! I'd never hit a woman before! Hated myself for it! But then she got a divorce and custody of the kids. I begged her to give me a second chance, to find some kind of arrangement with the kids. She refused!... and

my slip-up really helped her cause. That's it... I'll never see my kids grow up as in any normal family. I lost everything.



I haven't been through that but I can imagine the pain that...



Nah, I don't think so.



Hmm... But how am I responsible? Because I got back at you in school because you blackmailed me?



Without this episode, my life would have been different.



We are responsible for our actions. You could have fought back instead of bending over.



Yeah, you're right... I should have fought back. I have dwelled on regrets for too long! Now it's too late!... there are no second chances! Pure wishful thinking!...



So you'd rather have your revenge over me?



Hmm...



I have a better idea.



Oh really?



Let's settle it like men!



Ha ha!... you want us to fight?... you and me?



I don't particularly want to... But if it's the only way, here's the deal: a fair fight, just fists and if I knock you out, you let me go.



And if I beat you to a pulp?



Then you'll have beaten me to a pulp.



Yeah, I like it... beating you to a pulp!
Come on, get out of the car!



It's going to get bloody!



We can always change our mind... We don't have to fight.



Are you afraid?



Err... no.



Then I hope for your sake you know how to fight.




Either I punch or I parry: isn't that how it works?





Yep, if you react quickly enough. Go on... show me what you've got!




 Haven't you had enough yet? Want more? Come on, I'll give you another beating!




 Not too bad... you know how to punch. But it won't be enough!

 I know how to defend myself.



 Hey, impressive! You're tenacious... I thought you were weaker.

 The passing years have hardened me... I have learned to take punches and fight back.



I can see that... It's becoming interesting... victory will be all the sweeter!



Can we stop now? Can we put it behind us?



Behind us my arse! I want to smash your faggot face!



That's not going to change anything!



It will do me good!



Are you alright?



Argh...



Can you get up?



Nah... I feel humiliated... again.



Hmm...



I am such a shitbag! A total loser...
worthless.



You can get back on your feet.



Hmm... Leave me alone...



I'm serious, you can...



Leave me alone... There are no second
chances in life! Go away!



Hmm...



Go away!!!



I won't insist.



Hmm... What an idiot!... I didn't pay attention!... There's a bookmark inside... Actually, it's a business card in the shape of a bookmark... Martin Lacour: « Art Collector & Enthusiast. » He lives in the area... more or less as David said. I should meet him... he's bound to have more info. But how do I get there?



Hello.



Hi!



Are you a lorry driver?



Yep!



I don't have a car. I hitchhiked here. I lost my wallet and papers in a scrap... I'll spare you the details...



Nothing broken, I hope?



I'm alright. I've had worse.



Seriously?



I lived in Africa for a couple of years.



Cool place though... they're chilled over there.



You're not wrong. Where do you live?



I don't live anywhere, mate... I'm on the road.



You don't have a home?



I do, and a wife and child near Paris. I go back weekends.



Don't you miss them?



Being a truck driver is cool... You're far from your wife... from screaming children... free to chill out... All the advantages without the daily grind, if you see what I mean.



Hmm... yes, I get it.



And lots of traveling... I love driving on country roads and to small cities in Europe. You can stop anywhere and discover some real gems.




Isn't it tiring to drive all the time?





You get used to it... I like the lifestyle. I'll have a cold beer and then I'll get some fuel.





I need to get to Lyon.


 Sorry, I'm not going that way.


 Would you mind the detour?


 I would... I am running late as it is.


 I can give you money.

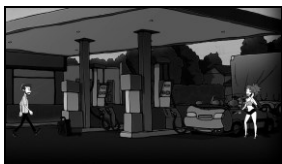
 I thought you said you lost your wallet.


 How about I pay you in kind? Fuel?

 Hmm... Yeah, why not... Diesel in a can works for me.

 I'll get you a can of diesel.

 Hurry up then!... I'm leaving soon.



 She looks very busy. I need the fuel pump. I still have the aspirin tube.



Quick!... before she realises she hasn't put the fuel pump back properly.



Here's a full can of diesel, as agreed.




Thank you. I'll drink up and we can be on our way.



 It's Martin Lacour's house. Nobody home?



 Are you lost?



No.



What are you doing outside in the middle of the night?



Going for a walk... I like looking at the stars by the church.



How old are you?



I am eight.



Where are your parents?



They're gone.



Gone?... so who looks after you?



My Granddad, but he's busy.



What's your name?



Léa... and you?



Désiré. Where's your grandmother?



In Heaven.



Hmm... That's a nice boat.



