

La Comédiathèque

Family Tree

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Translation by the author

Diane introduces her fiancé Karim to her parents. Exasperated by the condescending attitude of his future in-laws, who take rather too much pride in a French family line supposedly stretching back to the Middle Ages, Karim challenges Diane to prove the purity of her ancestry with a DNA test. Its unexpected results set off a chain reaction...

Characters

Diane: a young woman
Karim: her fiancé
Thérèse: her mother
Édouard: her father

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A middle-class French sitting room, with old-fashioned furniture and décor. A crucifix hangs on the back wall, and a picture of the Virgin Mary stands on a cabinet. Thérèse, in her fifties and elegantly old-fashioned, carefully folds baby clothes and packs them into a cardboard box. Her mobile rings. She answers.

Thérèse – Distressed Mothers Helpline, how can I help...? Oh, hello, Marie-France... No, you're not disturbing me... I was packing a parcel for that poor sinner whom, thank God, we persuaded to keep her baby... Yes, a 'voluntary termination of pregnancy', as they call it nowadays... You can modernise the language all you like: a visually impaired person is still blind, and taking an innocent life is still a crime. Édouard? He's all right... Since retiring he's been at a loose end, but luckily he's started writing that book. It keeps him busy... You're still coming to dinner on Saturday...? Well, I don't know... It's Epiphany. Bring a galette des rois, the traditional French cake for the Three Kings. We'll crown the king! That's settled, then. See you Saturday! Goodbye, Marie-France. Give my regards to Bernard-Henri...

She puts away her phone and goes back to packing. Édouard, in his sixties and just as old-fashioned in his elegance, enters carrying a folder and looking delighted.

Édouard – That's it! I've just sent my manuscript to the publisher!

Thérèse – That's wonderful... How long have you been working on that book?

Édouard – At least three years on the research. About nine months on the actual writing.

Thérèse – Nine months...

Édouard – Yes, I feel like a woman who's just given birth... I'm relieved, but at the same time... I feel rather empty.

Thérèse – You're not going through postnatal depression, are you?

Édouard – I'm hoping it piques someone's interest... At the very least, it'll be a treasure trove of family history for our future generations.

Thérèse listens somewhat absentmindedly as she continues folding baby clothes and packing the box.

Thérèse – Yes, certainly...

Édouard – You don't sound very interested... And you're in this book too, you know.

Thérèse – Of course I'm interested... What are you getting at?

Édouard – Your family's roots, like those of the de Valmonts, go back at least as far as the Middle Ages. Can you imagine?

Thérèse – I might not be the genealogy expert you are, but as my father used to say, knowing where you come from helps you understand who you are.

Édouard – And it's not just a tale of our family; this book delves into History with a capital H. Our family's fate is intertwined with our nation's.

Thérèse – Indeed...

Édouard – I conducted plenty of investigations in my career as an investigating magistrate. This has been the hardest — and the most fascinating.

Thérèse – Thankfully, it's not a criminal investigation this time...

Édouard – I hope to have the first copies in a few weeks. We could organise a little signing at the Notre-Dame bookshop. We could get the whole family together! Our friends too. What do you think?

Thérèse – Why not? Yes, that sounds delightful.

Édouard – I'm not certain it will become a bestseller, but I'm happy with leaving this legacy for our future generations...

Thérèse – Even though, as I remind you, we don't have any at the moment...

Édouard – It will happen in due time. Diane won't remain single forever.

Thérèse – She's young, just finished her studies. She has plenty of time to start a family...

Diane, with a more contemporary appearance than her parents, makes her entrance.

Diane – Were you talking about me?

Thérèse – We were discussing your father's book...

Diane – Ah, yes... You were still debating the title. Did you finally settle on one?

Édouard – Indeed, and I must say I'm rather pleased with it.

Diane – The suspense... So, what is it?

Édouard retrieves a cardboard sheet from his folder and hands it to her.

Édouard – Well, here it is: the mock-up of the cover.

Diane examines the mock-up and reads the title.

Diane – The Right Line. A French Family.

Édouard – What do you think?

Diane – Yes, it's... It's good. And... 'The Right Line' — there's a political message in that too, I suppose?

Édouard – For better or worse, we live in a republic, my dear. Surely I'm still entitled to express my political views?

Diane looks at the cover again.

Diane – The fleur-de-lis, perhaps, wasn't entirely necessary... Mum, what do you think?

Thérèse – I'm confident it's going to be a bestseller...

Édouard – After all, we're a large family, and since this book is about each of us... If everyone buys one, we should sell at least 200 copies.

Thérèse – Your father is planning a book signing at Notre-Dame Bookstore. We could invite all our parishioners. As your father says, this book is also a page of France's history.

Diane – When is this little celebration going to happen?

Édouard – The book will be in print soon. I expect to have the first copies in about three weeks.

Diane – Great... How far back did you manage to trace, finally? I think I left off at Louis XV, if I remember correctly...

Édouard – Charles Martel on my family's side, and Joan of Arc on your mother's side.

Diane – Joan of Arc?

Édouard – Well, not in a direct line, obviously...

Diane (*distractedly*) – Ah, yes...

She glances at her phone.

Thérèse – And how about you, darling? How's everything going in your new law firm?

Édouard – How are things going at your new law firm?

Diane – I've just been given my first case.

Édouard – What's it about? Without violating professional confidentiality, of course...

Diane – It's about a man who recently discovered he's not the father of his son.

Thérèse – And then?

Diane – He's seeking a divorce, and he wants to disinherit the illegitimate child.

Édouard – Thank God he can't do that. Disinherit his son, I mean...

Diane – Luckily for all the illegitimate children in France and beyond.

Édouard – Yes...

Thérèse – How old is this poor child?

Diane – Seventy-three years old. His father is almost a centenarian.

Thérèse – How did he find out his son wasn't his? Seventy-three years later...

Diane – A DNA test. Simple as that. You can order one on the internet for about fifty euros.

Édouard – Those websites pose a threat to family peace.

Diane – True. These tests have mainly revealed to hundreds of husbands that they've been cuckolded.

Édouard – Fortunately they're banned in France now.

Diane – Except when a court orders one. You were a family court judge. You must have authorised a few, surely?

Édouard – It happened... In very specific cases... Never to fuel suspicion within families or satisfy some unhealthy curiosity.

Thérèse – Exactly... Why on earth should the average French person need to know whether there's a trace of African ancestry in their DNA?

Édouard – After all, anthropologists tell us that, if you go back far enough, Africa is the cradle of humanity.

Diane – It's easy for you to say that! You've just spent three years of your life tracing your family tree back to the Middle Ages!

Édouard – Because the de Valmonts are an old French family with a glorious past! If my name were Dupont or Durand, I wouldn't have bothered going back so far.

Diane – So, genealogy isn't for common folk, according to you...

Édouard – Let's just say it's more interesting if you come from a distinguished line...

Thérèse – All the same... I can hardly believe you're a lawyer now...

Édouard – And that your clients call you Maître — that's what lawyers are called in France.

Thérèse – It really is a family affair... First your father dealing with family cases as a judge, and now you as a lawyer.

Diane – Speaking of which, with your association helping single mothers, you're attempting to protect families in your own way, aren't you?

Thérèse – Yes...

Diane – You're right. It's funny, this family obsession with family affairs. (*Joking*) I wonder if it's hiding... a family secret?

Her parents don't respond but seem a bit uncomfortable.

Édouard – Well, I have to go. I'm heading to Notre-Dame Bookstore. I'll try to schedule a date for the book signing.

Thérèse – And I have a package to deliver... See you later, dear.

Thérèse grabs the box, but Édouard takes it from her hands.

Édouard – I'll help you... I can drop you off on my way to the bookstore, it's on my route.

Thérèse – You don't even know where I'm going!

Édouard – You know my route is wherever you're going, dear...

They exit. Diane checks her phone screen again. The doorbell rings. She goes to open it and returns with Karim, a casually dressed man in his thirties.

Karim – Are you alone?

Diane – My parents just left. You didn't run into them?

