

Daniela Quaglia
Montreal, QC
danielaquaglia@me.com

PLAGUE

Written by

Daniela Quaglia

EXT. SOMEWHERE ON THE JACQUES CARTIER BRIDGE, MONTREAL.
WINTER - DAYLIGHT, EARLY AFTERNOON.

Five young people aged between 20 and 25 years old are walking along the Jacques Cartier bridge. They come from the far north of Québec and they have walked a long way heading towards downtown Montréal. It is a very cold afternoon, temperatures approaching -25C. There are abandoned cars on the bridge: rust is taking over, windows and mirrors are shattered. They have been abandoned there for a long time. The city is frozen in the distance, except for some rare clouds of smoke, faint, irregular, puffing up from some random corners of town.

JEAN FRANCOIS

So that's it then. Montréal.

GRETA

There is no-one down there.

MAGALI

There is nobody anywhere, if you hadn't noticed.

Darren stops briefly at the bridge's parapet and observes.

DARREN

There might be almost no-one, yes.
But we've got to get our ass down
there and look for food. We've got
what... three, four cans left?

MAGALI

I'm cold. Everything hurts.

DARREN

My point exactly.

The five friends keep walking towards the City, the wind-chill hitting hard on their cheeks.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MONTRÉAL, FRONT OF THE EATON CENTRE - SUNSET
HOUR.

DARREN

Look, we've gotta stop somewhere
man! You can't keep discarding
places!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Do you want to take a chance and
end up dead before you even notice
it?

DARREN

Dead from what? There is NO ONE
here!!

Darren angrily points at his surrounding and then takes one
of his hands off his gloves.

DARREN

This is what will kill us! I am
freezing to death!

MAGALI

Please J.F., Darren is right. I am
so cold... So cold...

Magali's eyes are full of tears, but the droplets have frozen
on her eyelashes before even reaching her cheeks.

JEAN FRANCOIS

You fools! There is no one, except
when there is someone! You saw the
smoke from the bridge! You saw it.

GRETA

Ok, let's vote.

DARREN

I vote enter. NOW.

GRETA

I vote enter, too.

Magali sobs and nods with her head looking towards Jean-
Francois.

JUSTIN

Ok J.F., listen. I totally get you.
But what's the alternative? The
night is coming. We have no wood to
make a fire. And even if we had, I
wouldn't chance it.

(sighing)

I am sorry pal. I gotta agree with
them.

Jean Francois looks at the entrance door of the mall. It is
rusty, cold, dark.

The sign on top used to say 'Eaton Center', but the 'a' and the 'c' and the 't' have been eroded by the weather. It must have been a long time since anybody has taken care of reparations.

JEAN FRANCOIS

I hope we don't regret this. What makes me nervous the most is that it says 'Metro'. Isn't it that sort of 'underground bus'?

DARREN

And what...?

GRETA

Yes, indeed. Are you afraid of people gathering there..?

JEAN FRANCOIS

I don't know. It makes me feel very uncomfortable.

(He stands hands on hips
in front of the entrance
for a few moments)

Ok, let's go in. But quietly. And at the first sign that something is wrong we come out. You follow my lead. Is this clear?

Darren scoffs. Magali approaches Jean Francois and takes his hand. She looks at him and gently pushes him towards the door.

INT. THE EATON CENTRE, MONTREAL. MAIN FLOOR OF THE MALL. THE SHOP WINDOWS ARE SHATTERED AND THERE IS DUST AND MOULD EVERYWHERE. OBJECTS OF ALL KINDS ARE SPARSELY STACKED UP ALL OVER THE GROUND MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO WALK.

The group of young friends is walking towards the middle of the big hall. The light is deem and it is difficult to see. The deserted space amplifies the sounds. They speak maintaining a soft voice.

MAGALI

It smells.

GRETA

Indeed. It smells like...

DARREN

It smells like death.

MAGALI

Oh God...

Magali covers her eyes with her gloved hands and starts sobbing.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Would you just shut up?!

Looking at Darren with challenging eyes.

JEAN FRANCOIS

It's normal that it smells Magali. No one has cared for this place in years, and when they left it was the war. It smells like old and dusty, and... I don't know... maybe a bit of dead something, too. But of course! There might have been animals coming in at some point. It does not mean anything.