It's a birthday present from my Granddad.



It's not a toy... it's a collector's item.



I know... he gave me his boat because my parents didn't visit for my birthday.



You don't see your parents often?



No... they're always gone. They work all the time.



Isn't it dangerous here?



No... there's never anyone around.



Hmm... I am looking for Martin Lacour. Do you know him?



He's my Grandad!



Ah! I need to meet with him. Shall I take you home?





I can go home on my own.





We can walk together.





 Good evening... sorry to disturb you. I rang the bell but nobody answered. Your granddaughter Léa opened the door for me.


 I didn't hear anything. Who are you?


 Hmm... I am... err... I am an art enthusiast...

 Good grief! Are you a collector?

 Hmm... yes, in my spare time.

 Great timing dear colleague!... Come and have a look at my latest acquisition! I have been looking at it for hours on end.

 It's just that...

 Ah... no excuses!... These antiques are just astounding.



In fact, I came to see you to... talk to you about a manuscript...



Look at this engraving... amazing details... Have you seen anything like it before? I bet you haven't... 10 to 1 odds. So?... am I right? Come closer... take a look.



Yes, it's pretty.



Pretty?!... It's magnificent, you mean!!!



I am not a big fan of antiques.



What a shame... you really are missing out! No? Oh yes, you really are missing out.



Do you have any manuscripts in your collection.



Manuscripts?... Of course! Obviously!... I collect them. Do you want to take a look?



I am looking for one manuscript in particular.



And which particular one would that be?



It's a book of poems an old sailor gave to me back in 1992.



Ah... Doesn't ring a bell...



I used to see him by the newsagents... and he seemed to pour his soul into the pages.



Interesting story but I can't help you.



Are you sure?



I told you! I have never heard of it. Hmm... by the way, how did you get my address?



It's a long story... The short version... I found a bookmark in a book at Emmaüs. The book looked a lot like the manuscript I am after so I came to see you.



Hmm... I see... So... Hmm... it's getting late. I would love to talk some more but unfortunately, I have to prepare dinner and put Léa to bed. Can I take you home?



This manuscript is very important to me.



A rare work of art is important to everyone. It's a precious object in everyone's eyes.



I am not talking about its monetary value or its rarity or what it's worth to others.



So why is it so important to you? Is it sentimental value?



Not at all!... in fact, it is not the work of art I am interested in. I just need to read it to find answers.



To find answers? That's unusual.



Yes, answers to my questions.



I don't understand... it's just a book of poems.



I held it in my hands nearly thirty years ago and I didn't even bother to read it... I didn't open up to it. Believe me... I don't want to keep it... I just want to read it and put an end to the doubts that have plagued me all my life.



Hmm... Hmm... hmm... You say you knew the author well?



Yes, when I was a kid...



Hmm... Can you tell me more about him?



Of course! What do you want to know?



Hmm... Truth be told, I am not sure.



Do you know anything about the manuscript?



Hmm... No, I don't know anything.



I think you do.



Hmm... Alright... I'll be honest with you... I have been looking for this manuscript for over twenty years... and I finally got my hands on it.



What?!... you found it?!



I am wary of the vultures waiting to pillage my collection after I die. But listening to you just now...I think you're telling the truth. I don't meet collectors like you every day. It's a priceless piece... my best find ever! I keep it safe but if you really want to see it, I'll show it to you. After all, a work of art is meant to be seen.





That is great... thank you so much!




Wait in the living room and close the door behind you, please. I'll bring you the manuscript.





 Open your eyes and turn the pages softly...


 Don't worry, I'll be very careful. Hmm... Hmm... hmm... Yes, it's the old sailor's manuscript.

 Yes!

 It has to be the one. The words sound so right... and I find more meaning here than in any other book I have ever read. Hmm... hmm... And there this light music dancing around the words...

 I told you it was my best find!

 It is so strange... I have never felt anything like it...

 Really? What feeling is that, then?



It is like reaching the depths of my soul.



Really?...



Ah... I don't believe it! How is this possible?



What?!... what did you read?



I was right!



About what?!...



Unbelievable!...



What did you find? Hand it back to me!



Hmm...



Tell me! I want to know! What did you see?



Colours.



Colours?!... Are you playing me?



I saw colours like never before. Totally pure... flawless.



How can you see colours? Is it an optical illusion? Do you need to focus on a particular point? A precise focal point between two keywords? I beg you... tell what the trick is!



There is no trick.



You're having me on. Did you find your answers? What are they?



Yes.



And?... Say something already!!! Forgive me... I am losing patience!



The answer is within us.