Karim (*uneasy*) – No...

Diane – You waited for them to leave before ringing!

Karim – But not at all...

Diane – It's crazy... Are you that afraid of them?

He kisses her gently.

Karim – They have some reasons to resent me. I'm about to take their only daughter away on my white charger...

Diane – A white horse... So, a purebred Arabian, then... Would you like something to drink?

Karim – I don't know... What does your parents' bar have? Communion wine? Chartreuse? Monastic elixirs?

Diane – Come on...

Karim – Okay, they scare me...

Diane – It's not like you've never met them! They know we're dating. You've had dinner with them several times at home. They haven't poisoned you...

Karim – Because they don't know we're getting married... Did you tell them?

Diane – Not yet...

Karim – You promised.

Diane – I haven't found the right moment. And besides, wouldn't it be more appropriate for you to ask my father for my hand, right?

Karim – True... That's how things were done at the beginning of the last century. Mind you, looking at this furniture, I'd say time stopped in here just before the French Revolution.

Diane – So, you're scared. That surprises me...

Karim – Your father's an investigating magistrate!

Diane – He's retired.

Karim – The only Arabs he's seen in his life were in a courtroom. To send them to jail right after...

Diane – Nonsense! Besides, my mother said you seemed like a nice guy.

Karim – A nice guy? I'm not sure how to take that...

Diane – The opposite of a bad boy, I guess...

Karim – I see... A nice guy... for an Arab.

Diane – Honestly... I don't think when they see you, their first concern is your ethnic background.

Karim – Your father has just spent three years tracing your family tree back to the Middle Ages. All to prove his family was French before France even existed. You can't deny he's rather obsessed with his roots, can you?

Diane – It's historical research... There's nothing wrong with being interested in your family's past. And as for you being Arab... you were born in the posh sixteenth arrondissement of Paris!

Karim – Muslim, if you prefer.

Diane – You drink alcohol and eat sausages.

Karim – Maybe, but my parents were born in Casablanca. And just twenty years ago, they weren't French yet.

Diane – Well, let's change the subject because you're getting on my nerves...

Karim – OK...

Diane – Are you sure you don't want anything to drink?

Karim – A Scotch, then.

Diane – Scotch? At this hour, are you sure?

Karim – I need a little pick-me-up.

Diane – Even if it goes against your religion...

Karim – There you go again...

Diane – Alright, I didn't say anything. Actually, I'm going to join you. I had a tough morning too.

She takes two glasses and a bottle of Scotch from the drinks cabinet and fills one glass.

Karim – Whoa, easy there, it's not holy water...

Diane – You're right; I think I poured a bit too much.

She picks up the glass and pours half of it into the other one.

Karim – Well, it's okay if I get a bit tipsy. I'm not performing tonight...

Diane – Oh yeah?

Karim – It's Monday. The theatre's dark. If we get married, you'll have to get used to that. Monday's when we'll go to the cinema or out for dinner — along with all the shopkeepers who shut on Mondays.

Diane – Except for the Arab grocers who stay open every day... What are you performing in right now?

Karim – Molière's *The Would-Be Gentleman*. It's rather like your father's story, when you think about it.

Diane – You think so?

Karim – de Valmont... Yes, there's a noble-sounding 'de' in your name, but you haven't got a title, have you?

Diane – My grandfather was a baron. It's my father's older brother who inherited the title.

Karim – Baron... That's the lowest rank in French nobility. Below that, there's only knighthood.

Diane – You seem to know a lot about it. Did you look it up?

Karim – Your family traces back to the Middle Ages, big deal. Man descends from apes, and apes descend from trees; that's all we need to know about genealogy.

Diane – Very funny.

Karim – We've all got ancestors, haven't we? Some people know their names, others don't. That's all. Even your Portuguese concierge has a family tree stretching all the way back to Adam and Eve.

Diane – Why does it bother you that my father is passionate about genealogy?

Karim – He boasts that his family has been French for thirty generations! Do you think he'll be thrilled to see an Arab climbing to the top of his one-hundred-percent Gaulish family tree?

Diane – They're rather reactionary, I know. But they're not racists...

Karim – A bit old-fashioned? They go to mass every day. Your father is a royalist, and your mother is involved in a pro-life association!

Diane – Pro-life... That's quite a strong term...

Karim – Anti-abortion, if you prefer.

Diane – It's an association that helps single mothers.

Karim – Yes, to dissuade them from having an abortion!

Diane – Alright, they're old-fashioned. But it's not my fault that I'm the last descendant of an old French family, some of whose members made a mark in history.

Karim – An old French family... Come on, do you hear yourself?

Diane – What? Would you want me to be ashamed?

Karim – No. But I also don't see why you should be proud...

Diane – My father is a descendant of Charles Martel!

Karim – The one who stopped the Arabs at Poitiers...

Diane – My mother descends from Joan of Arc.

Karim – The one who drove the English out of France...

Diane – Sorry, but before the far right appropriated her, Joan of Arc was rather like General de Gaulle. Don't tell me you've got something against de Gaulle as well?

Karim – I'm as French as you are, I'll remind you. But for me, my France is about the melting pot and multiculturalism. Not apartheid and genetic selection.

Diane – Don't you think you're going a bit overboard? If I really wanted to protect the purity of my race, I wouldn't be marrying an Arab, right?

Karim – I'm not talking about you; I'm talking about your parents! And wait... You descend from Joan of Arc, too? I thought she died a virgin?

Diane – Well, maybe not directly... I didn't quite understand...

Karim – Are you sure you're not descended from the Virgin Mary as well?

Diane approaches him and tenderly embraces him to defuse the situation.

Diane – We're not going to argue about Joan of Arc, are we?

Karim – You're right, I'm sorry.

Diane – I love you, you know that. I take you as you are. But you also have to take me... with my parents. And we can't change my parents now.

Karim – No, unfortunately...

Diane – That's why I wanted to know if you were okay with us having a church wedding. It would mean a lot to them...

Karim – I haven't said yes yet...

Diane – Well, you wouldn't want to get married at the mosque anyway...

Karim – We could just go to the registry office, like many people do.

Diane – Alright, then do it for me. A church wedding still has more elegance, doesn't it?

Karim – If you say so...

Diane – I promise to do everything to make it work with my parents.

Karim – I'll still feel more at ease when you've talked to them.

Diane – We'll announce it to them together, okay?

Karim – When?

Diane – Today! I'll tell them I've invited you for tea. I think they already suspect something, you know. They won't be very surprised...

Karim – If you say so...

Diane – Well then... Inshallah...

Blackout.

Édouard, Thérèse, Diane and Karim sit around the coffee table, with a galette des rois, a teapot and cups. Thérèse cuts the cake.

Thérèse – We won't ask the youngest person to crawl under the table...

Édouard – No... Strangely, over the years, the table has become too small...

Thérèse serves everyone a slice of the galette.

Édouard – Do you know the origin of this old French tradition, Karim?

Diane – I bought the galette. Judging by the price, I'd say this tradition was invented by bakers.

Édouard – For us, the galette celebrates the visit of the Three Wise Men to the baby Jesus.

Karim – Of course... *(A pause)* Though I'm sure I read somewhere that this pagan tradition goes right back to Roman times. Long before Christ was born.

Diane stifles a smile. Her parents seem taken aback.

Thérèse – Really? I didn't know that...

Karim – The galette des rois goes back to the Roman Saturnalia, held around the winter solstice. The slaves were given a cake, and whoever found the bean became king for the day. He could even give orders to his master. Before going back to slavery the next morning — or being executed, if his owner felt like it.

Thérèse – That's awful... Are you sure?

Diane – You can trust Karim, Mum... He probably looked that up on Wikipedia just before coming, while I was waiting in line at the bakery...

They eat in silence and with caution.

Édouard – Mind your teeth... It's possible the dentists' guild revived the custom. Whoever breaks a molar on the bean gets a crown.

Polite smiles.

Diane – I warned you, Karim. My father is quite a joker...

Thérèse – Oh, I think I have the charm...

Édouard places one of the two paper crowns on his wife's head.

