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Gay Friendly

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Gay Friendly

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A bag full of cash might pay for your son's lavish gay wedding. But money that falls into your lap can just as easily land you in trouble...

Characters

Gaby: man (or woman)

Alex: man (or woman)

Sam: man

Vic: woman

Gaby and Alex are a same-sex couple and must be played by performers of the same gender. This version is written for three men and one woman.

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Gaby is on the sofa, leafing through a travel brochure and sipping a tropical cocktail. A television, its screen hidden from the audience, is on with the sound muted. Gaby stops at a page in the brochure.

Gaby *(dreamily)* – America... Why not? Las Vegas, Caesars Palace, the slot machines... *(The smile fades.)* Five thousand euros for a week? I'd be bankrupt before I even set foot in a casino.

Something on the television catches Gaby's eye. Gaby picks up the remote and turns up the sound.

Newsreader – The winning lottery numbers were five, nine, twelve, seventeen and twenty-four, with six and eleven as the bonus numbers. The lucky winner takes home the modest sum of fifty million euros...

Gaby mutes the television again.

Gaby – Why do I keep buying lottery tickets...? *(The phone rings.)* Sam, darling! How are you? Laundry day, is it? How did I guess? You only come to see us when you've run out of clean underwear. I'm exaggerating, of course. It's my inner overprotective mother... Found a job yet? Any news? *(Suddenly excited.)* Don't tell me you're getting married! Sort of? That's either too much information or nowhere near enough. Come on, tell me! You want it to be a surprise? Fine, see you soon. Love you too. *(Gaby puts the phone away and sighs.)* Sort of... How can anyone be sort of married?

Alex enters with an expensive designer handbag, leaves it discreetly in a corner, then kisses Gaby on the lips. Alex notices the cocktail.

Alex – Living the high life, are we?

Gaby – It's cheaper than a plane ticket, and for five minutes I can pretend I'm on holiday. Want one?

Alex – Maybe later...

Gaby – How was your day, my love?

Alex – Let's just say... it was a very rewarding day.

Gaby – Rewarding? Emotionally, you mean?

Alex – That too. I'll tell you all about it.

Gaby – Well, I've found the perfect place for our honeymoon.

Alex – Honeymoon? We'd need to be married first... and I haven't said yes yet.

Gaby – We fought for years for the right to get married!

Alex – It's a right, not an obligation. Like abortion. I'm all for the right to it. That doesn't mean I want to go through with it.

Gaby – So marriage is like abortion now? How romantic.

Alex – We've been through this, Gaby. I just think getting married is a bit ridiculous. Gay or otherwise.

Gaby – Ridiculous?

Alex – For a start, which one of us would wear white?

Gaby – Me, obviously!

Alex – At your age? Isn't that a bit much?

Gaby – Thank you for that delicate reminder of my age.

Alex – Sorry.

Gaby – You can be gay and a blushing bride, you know.

Alex – A honeymoon... at our age... *(Gaby gives Alex a withering look.)* Besides, if all you want is a holiday, we don't have to get married to take one. Where would you go?

Gaby – What about Las Vegas?

Alex – Las Vegas? People usually go there to get married in five minutes and save themselves the honeymoon. Why Las Vegas?

Gaby – I don't know... I've always dreamed of going to one of those casinos, with rows of slot machines as far as the eye can see... I feel like one is waiting for me somewhere with the jackpot...

Alex – The jackpot...

Gaby – I doubt we can afford it just now. Especially if our unemployed son is planning a wedding of his own.

Alex – Excuse me?

Gaby – Sam just called. He's on his way over. He told me he's getting married... sort of.

Alex – See? We can't get married at the same time as our son!

Gaby – Why not?

Alex – Getting married at the same time as your own son? Now that would be ridiculous. *(A pause.)* Hang on. What exactly did he mean by getting married... sort of?

Gaby – That's what he said...

Alex – And what do you think he means by that?

Gaby – Maybe he's gay...

Alex – You think?

Gaby – Like father, like son.

Alex – Which father? He's got two.

Gaby – We've never seen him with a girl.

Alex – We've never seen him with a boy either.

Gaby – Maybe he was afraid to introduce them to us.

Alex – With two gay parents? Coming out should be the easiest thing in the world for him.

Gaby – Or maybe it's the other way around... He's straight, and he never dared to tell us, fearing he'd disappoint us...

Alex – Disappoint us? Don't be absurd.

Gaby – With gay parents, perhaps coming out as straight isn't as easy as it sounds.

Alex – Have we traumatised the poor boy that badly? Perhaps those people who say gay couples shouldn't raise children have a point after all.

Gaby – I'm starting to wonder whether it's possible to be gay and homophobic at the same time. First you're against gay marriage, now you're against gay parents!

Alex – I'm not against gay marriage. I'm against marriage, full stop! Am I not allowed to think it's old-fashioned?

Gaby starts to sniff the air suspiciously.

Gaby – Something smells different in here since you came home.