He takes her in his arms and hugs her to his chest. He keeps looking at Darren with severe eyes. Darren backs off but does not hide his grin.

JUSTIN

Jean Francois! Come here.

Justin has found what seems to be the map of the place.

JUSTIN

Maybe if we can figure out where the food court was... I mean... I know it's a long shot, but maybe, just maybe...

GRETA

(Interrupting Justin) maybe there is still some canned food.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ok, let's see.

Jean Francois keeps Magali under his arm and they walk towards the map.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Well, I'm not sure. I've never been in a Mall before, but I think your dad, Magali, used to tell tales about the food courts and how he loved the burgers and fries, and how you could smell the way down there. Wasn't he saying 'down there' all the time?

JUSTIN

Makes sense. Look.

He points at the map where some names are still visible. It reads 'Thai Express'.

JUSTIN

It's underground. We just got to find a way to go 'down there'.

Justin continues to point at the map and follows along with his finger.

JUSTIN

So, if we assume that we are here, there seem to be stairs behind us. But we haven't seen them.. Probably covered in filth.

GRETA

But look, here!

Pointing to the other side of the map.

GRETA

Are they also not stairs?

JEAN FRANCOIS

Could be, yes. And it would make sense. There must be stairs on both sides.

GRETA

Ok, so let's just keep going. Let's keep our eyes opened for anything interesting on the way. Let's go. I am SO starving. I have a good feeling about this.

Darren has already left the group behind and he is advancing in the dark.

JEAN FRANCOIS

(In a low voice) Jerk.

GRETA
 Whatever. Let's go.

The rest of the group starts walking. They keep close and watch out for each other. Magali is still sobbing but follows.

INT. OTHER SIDE OF THE MALL. A STAIRCASE WINDS IN FRONT OF THE GROUP OF FRIENDS.

After making their way through the other side of the mall, eventually the five friends spot the staircase. It is full of objects and partially hidden behind an innumerable number of garbage bins.

JUSTIN
 Help me.

Together with Darren they clean away the trash. Everyone follows them in the descent. Jean Francois is last. He has spotted something, a signboard. Metro. He does not share with the others, but his eyebrows frown.

MAGALI
 Do you really think that there is food down there..?

GRETA
 I don't know Mag, but I sure hope so.

JUSTIN
 You'll see. We'll find something. We always do.

GRETA
 Shit!

One of her feet has slipped and she falls at the end of the staircase.

MAGALI
 Ahhhh!

JEAN FRANCOIS
 Greta!

JUSTIN
 Great, oh God!

Darren rushes down the last flight of stairs to rescue her. The others follow behind.

DARREN

You ok?

After having looked at her and assessed briefly the situation.

DARREN

(to the others)

She is ok.

DARREN

(to her)

Are you all right?

GRETA

Yes, I'm ok, but my ankle.

Darren tries to help her up but her ankle hurts. Darren and Justin help her out and they seat her on an old bank.

MAGALI

Is her ankle broken? Oh my God, what are we going to do...!?! (in a panic)

DARREN

Magali. Stop!

MAGALI

It's broken isn't it? We should have never come here. We should have not. We should have just... I don't know. Dad was right. We should have... (and she starts sobbing away)

DARREN

Damn it!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Magali, listen (putting his hands on her shoulders and looking at her in the eyes). It is going to be ok. But you have to remain calm. Listen to me.

Jean Francois and Magali sit down next to Greta who is now silently looking into the emptiness.

JUSTIN

Ok, listen everyone. At least it looks like we are in the right place.

In front of them restaurants signboards are still up and tables are distributed all around the place, some have been ripped out and it is messy everywhere, but there is no doubt. They reached the food court.

INT. THE FOOD COURT. - APPROXIMATELY 6PM.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Greta, you and Magali will have to stay put. Justin, Darren and I will go exploring.

JUSTIN

Agreed.

GRETA

But, maybe...

JEAN FRANCOIS

No Greta, we can't risk it. I don't think it's broken (pointing at her ankle), but you need to rest for a bit.

JUSTIN

You can't stay out here though. Here, take my arm. One, two, three... up!