Édouard – So, here's the queen...

Thérèse takes the other crown and places it on her husband's head.

Thérèse – And here's my king...

Diane and Karim look at them, a bit embarrassed by this ridiculous spectacle.

Diane – I think the tea is steeped enough now, don't you?

Thérèse serves the tea.

Thérèse – It's mint tea... A little different from what you might be used to... I'm sure it doesn't compare to your mother's, Salim.

Diane – Karim, Mum...

Thérèse – My apologies, Karim... Diane has spoken so highly of you. It's inexcusable for me not to remember your name.

Édouard – You're an actor, right?

Karim – Yes.

Thérèse – I hope it's sweet enough.

Édouard – I dabbled in theatre during my high school days.

Diane – You never mentioned that to me...

Édouard – Oh, I probably did mention it, but it seems like old folks like us tend to forget things easily. Youngsters are even worse; they don't even pay attention.

Thérèse – Old folks like us... Speak for yourself, old coot. I'm not dealing with Alzheimer's just yet.

Édouard – But you did forget Karim's name.

Thérèse – You see what happens to old couples, young man. We keep bickering... and it doesn't get better with the years, believe me.

Édouard – Here's a piece of advice for you: don't rush into marriage... or at least, wait as long as you can.

Karim appears uncomfortable. He exchanges a worried glance with Diane, prompting her to break the ice.

Diane – Well, speaking of marriage, Karim and I... we have some news to share.

Thérèse – News...?

Diane – Good news.

Édouard – Oh, really?

Diane – Can't you guess?

Thérèse – Well, no...

Diane – Karim and I are getting married.

An awkward silence fills the room.

Thérèse – Getting married...?

Édouard – Getting married, you mean... together, I assume.

Diane – Yes, together!

Thérèse – Well, alright... I mean, if that's what you both want.

Édouard – But... it's not happening right away, is it?

Diane – No, not immediately. It's not happening tomorrow, if that's what you're asking.

Karim – We haven't set a date yet, of course. We just wanted to share the news with you first.

A tense silence lingers.

Diane – Well, it's lovely to see how pleased you are for us.

Édouard – No, no, we are, of course... It's just that... with the release of my book...

Thérèse – Yes... We'll have to set a date, I suppose...

Édouard – I can't seem to find my diary...

He searches for his diary with a worried expression.

Thérèse – And we'll need to inform the family as well... Gathering them all at once is going to be quite a task...

Karim – There's no rush, you know... We can discuss it later...

Édouard – Yes, that might be a better idea...

Diane – So you'll have time to chill the champagne...

Thérèse – Very well... Yes, because right now, excuse us... We hadn't planned anything...

Édouard – We should have a bottle somewhere, although it might not be very cold.

Thérèse – I wonder if it's even still good... And maybe Karim doesn't drink champagne...

Diane – Why wouldn't he drink champagne?

Thérèse – I don't know... I just mentioned it...

Diane – Not every Arab lives on mint tea, Mum...

Thérèse – Would you like more tea?

Karim – No, thanks, I'm good...

Thérèse – In that case, maybe we should leave you to it, Édouard, don't you think?

Édouard – Yes, besides, I need to call my publisher.

Thérèse – And you probably have a lot to discuss...

Diane – Well, it's not like it's an arranged marriage, and we've just met... We already know each other a bit...

Thérèse – Of course... No, I meant... for planning the ceremony and all that.

They stand up.

Édouard – So, see you very soon, Karim.

They exit, leaving behind a heavy silence.

Diane – Okay, they're old farts... But what can I do? They're my parents...

Karim – I did warn you.

Diane – Then again, they didn't say no.

Karim – No, I think the exact phrase was... if that's what you want.

Diane – It wasn't very enthusiastic, I admit. They weren't expecting it. But they didn't say no...

Karim – It's crazy... Who do they think they are, these last remnants of a decadent lineage?

Diane – Uh... Just so you know, you're talking about me too...

Karim – Yeah, well, fortunately I'm here to inject some fresh genes into this long consanguineous lineage.

Diane – So, you think I'm a degenerate to that extent? Thanks...

Karim – No, quite the opposite, and that's what surprises me.

Diane – Because otherwise... you can still change your mind and marry a Franco-Moroccan girl who has a diverse genetic pool.

Karim – Listen, Diane, you can still understand that it's quite humiliating for me.

Diane – I understand perfectly, believe me. I'll talk to them...

Karim – It's not as if I live in some run-down suburb of Paris, or as if my parents run the corner shop! I'm bourgeois too! Casablanca bourgeoisie, perhaps, but bourgeoisie all the same. My grandfather was Morocco's Minister of Justice... Your father is just a retired magistrate!

Diane kisses him.

Diane – It will get better, I promise... We just need to give them some time to get used to the idea, that's all.

Karim – Time? How much time?

Diane – I'll talk to them, I'm telling you...

Karim – Very well... Then I'll come back later... Anyway, I have a rehearsal in an hour. The Would-Be Gentleman, remember?

He exits. Diane sighs. Her mother returns.

Thérèse – Karim has already left?

Diane – He felt a bit uncomfortable...

Thérèse – Oh, really...?

Diane – It's not like you told him he was welcome here and that he would be embraced by this family with open arms...

Thérèse – Excuse us... we were taken aback.

Diane – It's been more than a year since we've been dating, and you know it.

Thérèse – We thought it was just another fling. Admit that there have been a few others before him...

Diane – Well, let's just say that this one is the right one.

Thérèse – Are you sure?

Diane – I love him. And I know he loves me too. In theory, that should be enough, right?

A pause.

Thérèse – You're not pregnant, are you...?

Diane, shocked, takes a moment to respond.

Diane – No, I'm not pregnant, Mum. But you know, it's the 21st century now. Girls don't get married just because they're pregnant.

Thérèse – No, unfortunately... Some prefer to have abortions...

Diane – I have to admit I'm stunned by your reaction... Karim thinks you're a bunch of old reactionaries, and I'm starting to wonder if he's right.

Thérèse – Did he say that?

Diane – In more diplomatic terms, yes... that was the idea.

Thérèse – Listen, my dear, we won't oppose this marriage, obviously. We're just wondering if you're sure it's the right choice. We're your parents. It's natural for us to worry.

Diane – Why wouldn't it be the right choice? Because he's Arab?

Thérèse – Not at all, but, well, he's... an actor.

Diane – An actor, and Arab, therefore...

Thérèse – You must understand that, even if he's probably a nice young man — and even if he does think we're a pair of old fossils — he wasn't exactly the son-in-law we'd pictured.

Diane – Because he's an actor...? He went to the Conservatoire. He's a member of the Comédie-Française! You have to admit we're far from a street performer or a snake charmer...

A pause.

Thérèse – Have you met his parents, at least?

Diane – I've seen them once or twice. I'm not marrying his parents...

Thérèse – And so they are...

Diane – Muslims, yes. Like the majority of Arabs are Muslims, and the majority of French are Catholics.

Thérèse – And them...? Are they in favour of this marriage?

Diane – If they're not, we'll do without their consent. Just like yours, by the way.

Thérèse – So they don't know yet...

Édouard enters.

Édouard – What's going on? I can hear you from my office...

Thérèse – We were talking about this marriage plan...

Diane – A plan? It's not a plan, Mum. It's a decision. And we're just informing you...

Édouard – Well...

Diane – I'll leave you... I might say things I'll regret later. When you're gone...

Édouard – Lovely...

Thérèse – But Diane, don't leave like this.

Diane exits. Édouard and Thérèse exchange an embarrassed look.

Édouard – So, this marriage? At the church? At the mosque?

Thérèse – Both...?

Blackout.

Diane is reviewing her father's book proofs. Karim enters.

Karim – What are you reading?

Diane – My father's book. Well, the corrected proofs. He asked me to check for any remaining typos...

She puts down the manuscript and Karim reads the title.

Karim – The Right Line. A French Family... I feel as though I must be the misprint in that story... Have you spoken to them?

Diane – Yes.

Karim – And then?