What?! Kitchen sink psychology?!



This manuscript is just a mirror for our soul.



What are you talking about?!



I need to read further... it was too short.



No... enough for today. I showed to you as promised... now, tell me more about its provenance.



Hmm... I'll come back tomorrow morning. I should really try to find a hotel room before it's too late.



A hotel room?... it's far too late already! Stay for dinner and we'll have more time to talk about it.



Yes!



There's a guest bedroom upstairs.



Hmm... I don't want to impose.



Please... stay.



The bed is very comfortable.



Hmm... Alright, thank you very much.



Perfect!... make yourself at home... I am putting the manuscript away and then we can talk. I want to know everything!



Nice weather this morning.



Perfect weather for visiting the area.



What are you doing?



I am cleaning the bannister while waiting for the post.



Are you expecting a parcel?



I am waiting for the mail. I write to other collectors. Every morning, I take care of correspondence and filing. Then I have the whole afternoon to go on treasure hunts... Treasures like the manuscript!



Yes, about the manuscript... Can I read it again?



I'll show it to you later.



Hmm... Thank you for dinner last night.



Oh... that was nothing... I really appreciated the company. Hmm... in fact, I thought about what you said about the old sailor... and I wondered whether you'd tried to find him again. We could try to locate him. Couldn't we? What do you say?



It's been a long time and I told you he was ill.



Yes, you did... Hmm... but you never know, right?



Sometimes it pays to preserve the mystery.



Did you hear?



Hear what?



I think I heard the postman's bicycle.




Oh thanks! Let's have a look.






I need a plan to find out the code for the safe... and I need more time. Well... I shouldn't stay here too long. He could come back at any time.




 You were right! It was the postman on his bicycle.

 Funny.

 I'll leave you for a while... I need to deal with the mail.



 Tell me, Léa... Do you want to have

some fun?



Yes!



Do you like to play tricks, Léa?



I don't know.



I'm sure you'll like it. We're going to play a trick on your grandad to take his mind off his hobby.



What trick?



We're going to pour a bucket of water on his head. Do you want to be my accomplice?



Yes...



Stay here... I'll go and get a bucket. Okay?



Yes, I'll wait for you.



Hello sir. What would you like?



Do you sell chestnut cream tarts?



No, sorry... that's an unusual request. Not enough demand for it to be profitable.



Shame... they remind me of my childhood. You have a nice church. I have never seen anyone walk in.



The villagers don't attend since mass has lost its soul.



Is there no priest in residence?



Only visiting priests.



Do you know young Léa?



Yes, she's Martin Lacour's grand-

daughter... he's the village collector. She comes here every afternoon to buy a croissant. She's cute.



Do you talk?



She's very laconic, that one. Getting her to say anything can be real hard work.



That's surprising... she didn't seem to hold back with me. I met her only yesterday and she seems rather open.



She likes you then. Believe me, she really clams up with strangers normally.



I was surprised she was out so late.



It's very quiet around here. I think she likes it. She feels both free and at home. She may not look it but she's a brave little girl.



Why is she alone?



According to Martin, she withdrew after her parents divorced, when she was five. She was already shy and introverted.



But Léa talked to me about her parents back then and she never mentioned the divorce.



It's complicated for an eight year old kid.

Her parents still work together. They're very singled-minded and focused on their career. They're successful at everything they undertake. Except in their married life, of course. They're always traveling so Martin takes charge of her education.



It's really surprising.



What is?



That Léa doesn't talk to anyone but me, and her grandad spilling the beans to the baker, although he seems more into his antiques than confession.



Martin has been feeling somewhat overwhelmed since he's been taking care of Léa. He confided in me a lot three years ago... maybe because... because we were once very close... and he didn't have anyone else to turn to for support. I know this whole story weighs on him. I think he's running away from reality. Because he feels incapable of giving her the happiness she craves. He didn't know how with his daughter either, Léa's mother, so he feels it's better not to try than to fail again.



I asked Léa if she wanted to play a game.



Great idea!



But I am going to need your help.



With pleasure! Tell me everything!



I need a bucket of water to prank her grandfather.



Sounds like a bad trick...



I think it will do them both a world of good.



Yes that will definitely remind Martin of his youth, and it will make Léa laugh. Take the bucket next to you. It's clean. Promise you'll tell me everything afterwards...



Sure thing!



Now it's up to you.



What do I do?



Get your grandad outside.



Grandad?...



Yes, darling?...



The woman from the other day is outside.



Again? Why does she always come back?



She wants to speak to you.



Tell her I'm not in.



Why don't you want to see her?