Justin helps Greta up and together they walk through the counter of a former sushi shop. He helps her sit down behind the counter. Magali and the others follow.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

There.

MAGALI

Cheers Justin. I can't believe this happened. I am so sorry.

JUSTIN

Don't be. This place it's a mess. Everyone could have slipped.

DARREN

Ok, let's go.

JEAN FRANCOIS

If we are gonna find something it's going to be at the back of the stores.

INT. FOOD COURT. BACK STORE OF 'CULTURE', A SHOP THAT USED TO SELL HEALTHY MEAL SOLUTIONS - APPROXIMATELY TWO HOURS AFTER THEY LEFT THE REST OF THE GROUP.

DARREN

Nothing. (Throwing an empty box in the air out of frustration)

JEAN FRANCOIS

What were you expecting, eh? A banquet? Of course there is nothing! It must have been years..!

JUSTIN

Would the two of you just stop? This does not solve anything.

DARREN

You know what is our best chance? One of those 'automatic fridges' things!

JUSTIN

A 'vending machine'? Yes, I read about them in the books.

DARREN

A 'vending machine'. Yes a 'vending machine'.

Jean Francois is looking at them. Hands on hips.

JEAN FRANCOIS

All right. I saw something before. I did not want to tell you, but...

DARREN

What?

JEAN FRANCOIS

I think I saw where the vending machines are.. I just got a glimpse but...

DARREN

But what? What is your problem?! When were you thinking of telling us?

Darren looks at Justin.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Would you actually believe the man? He is keeping secrets... Ah!

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)

He is keeping fucking secrets! ...
What the actual...

JEAN FRANCOIS

See? This is the reason why I am
keeping 'secrets' from you, like
you call them. Because of this
explosive attitude you have! The
vending machines are on the way to
the Metro!

DARREN

And what?

JEAN FRANCOIS

And there you go! What do you mean
'and what?' The Metro level is
DANGEROUS! I am pretty sure there
are people there! It's clear, and
warmer and you heard the stories at
the village: the Metro was
dangerous even when people were
here! Do you really want to risk
that?

DARREN

I just cannot believe this.

Darren starts walking back and forth, his fists clenched.

JUSTIN

Ok guys. That's it. Jean Francois,
I understand why you did not want
to disclose this, but I am not
really sure we have a choice at
this point.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Mhm.

JUSTIN

I don't like it anymore than I do,
believe me.

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ok. But he has to swear he will
behave! (Pointing at Darren)

JUSTIN

Darren. He is right. No rushed
steps. No stupid moves.

Darren nods impatiently.

DARREN
Whatever. Just tell us where.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Follow me.

Jean Francois passes his hand on his forehead.

JEAN FRANCOIS
It's very hot in here. Very hot.

Darren and Justin look at each other in disbelief.

JUSTIN
Jean Francois... it's freezing in here...

JEAN FRANCOIS
It is...?

DARREN
You bet man. It's fucking freezing!

Justing and Darren look at Jean Francois.

DARREN
This is wrong man. Wrong.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Ok. No time for this now. Follow me.

The three friends start walking towards the Metro.

INT. THE METRO LEVEL - NIGHT.

The Metro level is dark. The natural light from the main hall does not make it to this level. The three friends have a flashlight, but they hesitate flashing it throughout the emptiness.

JUSTIN
There! Down there!

JEAN FRANCOIS
Yes!

Justin, Jean Francois, and Darren rush to the point where they spotted the vending machines. There are things in them, but the windows are made of thick glass.

JUSTIN
Ok. Ok. Think Justin. Think.

JEAN FRANCOIS

This must be the reason why there is still food in there. (he points at the thick glass)

DARREN

Let's just smash the window.

JUSTIN

Darren, please. You promised.

DARREN

You have a better idea?! I am all ears!!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Ok. Maybe we could just, I don't know... I don't know.

JUSTIN

Damn. Damn! So close!

DARREN

Ok help me out. Darren takes a baseball bat out of his bag.

JUSTIN

What the heck?!

JEAN FRANCOIS

Where did you get that??

DARREN

On the road. 'Sport Expert' I think it was called.

Justin and Jean Francois are speechless.

DARREN

What?! I just went... shopping... is that the way they called it? Real fun!