Diane – It's not a done deal yet...

Karim – I see.

Diane – I'm not defending them, of course... But I don't want to have to choose between you and my family, you understand?

Karim – Ah, because we're already there?

Diane – No, Karim! I'm only saying I'd rather spare their feelings. My father has just published his book. It's his life's work. Rightly or wrongly, he's proud to proclaim to the world that he's French through and through, and that his daughter is descended in a straight line from Charles Martel. Surely you can see why turning up to the signing with a North African son-in-law might make him uncomfortable...

Karim – Uncomfortable? Don't you think I'm the one feeling most uncomfortable in all of this?

Diane – You're absolutely right... I'm sorry... It's very selfish of me...

Karim – And honestly, "pure French lineage"...

Diane – I admit that choice of words was not the best.

Karim goes back to reading the manuscript.

Karim – The Right Line... You really believe those fairy tales?

Diane – It's a very well-documented study, you know. He's been working on it for over three years.

Karim – When it comes to genealogy, direct lines are rarely the shortest path from one generation to the next.

Diane – What do you mean?

Karim – At some point, there are bound to be some detours... Uncontrollable skids...

Diane – Are you calling my father a cuckold and my mother an adulteress?

Karim – It's not about your parents! I'm talking about the idea of your family tree going back to the time of the Crusades. Do you really think that in over a thousand years, none of the women in your family ever had affairs? Take the Crusades, for example...

Diane – I don't think women accompanied their husbands on the Crusades.

Karim – No, that's just it. Their husbands left them alone in their castles. Some of those women must have got bored. And a chastity belt wouldn't stop somebody sufficiently determined and handy with a tool kit.

Diane – Yes, maybe...

Karim – Do you think adultery was invented by Feydeau? You know, the French playwright who wrote all those bedroom farces?

Diane – I don't know... Yes, it probably happened that women cheated on their husbands... Not with strangers, though... You said it yourself; it probably stayed within the family... That's why we look so degenerate, right?

Karim – Instead of a family tree, your parents should have done a DNA test. And you too, actually. It's much faster, and much more reliable. There, at least, you would know everything for sure about your ethnic origins.

Diane – Stop... What are you trying to prove?

Karim – Take the test!

Diane – It's prohibited in France! Unless ordered by a judge. I know this well; I'm a lawyer.

Karim – But it's legal almost everywhere else. All you have to do is send a lock of hair abroad and have the result emailed to you.

Diane – What? With this miraculous test, did she discover she was Black?

Karim – No. She found out she had a brother she didn't know...

Diane – A brother? How so?

Karim – DNA analyses are linked with family trees that people voluntarily upload to the site. That's how she learned she had a brother. Well, a half-brother. They share the same father... Who knows, maybe you'll discover you have Russian blood or distant relatives in Uzbekistan.

Diane – I'm absolutely certain of my French origins.

Karim – Care to put that certainty to the test?

Diane – Not really.

Karim – Come on, humour me. If the results show Arab origins, we'll go all out with a mosque wedding in Paris.

Diane – And what if I win?

Karim – Listen... If you're at least ninety per cent European, I'll agree to a church wedding.

Diane – You must be kidding.

Karim – It's just a bit of fun. What's the harm? You're so confident about your heritage...

Diane – Alright, since you're so persistent... *(She opens a drawer, grabs a pair of scissors, snips a lock of hair, and hands it to Karim)* There you go... But who would've thought that one day, you'd be asking me for a lock of hair for a DNA test.

She leaves. He follows.

Karim – Hang on! We can still talk about this...

Édouard and Thérèse arrive.

Thérèse – I have a feeling something's not right...

Édouard – Don't tell me you're happy about this. That wouldn't be very Christian...

A court silence.

Thérèse – I shouldn't have spoken to her like that, I know.

Édouard – She's quite stubborn. The more we try to convince her that Karim isn't the right man for her, the more determined she becomes to marry him.

Thérèse – Yes, you're right...

A court silence.

Édouard – Mind you, he's a nice lad... and besides, he's got a good job. The Comédie-Française, after all, isn't the Folies Bergère...

Thérèse – Of course, I'm not saying otherwise, but...

Édouard – But?

Thérèse – We don't know his family! Those people don't have the same culture as us. He seems to be very well integrated, but his parents, his brothers, his sisters...

Édouard – Does he have brothers and sisters?

Thérèse – I don't know. I suppose...

Édouard – In any case, we shouldn't pressure her.

Thérèse – Perhaps we could gently advise her not to rush things too much. This marriage does seem a bit hasty, doesn't it?

Édouard – How long have they known each other?

Thérèse – She introduced him to us at Christmas.

Édouard – They must have known each other before.

Thérèse – Yes, but you don't simply decide to get married on a whim.

Édouard – When we got married, we'd only known each other for three months...

A court silence.

Thérèse – That was a different time.

Diane returns, looking unsettled.

Édouard – Everything alright, my dear?

Diane – Super... And you? What's with these conspiratorial faces?

Thérèse – What are you talking about... Are you sure everything's okay?

Édouard – Did you have an argument with Karim?

Diane – Let's just say... We had a little disagreement.

Thérèse – About what? Regarding this marriage?

Diane – He claims that being one hundred percent French for twenty or thirty generations isn't possible.

Édouard – And so?

Diane – So, I'm going to take a test to prove him wrong.

Her parents are stunned.

Thérèse – Pardon...?

Édouard – A test?

Diane – A DNA test!

Thérèse – But that's ridiculous!

Édouard – And it's illegal...

Diane – You just need to have the results sent to Belgium, it seems.

Thérèse – But what do you expect to discover?

Diane – Nothing! It's just to prove to him that... But it seems like it's making you nervous. Do you have something to hide?

Thérèse – Not at all...

Diane – You spent three years working on a book to prove our pure Gaul ancestry. Are you not confident in your research?

Édouard – Of course, but...

Diane – But?

Thérèse – DNA tests are typically used for criminal investigations...

Édouard – ...or for paternity tests.

Thérèse – You know who your parents are, don't you?

Diane – Anyway, it's too late; I already gave him a lock of my hair and signed the consent form.

She leaves. Her parents are dismayed.

Blackout.

Diane arrives with Karim.

Diane – That's it. I think my mother has finally come to terms with having a son-in-law from an immigrant background. She asked if she could invite your parents to dinner.

Karim – Great.

Diane – And then?

Karim – What?

Diane – When will you ask them? When they're available for dinner...

Karim – Oh, right...

Diane – You haven't told them yet that we're getting married...

Karim – I was waiting for the right moment...

Diane – Really? And when is the right moment?

Karim – I'll do it... tonight, I promise.

Diane – Well, they might not be thrilled either to have a Gallic and Catholic daughter-in-law.

Karim – It could be worse.

Diane – Could it?

Karim – You could be Jewish.

Diane – Very funny.

Karim – I'm joking. My parents are like me. They drink pastis. They don't observe Ramadan. They only go to the mosque for weddings and funerals.

Diane – Well, in that case, I'm not sure I'm ready to become part of this family of non-believers...

Karim – Oh, by the way, I forgot, I have the results of your test.

Diane – My test?

Karim – Your DNA test!

He hands her an envelope, which she takes with some apprehension.

Diane – Oh yes, that's right, I forgot about that.

Karim – Of course, I haven't opened it.

Diane – Thank you...

Karim – Aren't you curious to see what it says?

Diane – It's not like I'm anxiously waiting to find out if I have a serious illness, is it? I'll open it later, once you've left. It's personal and confidential, isn't it?

Karim – Confidential... Just a reminder, we did make a bet...

Diane – What are you hoping to discover, exactly?

Karim – Nothing! Absolutely nothing. Since you're absolutely sure of the purity of your heritage...

Diane – I thought you had an appointment.

Karim – I'm heading out now. So, see you tonight...

They kiss. He leaves. Once he's gone, she opens the envelope with some trepidation. She reads the results, and her face falls. She takes out her mobile phone, looks at the sheet again, and dials a number. She waits for her correspondent to answer.