We've talked about this Léa. Grandad is

happy the way things are.



You always talk about Gran but she's gone.



I don't want to meet another woman. Nobody can ever replace your grandmother.



Hmm...



I am sorry Léa. I know you would prefer a more solidly united family. We don't always get what we want in life.



Hmm... I told her you were in.



Ah... hmm... Alright, I'll go... I am going to be totally frank with her this time.



Mister Lacour! You have a call...



He's coming...



You find that funny?



If you could only see your face... you'd find it funny too!



I'm going to the garage to get changed, so as not to get the stairs wet.



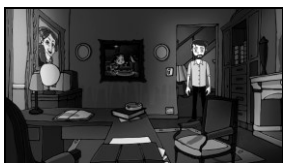
You find that funny?



Yes! He's so funny with a bucket on his head. Grandad is soaked!



He's so stuck up.



Phew!... Martin didn't see me coming out of his office.



I'm sorry.



That was your idea, I suppose?



Yes... I hope you're not mad at me.



I was!... But when I saw that Léa was laughing and really enjoying herself, for once... hmm... I can tell you it felt great! Besides, it's only water. The carpet will dry quickly. It's so warm today.



Your clothes are already dry?



No, why? I got changed.



Your clothes look the same.



I often wear the same clothes. It saves so much time in the morning. No choice... no problem! In the old days, it was my dear wife who picked very elegant outfits for me. I never had her patience.



I have to go.



Ah... already? Léa will be sad.



I know...



Stay a while longer... Don't you want to have lunch with us?



Hmm...



Léa will be so pleased if you do. Say yes and I will show you the manuscript again.



Hmm... alright, that's very kind of you.



Don't move!... I'll be straight back...



Thank you... Hmm... hmm... I don't want to read it again after all. I just wanted to touch it.



You really are disconcerting sometimes. As you wish... was that enough?



Yes... you can take it back.



Good, I'll put it back in the safe and I'll go get some bread for dinner.



It's the moment of truth. If my little plan fails, never mind: I'll leave without knowing for sure.



249... no, that's not it.



924... no, that's not it.



492... Got it!



I have to read it.




Not here. I need a more secluded, quieter place.





Hmm... I can't believe it. Hmm... Bloody hell! Wooah!... That is so bloody gorgeous... It's crazy how colours come back so easily!... They look so accessible... seems too easy... How could I have tortured myself for so long? This manuscript could help me leave the world of black and white behind. This is living proof! Hmm... But if I do that... I am going to have to steal the manuscript from Martin... and that's not right. After all he has done to unearth it, that just wouldn't be right. Even if we talk for hours, he won't give it to me... And the manuscript wouldn't make sense anymore if I didn't respect the fact that it is free of charge and spontaneous. But... How could I forego this gift from heaven? A miraculous breakthrough to those who are open to it. How can I let it lie in a cold, dark safe? Unthinkable!... what a waste! It needs to be


surrounded by life. Martin is way too possessive to give it to anyone. Hmm... Unless it's Léa. Yes, of course... she needs it so much. It has to be for his granddaughter. Not for me! Subconsciously, he just wants Léa to be fulfilled. But he won't see it, even if I tell him clearly. The only way is to steal the manuscript and give it to Léa.





 Léa, I have something important to tell you. When I was a boy, I met this old sailor who gave me a magical book.


 A magical book?

 Yes, a real treasure! And now, I want to give that book to you.

 I don't want it! I don't like treasures.

 It's not that kind of a treasure. This one is magical... it will help you find your way in life.

 Did you find your way?

 Hmm... Yes... finally. Do you trust me, Léa?

 Yes.



It's a very important book and it must be our secret. Do you know how to keep a secret?



Yes!



Take good care of it... Read it with all your soul when you need help and it will give you the right answers.



What's a soul?



You will understand as you read... And one day, you will no longer need it.



When?



You will know when the time has come. Promise me something...



Yes.



On that day, give the book to another lonely child.



Hmm... alright.



Thank you Léa. I have to go.



You're not eating with us?



No, I'm sorry. I hope your grandad

won't mind.



Hmm...



Don't be sad. Now you have a magical book that will always be there for you. Don't lose it. Good luck Léa.




Hmm... See you soon Désiré.




Hmm... Before I go, I want to contemplate the colours in the church again.



 The colours are fading already. Am I dreaming or what? Is that Jesus?... over there?...



 I can't leave without speaking to him.



After so many improbable encounters, I am not even surprised to see the Lord here. Have I lost touch with my inner child?



For heaven's sake... just call me Jesus.



That's somewhat destabilising.