Alex – You think so?

Gaby – Cheap cologne... *(Sniffs again.)* And far too much of it. *(Dramatically.)* You're leaving me for someone of the opposite sex!

Alex – Don't be ridiculous! Where did that come from?

Gaby – You're hiding something from me, Alex... I know you... What's going on?

Alex *(hesitating)* – As it happens... we might be able to afford Las Vegas after all.

Gaby's face lights up with a smile.

Gaby – Have we won the lottery? *(The smile vanishes.)* No, impossible. I just heard the numbers. We've lost again!

Alex – It's a bit more complicated than that...

Gaby – Go on, then.

Alex retrieves the designer bag and puts it on the coffee table.

Gaby – So that's what's making the whole room smell of cologne! What on earth have you got in there?

Alex – I found it on the metro.

Gaby – A designer bag? I thought you found that sort of thing vulgar.

Alex – Depends what's inside.

Gaby – And what's inside?

Alex – Money. Lots of it.

Gaby – Money...?

Alex – Look...

Gaby opens the bag, reaches inside and pulls out a thick bundle of banknotes.

Gaby – Don't tell me that's real.

Alex – I didn't believe it either. I thought it was a hidden-camera prank. Perhaps the handle would set off an alarm, or the bag was attached to an elastic cord, or someone had rigged up a bucket of water above my head. But nothing happened.

Gaby – And how many stacks are there, like that?

Alex – I didn't have time to count. But the bag's stuffed with them.

Gaby – And you found it on the metro? *(Suspiciously.)* When you say found... you didn't steal it, did you?

Alex – It was sitting on the seat beside me. I thought it belonged to one of the two bottle-blonde women opposite. I was annoyed that a handbag was taking up a seat on a crowded train. But they got off at the next stop and left it there.

Gaby – And then?

Alex – Then an elderly woman wanted the seat, so I picked the bag up and put it on my lap. Without thinking.

Gaby – Instinctively...

Alex – When my stop came, nobody had claimed it, so I took it with me. I thought I'd look inside for an address or phone number so I could return it.

Gaby – And?

Alex – The only numbers in there are the serial numbers on the notes.

Gaby – That's crazy... But what do you plan to do with it?

Alex – For the moment, it feels as though I've won the lottery. Can't I enjoy the feeling for five minutes?

Gaby – Yes, well... This money belongs to someone...

Alex – There's no name or address! What are we supposed to do, run an advert? 'Found: designer handbag full of cash. Please call to arrange collection.' We'd never get the phone off the hook.

Gaby – There's still the police...

Alex – Of course I've thought about it. But handing a fortune like that to the police? It would break my heart.

Gaby – Come on, Alex, we can't keep this money... It's not ours!

Alex – And who's to say the police would find the rightful owner? Perhaps the owner wouldn't dare come forward.

Gaby – To claim a bag full of cash?

Alex – Suppose it's money someone's been hiding from the tax authorities and is about to smuggle abroad.

Gaby – In the metro?

Alex – I don't know... What do you suggest, then?

Gaby – It is tempting, but we can't keep it. Especially if it's dirty money!

Alex – Money's always a bit dirty, if you ask me. Any psychoanalyst will tell you that. This lot smells rather nice, though.

Gaby – They say money has no smell. Well, this certainly has one.

Alex – It's worth thinking about for five minutes, isn't it?

Gaby – What if the notes are counterfeit? We'd get caught the moment we tried to spend them.

Alex – We need to decide quickly. If we don't report it now, we could be charged with handling stolen money.

Gaby – One thing's for sure, this money wasn't deposited in front of you in the metro by an anonymous benefactor...

Alex – Why not? Perhaps it's our guardian angel, making sure we can give our son a wonderful gay wedding.

Gaby – We're a bit old for miracles. And I'm not sure the angels approve of gay weddings.

Alex – Perhaps heaven has become more gay-friendly.

Doorbell rings.

Gaby – Oh my God, it must be Sam...

Alex – I'll put this away for now, and we'll talk about it later, okay?

Alex puts the stack back in the bag and closes it. Gaby is about to go open the door.

Gaby – I can't wait to find out if it's a boy or a girl...

Alex – Is his girlfriend already pregnant?

Gaby – No! To find out if Sam is going to introduce us to a boy or a girl!

Alex – Oh, right. Sorry. I've got other things on my mind.

Alex puts the bag in a corner of the room. Sam arrives, also with a bag in hand.

Sam – Hello, Dad. Hello, Mum.

Gaby – Very funny.

Sam gives Alex a kiss on the cheek.

Alex – Hello, Sam.

Sam – How are things?

Gaby – Fine. Why?

Sam – You both seem a bit strange...

Alex and Gaby exchange an embarrassed look.

Alex – Well then, you're alone!

Sam – Uh, yes...

Gaby takes Sam's bag.

Gaby – Here, give me your dirty laundry. I'll put it in the wash.