Diane – Yes, I'm Diane de Valmont... I've just had my DNA test results and... Yes, that's right. Valmont, Diane... According to this, I'm fifty per cent Chinese. Is this some kind of joke...? There must be a mistake. No, absolutely not. Neither of my parents is Chinese and I don't look Asian in the slightest... I know it doesn't always show in people of mixed ancestry, but I'm not mixed race! Yes, Diane de Valmont... No chance of an error? That's impossible... *(Her mother comes in)* All right, I have to go. Thank you...

Thérèse – Is there a problem?

Diane – No, no, it's a client who... About this DNA test... Anyway, I can't talk to you about it, it's confidential...

She rushes out. Her mother watches her leave, somewhat worried. Édouard arrives, with a folder in hand.

Thérèse – Are you still working on your manuscript? I thought you sent it to your publisher...

With a conspiratorial air.

Édouard – It's not my manuscript, it's... an investigative report.

Thérèse – An investigative report? You've been retired for over a year...

Édouard – But I've kept some contacts in the police force, luckily.

Thérèse – Luckily? Luckily for whom?

Édouard – For us! It allowed me to find out a bit more about this Karim... and his family.

Thérèse – You didn't do that, did you?

Édouard – Why not? I'm sure that like me, you would prefer to know a bit more about these people before entrusting your daughter to them.

Thérèse – My daughter? I remind you that she's also yours. And do you realise that if she finds out what you've done, the police will have to investigate a parricide...

Édouard – That's precisely why we'll make sure she doesn't find out...

Thérèse – But, Édouard, it's monstrous! What possessed you to do this?

He sits down and opens his folder.

Édouard – So you don't want to know? Too bad, I won't tell you anything...

After a slight hesitation, she sits down next to him and glances at the folder.

Thérèse – Of course, I want to know! What did you find?

He flips through the folder.

Édouard – Nothing.

Thérèse – What do you mean, nothing?

Édouard – The file is completely empty. Neither the parents nor the son have a criminal record. No reports of radicalization either...

Thérèse – You look almost disappointed...

Édouard – Envious, if anything... His father has the Légion d'honneur for heading a Franco-Moroccan cultural association. His mother has been awarded the Order of Arts and Letters for several novels she wrote in French.

Thérèse – And you needed a police investigation to find that out?

Édouard – No, I found that on Wikipedia...

Thérèse – What about Karim?

Édouard glances at the folder.

Édouard – I found several traffic violations, including a speeding ticket that resulted in a suspended licence when he was nineteen.

Thérèse – Is that all?

He looks at the folder again.

Édouard – He only has six points left on his driving licence... We'll have to ask him to drive a bit more carefully.

Thérèse – Are you absolutely certain there's nothing else?

Édouard – Diane is right... They're an old Moroccan family belonging to the upper bourgeoisie of Casablanca.

Thérèse – Don't tell me you've compiled their family tree in addition to their criminal record...

Édouard – The parents decided to stay in France after completing their studies in Paris. That's where they met...

Thérèse – In other words, an exemplary family when it comes to integration.

Édouard – If only Karim were Catholic, he'd be the perfect son-in-law...

A pause.

Thérèse – You take that file right now, and you put it in the recycling bin at the street corner, okay?

Édouard – I'll burn it in the dining room fireplace. *(He gets up to leave, and she gets up too)* Where are you going?

Thérèse – I'm going to confess... We're truly behaving like monsters, aren't we?

Édouard – Mmm...

They leave.

Blackout.

Diane arrives with Karim.

Karim – Tomorrow is the premiere of "The Would-Be Gentleman", will you be able to make it?

Diane – Of course.

Karim – If you'd like to invite your parents, I can arrange for three tickets to be left for you at the box office. It's a play that remains relevant, you know...

Diane – Is there a hidden message...?

Karim – Not at all! What are you looking for?

Diane – Sorry...

Karim – You've seemed a bit on edge lately. Is something bothering you?

Diane – No, no, everything's fine... I... I've just been a bit overwhelmed, that's all... The office has been quite chaotic.

Karim – Take it easy.

Diane – I've only just joined the firm. I still have to prove myself if I ever want to become a partner... And you?

Karim – Oh, you know, us freelancers... We only work when we feel like it... I even wonder why they pay us, since we do it for fun...

Diane – Nonsense... You're a member of the Comédie-Française, you're not a freelancer, you're a salaried employee..

Karim – You're right, it's even more complicated... How can one be both an actor and a salaried employee? It's almost like being a civil servant...

Diane – Yes, we should abolish these kinds of privileges. Like the special pension schemes for railway workers.

Karim – And your parents thinking that you're going to marry a tortured artist...

Diane – Ah, my parents, it's been a while...

A pause.

Karim – By the way, what about the results of your test? You didn't mention them...

Diane – Oh yes, the test, I almost forgot... I have no idea where I put it...

Karim – You don't want to share it with me, do you?

Diane – Not at all...

Karim – What's wrong? It's not exactly what you expected? Did you discover you have five percent Spanish or Italian genes?

A pause. Diane takes a sheet of paper from her pocket and hands it to him.

Diane – Here, take a look.

Karim examines the results.

Karim – No? This can't be true...

Diane – Yes, that's exactly what I thought.

Karim – 50% Asian origin?

Diane – It's nonsense...

Karim – DNA analysis is a proper science. Otherwise courts wouldn't use it as evidence to convict people.

Diane – So, now I'm on trial?

Karim – Not at all! Having foreign origins is not a crime or a source of shame, is it?

Diane – Asian, really... Me? And Asian... that's quite broad, isn't it?

Karim (*reading*) – Northern China, Canton region. That's quite specific.

Diane – These tests are conducted by private labs, not experts appointed by the judiciary. Plus, they're for recreational purposes. Are you certain it's completely reliable?

Karim – It won't give you your biological father's name and address, obviously. But fifty per cent Chinese ancestry means one of your immediate ancestors must have been Chinese. One of them certainly wasn't from Normandy or the Ardèche, like your parents' families supposedly were.

Diane – Do you think I look Asian?

Karim – I'd never really noticed before, but... now that you mention it, there's something about your eyes...

She takes out a pocket mirror and glances at herself.

Diane – You're joking, right?

Karim – Did you know you had Asian ancestors?

Diane – No, I had no idea.

Karim – There must be an explanation... Have your parents ever mentioned travelling to China?

Diane – I don't think so... No.

Karim – In the thirteenth arrondissement of Paris, maybe?

Diane – No, not that I know of.

Karim – Does your mother have any Asian friends? Maybe a grocer? An acupuncturist?

Diane – You're really enjoying this, aren't you...

Karim – It does raise some questions, though, doesn't it?

Diane – What kind of questions?

Karim – Well, for starters... Are you really your father's daughter?

Diane – Oh, really?

Karim – If not, whose daughter are you?

Diane – And what if I'm not?

Karim – Well... Only your mother could answer that. But obviously, it's not an easy question to ask your mother...

Thérèse arrives.

Thérèse – Oh, hello Karim... How are you?

Karim – Very well, thank you.

Thérèse – Can I offer you some coffee... or tea?

Karim – That's kind of you, but I was just about to leave.

Thérèse – I hope I'm not chasing you away.

Karim – Not at all... Tomorrow is the premiere of "The Would-Be Gentleman", and tonight is the final dress rehearsal... By the way, if you'd like, you're my guests, of course.

Thérèse – That's very kind of you; I'll discuss it with my husband.

Karim's phone rings.

Karim (to Diane) – Excuse me a moment...

He goes out to answer the call.

Thérèse – He really is a nice young man...

Diane – Can you both stop saying that?

Thérèse – Saying what?

Diane – That he's a nice young man!

Thérèse – Isn't he nice?

Diane – He is, but... I don't know... Calling him a pleasant young man, what does that imply? That he's a bit simple, is that the idea? I don't want to marry a nice young man!

Thérèse – Oh really?

Diane – Well, no! Dad, he's nice... But I wouldn't want to marry Dad.

Thérèse – You're certainly making me feel better...

Diane – That's not what I meant either...