That is the reason you see me now, to stimulate your imagination. Not as a biblical apparition... but for the message I am here to deliver.



I have heard messages throughout my life... heard it all and it didn't get me anywhere... I end up totally stuck at best and falling off a cliff at worst!



I agree: the world is saturated with messages. A cacophony of impostors. A constant hubbub of confusing messages.



And you want to add to the noise?



Oh!... I gave up speaking to those who don't want to listen long ago.



Are you painting your own portrait for the church?



I don't like the way I am depicted... art cheats and distorts reality.



I was kidding... are you really painting your own portrait?



Sweet Lord no!... there are so many things to paint and such inspiration within each of us... Why bother endlessly depicting my face? Hmm... truth be told, I am experimenting with art, without much success I might add.



But you're Jesus... you rose from the dead but you can't do art?



Art is the creation of man... and that is why I have no greater artistic aptitude than the next guy. Give back to mankind what belongs to mankind.



So you find pleasure in painting?



When you give your whole being to

practicing, you're filled with joy. Then you can reap what you've sown.



Is there really a point to art?



Don't get me wrong. Art with capital A doesn't bring me much joy. But when I am possessed by a work of art capable of eliciting strong emotions... it really doesn't matter whether it was painted by a famous artist or an unknown painter. But beware impostors!... It's not all good.



I may offend you...



Doesn't matter. Are you going to criticise my painting?



No, not at all... I am no judge of artistic talent. Hmm... no, in fact... I don't believe in God.



Who cares!



I don't like our time.



Was it better before?



I don't know... each era has its charms, I guess. In any case, I just don't go for contemporary charm.



Because everything is so much faster?



Yes, this incessant race for progress and growth.



I have always fought power and wealth. It's a hard fight, for the long run.



I know...



The Pharisees are so powerful and they're driving the world to ruin.



Is it only art that you admire in man?



No. I admire whatever is heroic in man.



Saving the world, you mean?



Dealing with your own anxiety for a start.




Easy to say... Should we never fear anything?



Don't confuse anxiety and fear, or religion with faith. Fear helps us grow, but anxiety paralyzes us.




You know... Today, I think I did something heroic for the first time in my life. I sacrificed my own well-being for the sake of a distressed little girl.




Yes, I am aware of that... Unfortunately, I fear you may be deluded... as I am with this painting.




Why?




You think you have foregone seeing colours for the good of Léa?




Yes, I think so.




I am not convinced. Sorry to be so blunt!... I see no heroics here. All I see is a man lying to himself and refusing to accept colours because he is weak. Your generous gesture towards Léa is just a way to avoid the issue.




Hmm... that's a bit harsh.




It can't be helped. All you are doing is burying your emotions deep inside.



Hmm... maybe... I don't know...



It's up to you to decide how you want to live. Ponder your deeds without attachment and be honest with yourself. What is the real motivation behind your act?



Hmm... the real motivation? Hmm...
hmm...



Say it!



I did it because I think it's too late for me to change. I have lived without colours all my life. That's all I know. I flirted with ghosts for too long to ever be able to change. This black and white world has become my world. And I know it better than anyone else. Whereas colours, however beautiful they may seem, are complete strangers.



Still, wasn't that your quest?



Yes, and I got there! Before that, I didn't have a choice. There was only one vision. Today, everything has changed... I opened another door. It may be a form of renunciation. But it's also a decision... my decision. But it's true that I am only just realising that.



Do you regret your choice?



No.





























There we are...

The journey was long and full of traps for this man... and it's only the beginning of a new lease of life.


















He will pursue his path as long as he possibly can... as long as he feels condemned to live...

Ultimately... life is but a spark that peters out in the mist...

CHARACTERS

1992	2003
 Désiré	 Désiré
 Dad	 Sebastian
 Mum	 Elma
 Bruno	 Homeless person
 Lucia	 Kevin
 Nina	 Cécile
 Sailor	 Pablo
 Nicolas	 Julien Foutriquet
 David	 Seller
 Sophia	 Ruby
 Supervisor	 Waiter
 Operator	 Dandy
 Newsagent	
 The Old Man	

CHARACTERS

2011	2020
 Désiré	 Désiré
 Pubic louse	 Angolo
 Theodore	 David
 Camille	 Bimbo
 Élodie	 Truck driver
 Andy	 Baker
 Neighbour	 Martin Lacour
 Fatty	 Léa
	 Jesus



desire.seccia.com

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Éditions Seccia
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<http://www.seccia.com>
France

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ISBN : 978-2-9561856-2-8
Dépôt légal : novembre 2017

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Printed by CreateSpace