JEAN FRANCOIS

What do you intend to do?

DARREN

I intend to break the damn thing.

Before Jean Francois and Justin can debate any further, Darren takes a swing. He hits very hard and the window gets smashed in a thousand pieces. But the glass flies everywhere.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Damn it Darren. Arhg! (screaming)

Jean Francois was hit by a flying piece of glass and his neck starts bleeding.

JUSTIN
Jesus! Darren!

Some crisps and drinks and different kind of snacks have fallen to the floor.

JEAN FRANCOIS
I'm ok. I'm ok. It's superficial. I just need something to help with the bleeding.

Justin grabs what looks like an old newspaper from a box. The title reads 'Métro: a Montréal newspaper'. It's old. Dated before the war. He passes it to Jean Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Cheers.

DARREN
What's that?

Noises come from the darkness. The three friends freeze on their feet. Someone heard all the noise and they are coming. As they approach, the sound of their voice gets clearer. They are laughing like hyenas, and they are coming for them.

DARREN
Fast. We gotta get out of here.

He grabs as much food as he can get and shoves it in his backpack. He holds onto the baseball bat, too.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Let's move. Switch off the flashlight. Quick!

JUSTIN
Where did we come from?

JEAN FRANCOIS
Down there! (whispering)

JUSTIN
Ok. Let's go. Run!

The three friends follow Jean Francois. The voices are clearer now. Darren makes sign to his mates to duck just behind a pile of trash.

VOICE 1 IN THE DISTANCE
Tasty boys. Those are tasty boys.
Ah Ah Ah Ah.

VOICE 2 IN THE DISTANCE
Not infected, you figure?

VOICE 1 IN THE DISTANCE
Not infected, I am sure. Ah ah ah
ah (maniacal laughter)

The three friends keep as still as they can. The flashlight is still off and they hold their breath.

VOICE 1 IN THE DISTANCE
(approaching fast)

Hungry hungry, starving starviiiiinnng..... Cutie cutie cutie cutie where are you...?

VOICE 2 IN THE DISTANCE
Ah Ah Ah Ah Ah...

The three friends hold onto each other trying to hide the sound of their breathing.

The voices are fading away again. They passed them. They continued on their way.

INT. THE FOOD COURT - LATER IN THE NIGHT.

GRETA
Oh my God Jean Francois what happened to your neck?

JEAN FRANCOIS
Shush! Not so loud! Shush!

GRETA
(Whispering) What happened?

MAGALI
(Moans)

JUSTIN
We are not alone.

Magali starts to sob.

DARREN
No, seriously. Shut up. It's going to be ok, but we can't make a noise. And we have food.

GRETA
You found some!

JUSTIN
We did. But we gotta get out of
here. It's insane.

GRETA
Who did you encounter?! Are they
dangerous?

Justin and Jean Francois look at each other and sigh.

JUSTIN
I mean...

DARREN
They are nut cases! They were
speaking about eating us!

JUSTIN
Would you shut up Darren!!!

Magali cannot keep it together any longer and starts sobbing uncontrollably.

GRETA
They were what?!

JEAN FRANCOIS
Yeah, well. We might have
misunderstood. They were far. For
sure not friendly. We'll stay for
the night but we've gotta go away
from this place. We've gotta head
back. This has lasted long enough.

GRETA
I'm not feeling well. I am not
feeling well at all. I think I am
developing a fever.

Justin and Darren look at Jean Francois.

JEAN FRANCOIS
Greta. Do you feel boiling hot?

GRETA
I do! It's so hot in here!

JEAN FRANCOIS
I'd agree with you. But apparently
dear, it's not...

Greta looks at Darren and Justin for approval, but Justin has noticed something written in the newspaper that Jean Francois is using for his wound.

JUSTIN

Ehm... Guys... I don't wanna alarm you but...

JEAN FRANCOIS

What?!

GRETA

What?(in unison)

MAGALI

What?!(in unison)

JUSTIN

Can you pass me the paper...?

Jean Francois passes the paper to Justin.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I don't think we will be going home very soon...

Camera closes on the blood-stained paper. The headline states: 'Plague: hitting hard for the third week. No one is spared. The infection is here to stay'.

FADE OUT.

THE END.