Thérèse – I can see you're angry with us... We haven't exactly made him welcome, I know. But what do you expect? Parents worry about their children. Especially an only daughter. I'm telling you, though: we're not against this marriage.

Diane – Thank you...

Thérèse – Still, we should meet his parents. Have they confirmed for Sunday?

Diane – Not yet...

Thérèse – I don't know what to cook for them... Do they have any dietary preferences?

Diane – Pardon?

Thérèse – No, I mean... Are there certain foods they don't eat?

Diane – I think they don't really like snails and frog legs.

Thérèse – You know what I mean... I just want to ensure they're comfortable.

Diane – They'll eat anything, don't worry. But you don't have to serve roast pork the first time you meet them... Why not make something Chinese?

Her mother seems a bit surprised.

Thérèse – Why do you want me to prepare a Chinese meal?

Diane – I don't know... Because... for the honeymoon, we were thinking of going to Asia with Karim. What do you think?

Thérèse – Asia? It's quite vast, isn't it? Where in Asia?

Diane – We haven't decided yet. Are you familiar with Asia?

Thérèse – Not really.

Diane – Maybe China?

Thérèse – China is in Asia, right?

Diane – Yes...

Thérèse – Oh, yes, I visited Hong Kong once.

Diane – Hong Kong? You never mentioned that before.

Thérèse – Your grandfather's job involved quite a bit of travelling. I didn't think it was important for you to know...

Diane – How long did you stay?

Thérèse – Not long... Perhaps a week. At that time, Hong Kong wasn't really China.

Diane – And when was this?

Thérèse – I can't quite remember... You weren't born yet. I went with my parents, you know... Yes, I think it was just before I got married...

Édouard arrives.

Édouard – I bumped into Karim. He's a really nice young man... And very polite...

Diane – Polite, especially for an Arab, you mean?

Thérèse – They were considering Hong Kong for their honeymoon.

Édouard – Ah, really? What a strange idea...

Diane – I didn't specifically say Hong Kong, I mentioned Asia.

Édouard – Asia's a big place.

Diane – Is Canton far from Hong Kong?

Édouard – It's about a hundred kilometres, I believe. In the context of China, Canton is like the suburbs of Hong Kong.

Thérèse – You're not suggesting Canton for your honeymoon, are you?

Édouard – What do you know about Canton?

Diane – Nothing... Apart from Cantonese fried rice...

Thérèse – Then why do you want to go on holiday there?

Diane – It's just an idea... We haven't made a decision yet.

Édouard – I thought you might go to Marrakech or somewhere like that. To meet your future in-laws.

Diane – Karim's family is from Casablanca.

Édouard – Marrakech isn't far from Casablanca, is it?

Diane – No... It's roughly the same distance as between Hong Kong and Canton.

Édouard – Well, I'll let you handle these geography matters. My expertise leans more towards history...

Édouard exits. Thérèse seems a bit embarrassed.

Thérèse – And what about that DNA test? Have you received the results?

Diane – Not yet. It takes some time, you know...

Thérèse – That's good, that's good...

Diane – What do you mean, that's good?

Thérèse – No, what I mean was...

Karim returns.

Thérèse – I'll leave you two...

Thérèse exits.

Karim – That was my parents... They're fine with coming over for dinner next Sunday.

Diane – So, you talked to them.

Karim – Of course...

Diane – And then?

Karim – I told them I was marrying a Gaul — a true-blue Frenchwoman — and they were fine with it... But what if I tell them I'm marrying a Chinese woman?

Diane – Exactly... I just discussed it with my mother.

Karim – Discussed what?

Diane – My DNA test results!

Karim looks horrified.

Karim – You didn't actually do that?

Diane – For now, I just asked her if she ever visited Asia.

Karim – That's a relief... So?

Diane – She went to Hong Kong just before she got married...

Karim looks more embarrassed than relieved.

Karim – No...?

Diane – It was shortly before my birth. Everything seems to match up, unfortunately...

Karim – Listen, Diane, I need to tell you something...

Diane – What?

Karim – About that test...

Diane – Yes?

Karim – It was a joke...

Diane – A joke?

Karim – I didn't think you'd believe something like that. Seriously. Chinese, you...?

Diane – But how is that possible? My name is on the results. You're saying this just to reassure me, right?

Karim – I applied in your name, but instead of your lock of hair, I used one from a Chinese friend of mine in Brussels. I wanted to teach you a lesson...

Diane – What? That's completely irresponsible... I was about to ask my mother if my father was really my father...

Karim – I was going to tell you, of course, but my phone rang right at that moment. I didn't think you'd bring it up with your mother immediately...

Diane – I can't believe this... You're completely insane!

Karim – I'm sorry, it was just a joke. A tasteless joke, alright. But you've been driving me crazy with your French heritage...

Diane – I think you'd better leave...

Karim – Diane...

Diane – Right now.

Karim – And what should I tell my parents about Sunday?

Diane – Tell them whatever you want, I don't care.

Karim – Alright, I'll call you when you've calmed down...

Diane – That's right...

Karim – I'm truly sorry...

Karim leaves. Thérèse returns, looking uncomfortable.

Thérèse – Is Karim here?

Diane – He's just left...

Thérèse – Am I disturbing you?

Diane – No. Why?

Thérèse – Can we talk... just the two of us?

Diane – You look serious. Is it that bad?

Thérèse – A bit, yes.

Diane – You're scaring me... You're not sick, are you? You're not going to tell me you have cancer?

Thérèse – No, don't worry. I'm not sick. And neither is your father. But it's still not easy to say...

Diane – I'm listening...

Thérèse – It's better if you sit down.

Diane – I'm fine standing.

Thérèse – It's about that DNA test.

Diane – Yes...? And then?

Thérèse – Since you're going to find out anyway, I'd rather you hear it from me.

Diane – Find out what?

Thérèse – Well...

Diane – What?

Thérèse – Your father... isn't really your father.

A pause.

Diane – I think I'll sit down after all...

She sits.

Thérèse – I understand that it's difficult to hear.

Diane – What do you mean, my father isn't my father?

Thérèse – He's not your biological father, if you prefer.

Diane – Oh, really...?

Thérèse – No.

Diane – Are you saying that... you used artificial insemination? You?

Thérèse – No... artificial, we can't really say that.

Diane – Alright... So who would my father be, then?

Thérèse – Another man...

Diane – Yes, that much... I could have figured that out on my own.

Thérèse – A man I knew just before I married your father.

Diane – A Chinese man from Hong Kong?

Thérèse – A Chinese man? Absolutely not... Why a Chinese man?

Diane – Karim told me that he received the results of my test, and that I had Chinese origins.

Thérèse – He told you that?

Diane – Then he said it was a joke, but maybe he said that to spare my feelings...

Thérèse – No, your real father is not Chinese, I can guarantee you that.

Diane – Alright.

Thérèse – Listen, I'm really sorry, but I'm relieved that I've told you.

Diane – Well, I'm glad for you if you're relieved...

Thérèse – When you talked about this marriage, especially the test thing, naturally... all of that resurfaced for me...

Diane – Yes... skeletons always come out of the closet eventually. And illegitimate children too...

Thérèse – You can't hide the truth forever... Eventually, you have to settle the bill...

Diane is in shock.

Diane – This can't be possible... So... you cheated on Dad? You?

Thérèse – I never cheated on him... It was before I knew your father. Well, Édouard. At least before I married him.

Diane – So it wasn't in Hong Kong, then?

Thérèse – It was in Casablanca.

Diane – In Casablanca?

Thérèse – I spent six months there with my parents, just before getting married. At the time, your grandfather was stationed there as an embassy secretary.

Diane – You never told me you lived in Morocco!

Thérèse – I preferred to forget that period of my life.

Diane – And then? Who is my real father?

Thérèse – While we were there, we had a chauffeur. I was very young and a bit naive. He was a bit older than me. He was handsome...

Diane – A chauffeur? Arab, I suppose...

Thérèse – His name was Salim... Shortly after, I became pregnant.

Diane – And then?

Thérèse – I didn't tell anyone, not even Salim. Marriage with him was totally unthinkable. My parents would have disinherited me... A servant. Arab...

Diane – And what happened next?

Thérèse – I returned to France with my parents. I met Édouard, and a few weeks later, we were married.

Diane – And he thinks I'm his daughter...

Thérèse – But you are his daughter! He raised you with me.

Diane – You know what I mean. Does he know that I'm not his biological daughter?

Thérèse – I don't know... We've never discussed it...

Diane processes all this information.

Diane – So my whole life is built on a lie... And yours too...

Thérèse – I would say rather... on an unspoken truth.

Diane – And you, who uphold Christian values...

Her mother is devastated.

Thérèse – Please, don't judge me... It was a different time...

Diane – We were already in the year 2000, weren't we?

Thérèse – I'm asking you not to tell your father, of course. Not yet...

Diane – To avoid spoiling the wedding, right? We'll just tell him right after the ceremony... What hypocrisy!

Thérèse – The fact that you're marrying a boy from Casablanca awakened these painful memories in me. That's why I wasn't very comfortable with this story...

Diane – And do you really think I can keep this family secret all to myself?

Thérèse – In any case, you had to find out someday... I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders...

Diane – Yes... Well, I didn't, as it happens...

Thérèse is on the verge of tears.

Thérèse – I hope you can forgive me someday...

Diane – Is my father still alive?

Thérèse – I don't know... I have no idea, I swear...

Édouard arrives, holding a book.

Édouard – There it is, the baby!

Diane – I'm sorry...?

Édouard – My book! I just received the first copy!

Thérèse – Ah, yes... The book...

Fade out.

Diane is with Karim.

Karim – No... Are you pulling a prank on me too?

Diane – Unfortunately, no...

Karim – So, in the end, you're 50% Arab?

Diane – According to the DNA analysis, I don't know, but according to my mother, yes...

Karim – Would you like me to arrange another test for you, just to be sure?

Diane – My mother is Catholic; I don't see why she would boast about having had a child out of wedlock if it wasn't true.

Karim – You're right... A mother's confession is even more reliable than a DNA test.

Diane – I can't believe it...

Karim – Come to think of it, when you know... You do have a distinct Mediterranean look. That's probably what attracted me to you in the first place, even though I didn't know...

Diane – How could she hide this from me for all these years...

Karim – As you said, she had no reason to boast about it. And then there's your father...

Diane – Yes...

Karim – The good news is, with all this in mind, there's no longer any reason not to welcome an Arab into the family...

Diane – Mmm...

Karim – In that case, maybe it would be better to have the wedding at the mosque, right? And why not in Casablanca? Since you're also from there!

Diane – You're making fun of me...

Karim – But wait, I'm thinking... We might even be related. We wouldn't want to end up being first cousins... Do you know who your father is?

Diane – He was the family chauffeur...

Karim – The daughter of a servant...? Well, at least we're not at risk of a consanguineous marriage. I come from a prominent Moroccan family, you see.

Diane – I'm happy for you...

Karim – Oh yes, but then... with all this, I don't know if my parents will still agree to this marriage.

Diane – Because I'm an illegitimate child?

Karim – Because you're the daughter of an Arab chauffeur! I told them I was marrying into a family that's been French for thirty generations...

Diane – Thank you so much for your support... I just found out that my father isn't my real father, and he doesn't even know. It's not easy to deal with, you know!

Karim – I'm sorry, you're right... But you went on and on about your 100% Gaulish family tree...

Diane – Actually, all of this is your fault!

Karim – What?

Diane – If you hadn't pushed me to take that DNA test. And if you hadn't lied to me about the results!

Karim – If that test had really been yours, you would have also realised that you're half Arab...

Diane – Maybe... but I would have never thought of getting a DNA analysis done!

Karim – And you would have lived in the lie for the rest of your life!

Diane – I wasn't seeking the truth at all costs, unlike you. I don't care about the truth!

Karim – Nice attitude...

Diane – Well then, if I'm not good enough for you and your ministerial family, you can find someone else. Maybe an Arab princess! Now, if you'll excuse me, I need some time alone...

Karim – Don't take it like that. I apologize, sincerely.

Diane – And are you even sure about your own origins?

Karim – What?

Diane – Your mother could have cheated on your father too.

Karim – My mother. No, that's really not her style, I swear.

Diane – Because it's the kind of thing my mother would do, perhaps...? You're becoming really insulting.

Karim – That's not what I meant.

Diane – Take the test! You made me take one. It's only fair, right?

Karim – This is ridiculous...

Diane – Oh yeah? Well, don't show yourself in front of me until you've given me the results of your DNA analysis. And in the meantime, get lost!

Karim – All right, all right... If you insist... I'll do it...

He moves towards her to make up, but she pushes him away.

Diane – I thought I'd told you that you could go...

Karim – All right, I'll do it now... The express service takes three days. It's a bit more expensive, but...

Diane – Very well, then, see you soon.

Karim leaves. Édouard arrives.

Édouard – I just bumped into Karim; he seemed worried, is everything alright?

Diane – Everything's fine, don't worry.

Édouard – I'm looking forward to meeting his parents this Sunday. We'll also need to discuss the details of the wedding...

Diane – The details...? It sounds like you're talking about a real estate transaction...

Édouard – We'll need to manage the multi-faith aspect, won't we? I assume you want to get married in the church, but we'll also need to plan something for... We have no issue with a mixed marriage, but it's a bit more complicated, isn't it...?

Diane – Well, you're going to be pleased, it might be much simpler now.

Édouard – Oh really? And why is that?

Diane – Because we're not getting married anymore... Isn't that what you wanted?

She leaves. Édouard seems stunned. Thérèse arrives.

Thérèse – What's going on?

Édouard – It's Diane... She doesn't want to get married anymore... Do you think it's because of us?

Thérèse looks shocked.

Thérèse – I hope not... I would never forgive myself... Did you burn your police report properly?

Blackout.

Diane is there. Karim arrives, and she looks surprised.

Karim – Am I bothering you?

Diane – Who let you in?

Karim – Your mother... She hugged me and started crying...

Diane – No...?

Karim – Then she told me three times that I was welcome here... and she offered me a lemonade.

Diane – Well, there you go, we're making progress...

Karim – You're right. Last time, it was mint tea.

Diane – Maybe next time, it'll be an aperitif with a charcuterie board.

A pause.

Karim – Since you weren't answering the phone, I thought I'd come over... Are you okay?

Diane – I told you I didn't want to see you until you had the results of your test...

A pause.

Karim – Well, precisely, I just received them.

Diane – And so?

Karim seems embarrassed.

Karim – So... Here you go.

He hands her a sheet, which she examines closely... before widening her eyes.

Diane – This can't be true... Is this another one of your tasteless jokes?

Karim – No, unfortunately not.

Diane – Are you sure those were really your hair samples?

Karim – Positive.

Diane – 50% Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry! Are you sure there's no mistake?

Karim – I called the lab. There's no mistake.

Diane – You, Jewish?

Karim – Well, then again, Jews, Arabs... we're all cousins, right? It's not surprising that we have common genes.

Diane looks at the sheet again.

Diane – Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry... Are you kidding me? These are Jews from Eastern Europe! We're a far cry from Morocco...

Karim – Yes, that's what I thought too...

Diane – So, your mother might have slept with someone other than her husband?

Karim – With a Jew? Even if my mother isn't religious, she's still supportive of the Palestinian people...

Diane – Mine's a Catholic, my ancestors went on the Crusades, and she slept with an Arab.

Karim – Regardless, I can't see myself asking her about it.

Diane – Ah yes, but you see, I'm not sure if that's even possible...

Karim – What?

Diane – Us! If I'm half Arab, I'm not sure if I can marry a guy who's half Jewish...

Karim – I wonder if you were right... These tests should be banned for common folk...

Diane – Yes...

A pause.

Karim – And how's it going with your parents? Have you talked to your father?

Diane – How do you expect me to talk to him?

Karim – Finding out that his only daughter isn't really his... That won't be easy to digest, that's for sure.

Diane – Imagine if my parents get divorced right before our wedding... That would be embarrassing, wouldn't it?

Karim – On the other hand, you can't hide the truth from him forever, can you?

Diane – Why not? You know, Catholics are like the mafia. We've always practiced omertà... Whether it's called lying by omission or the seal of confession... As long as it doesn't come out in public, it's as if it never existed. Otherwise, half of the good Catholics would be in jail. Not to mention the priests...

Karim – I think you should tell him...

Diane – Oh yeah? And what about you? Are you going to tell your mother about your Jewish roots?

Karim – To bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into our home...? I don't know...

Diane – So? How does it feel to know you're half Muslim and half Jewish?

Karim – I'm an atheist anyway, so... And they say Jewishness is passed down through the mother... not the father.

Diane – Because the mother is the only one we're really sure about... Proof right here.

Karim – In that case, I wouldn't really be Jewish...

Diane – You should tell your father that... That should reassure him...

Karim – We were wondering if we should get married in the church or the mosque... Maybe we should do it in the synagogue.

Diane – Yes...

Karim – And why not all three?

Diane – At least then we'd be absolutely sure we're married...

Édouard arrives.

Karim – I'll leave you... I think you have things to discuss...

Édouard – No, you can stay! Besides, I'm just passing through...

Karim – I was leaving anyway...

Karim exits.

Édouard – I'm looking for your mother. Haven't seen her, have you?

Diane – No...

Édouard – Don't tell me you had another argument with Karim?

Diane – No, no, everything's fine. But you'll laugh, he did a DNA test too, and he just found out he has Jewish origins...

Édouard – Oh really...?

Diane – Doesn't that surprise you more?

Édouard – Since he's not Catholic like us anyway, Jewish or Arab, what does it change...

Diane – Nothing, you're right...

A pause.

Édouard – And what about you, have you received the results of yours?

Diane – Yes...

Édouard – And then?

Diane – Nothing surprising on that front...

Édouard – Really?

Diane – Really.

Édouard – You can tell me anything, you know. I'm your father, and you'll always be my daughter...

A pause.

Diane – So you already know...

Édouard – Of course.

Diane – Did Mum just tell you?

Édouard – Your mother and I have never talked about it. But I've always known...

Diane – You've never talked about it?

Édouard – No...

Diane – Why not?

Édouard – I didn't want to embarrass her... And besides, it's not like she cheated on me. It happened before our marriage... It was a one-time thing.

Diane – A one-time thing? That's how you see it... I remind you, we're talking about me here...

Édouard – You were conceived before I even began seeing your mother. Well, we already knew each other, but... When she came back from Morocco, we started going out. It was a dream come true for me... She was a very beautiful woman, you know. I never imagined she'd be interested in me.

Diane – And she hid her situation from you...

Édouard – She didn't need to tell me anything. I understood very quickly. And I... I already knew I couldn't have children. I loved her, I married her as she was. I didn't ask her any questions...

Diane – Admit it, it's hard to understand.

Édouard – I loved her. I thought I was acting like a gentleman. To save her honour. She was very grateful to me. And I believe that over time, she came to love me too...

Diane – And me, in all of this?

Édouard – To me, you were my daughter. I thought it was up to your mother to tell you, if she wished. You know, there are also parents who hide from their child that they were adopted...

Diane – Yes, but I wasn't abandoned by my father, was I? Mum told me he didn't even know he had a child...

Édouard – I'm truly sorry that you had to find out like this.

Diane – And what about my father, then? I mean, my biological father...

Édouard – I don't know... Your mother never went back to Morocco. I've never been there either. That's actually why, when you told us your fiancé was Moroccan...

Diane – Do you think he's still alive?

Édouard – You'd have to ask your mother...

Thérèse arrives.

Thérèse – Ask what?

Édouard – I'll leave you...

He exits.

Diane – We were talking about my father... My real father... I wanted to know if he was still alive.

Thérèse – So you told him...

Diane – I didn't need to... He said he always knew.

Thérèse – That doesn't surprise me...

Diane – So what?

Thérèse – What?

Diane – My father! Is he still alive?

Thérèse – I don't know... I never tried to find out about him. But if you want to know, I think there's always a way...

Diane – Will you help me?

Thérèse – I believe we owe you that...

They hug, on the verge of tears.

Diane – The more I think about it, the more I feel like this wedding should take place in Casablanca. If I find my father, it would be an opportunity to bring together the three monotheistic religions...

Thérèse – The three?

Diane – I'll explain later...

Blackout.

Diane and Karim enter.

Karim – Sorry to hear that your biological father is no longer alive.

Diane – He passed away a year after I was born.

Karim – Due to an illness?

Diane – It was a car accident. He worked as a chauffeur. The accident happened on the Casablanca corniche, and both he and his new employer died on the spot...

Karim – The Casablanca corniche?

Diane – Yes... It makes me think of that famous scene with Cary Grant and Grace Kelly in *To Catch a Thief*... The sports car racing along the winding coast road near Monaco...

Karim – Well, the Casablanca corniche is quite different.

Diane – What do you mean?

Karim – I mean, it's more like the Promenade des Anglais than the Monaco corniche, you know? It's all flat...

Diane – Here I was, trying to create a romantic image of my father's death... and I missed again...

Karim – I'm sorry... A car crash on the Casablanca corniche... The road is straight.

Diane – Maybe he was drunk.

Karim – I wouldn't have liked to have him as my chauffeur, that's for sure.

Diane – Anyway, thank you for your support, it lifts my spirits...

Karim – On the other hand, these reunions with your biological father on the occasion of our wedding wouldn't have been very easy.

Diane – No, not for anyone...

Karim – In any case, I'm glad to see that all of this isn't affecting you too much. You're more radiant than ever.

Diane – That's because I took another test. And this time, it was definitely mine.

Karim – You took another DNA test? Don't tell me you finally learned that you were indeed your father's daughter? In a direct line...

Diane – I said a test, I didn't say a DNA test.

Karim – A test for what, then?

Diane – Guess...

Karim – I don't know...

Diane – My parents are right. You're a nice guy, but not very sharp... I hope this child doesn't take after you.

Karim – No... A pregnancy test?

Diane – I'm pregnant, Karim.

Karim – That's fantastic!

Diane – If you want, we can do a test to check who the father is.

Karim – Never! With this one, we won't go digging into where it comes from. I promise...

Diane – So this child, will it be Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim?

Karim – Let's say a mix of all three...

Diane – Even better, none of the above.

Karim – Really?

Diane – In the end, you're right. We won't have the baby baptised or circumcised...

Karim – Do you already know it's a boy?

Diane – If it's a girl, it will be even easier.

Karim – Let's give the child a civil naming ceremony. And the wedding?

Diane – We'll do it at the town hall.

Karim – You're right. A bride already up the duff at the altar would hardly look proper, anyway.

They share a kiss. Édouard and Thérèse suddenly arrive, catching them off guard. Everyone seems a bit embarrassed.

Thérèse – Excuse us...

Édouard – We'll leave you in peace...

Diane – No, no, we were leaving anyway... We just came to say goodbye...

Karim – My parents have invited us to spend the weekend at their country house in Cap-d'Ail.

Diane – Near Monaco.

Thérèse – Ah, I see... Very well...

Édouard – Will you be driving, Karim?

Karim – Um... yes, we'll take my car...

Édouard – Then promise me one thing...

Karim – Yes...

Édouard – Don't drive too fast on the mountain roads, okay?

Diane – Why do you say that? Because of the film?

Thérèse – What film?

Édouard – We just want you to be careful on the road, that's normal.

Thérèse – Speeding can happen so easily...

Édouard – It would be a shame if you had your driving licence taken away again...

Karim and Diane exchange puzzled glances. Édouard and Thérèse look embarrassed.

Blackout.

End.

About the author

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

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

<https://jeanpierremartinez.net/>

<https://comediatheque.net/>

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

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

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

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

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

<https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/>

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

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

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

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

Collection of sketches

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

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