Alex – We really didn't raise him well, Gaby! Aren't you ashamed, at your age, to still bring your laundry to your parents to wash?

Sam – It gives me an excuse to visit you.

Gaby – That's kind...

Alex – How about a washing machine for your birthday?

Gaby – Or you could put one on your wedding list.

Sam – My wedding list?

Alex – Well? Where's the lucky girl?

Gaby – Or the lucky boy?

Alex gives Gaby an intrigued look.

Sam – Well, that is...

Alex – Really... You're keeping us in suspense...

Sam – About what...?

Alex – Gaby was worried that...

Gaby – Forget it, it's completely ridiculous.

Alex – And besides, the important thing is that you're happy, right?

Sam – I see... So, you already suspected something...

Gaby – When you told me you were getting married... sort of.

Sam – Well... It's a kind of union. A lifelong commitment, really. And it involves celibacy.

Alex – Excuse me...?

Sam – But I thought you understood...

Gaby – A union without sex?

Alex – Sounds like marriage to me.

Gaby – You mean a civil partnership? That's absolutely fine with us.

Sam – That's good.

Gaby – So?

Sam – I've decided to become a priest.

Gaby and Alex stare at him in disbelief.

Gaby – Can you repeat that?

Sam – I've thought it through. My mind's made up. I'm entering the seminary.

Gaby – Tell me this is a joke...

Sam – I knew you'd react like this, but my faith is unshakable. And faith can move mountains.

Alex – Your faith? The last time you went to Mass was for your grandfather's funeral!

Sam – The Lord moves in mysterious ways. I know my conversion seems sudden, but it's sincere. I've had a revelation.

Gaby – A revelation?

Alex – Did you see the Virgin Mary?

Gaby – Remember when he was little, he had his mystical phase.

Alex – That's right. He used to hear voices. Like Joan of Arc.

Gaby – I almost wish he were gay instead.

Alex – Being a priest and being gay aren't mutually exclusive, you know.

Sam – It's not as if I've just told you I've got cancer.

Gaby – At least there's treatment for that.

Alex – Does this mean I'll have to call you Father?

Gaby – You're doing this to punish us, aren't you?

Sam – People don't become priests to punish their parents. They do it to serve God.

Gaby – Oh, absolutely...

Alex – What can we say to that?

Gaby – Well, at least he could marry us in church.

Alex – The Church doesn't marry same-sex couples, remember?

Gaby – Perhaps he'd make an exception for his parents. A church wedding does have more style.

Sam – What's that smell? Did somebody spill a whole bottle of cologne?

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

Sam – Forgot what?

Alex – On the bright side, if we committed a terrible sin, we'd have a trustworthy priest to confess to.

Gaby – Couldn't you be a Protestant minister instead? At least you'd be allowed to marry.

Alex – Or join a church that allows polygamy. You could have several wives!

Gaby – At least you could have a sex life.

Alex – Whether that's normal is another question.

Gaby – There are churches that even have openly gay ministers.

Alex – Pity we're not in one of those churches.

Sam – Tempting as it sounds, I'm sticking with the Roman Catholic Church.

Alex – Look on the bright side. You were unemployed. Priesthood's a secure job, isn't it? And there aren't exactly queues of applicants. Teaching's almost a religious calling these days, too. You may be better off as a country priest than a teacher in a rough school. Where will you be posted?

Sam – Wherever God calls me.

Alex – I'd avoid being a worker-priest, with all the factory closures these days. Though with the shortage of vocations, I doubt God will be making anyone redundant any time soon.

Gaby, completely overwhelmed, looks for an excuse to leave.

Gaby – I'll put this dirty washing away and splash some water on my face.

Dejected, Gaby leaves with the bag of dirty laundry.

Alex – Apart from that, how's life?

Sam – It's okay...

Alex – I'll get us a drink. We could all do with something stronger. Whisky? Port? Sorry, we're out of communion wine.

Sam – Whatever you've got. I'll pray for your souls while I wait.

Alex – Certainly...

Alex goes to fetch drinks. Sam's phone rings. While Sam talks, Gaby slips back in to collect the bag. Hearing the conversation, Gaby puts the bag down again and stays to listen.

Sam – Hello? Yes, I'm here. You've got the address? Great, see you in a minute. *(Laughs.)* You won't believe this. I told them I was going to become a priest! It just came to me as a joke. And they believed me! It's almost frightening that my own parents think I'd make a priest. What sort of son do they think I am? *(Alex returns with drinks and overhears the conversation.)* You should've seen their faces. There's a strange atmosphere here today. Otherwise they'd never have swallowed it. I hope it's not money trouble... I wonder if this is the right time to... *(He turns and sees Alex and Gaby glaring at him.)* Right. See you in a minute.

Sam puts away his phone.

Gaby – You had us going, didn't you? Aren't you ashamed?

Sam – Sorry. I couldn't resist. You were so desperate for me to have a big announcement.

Alex – Trying to give us a heart attack so you can inherit sooner?

Sam laughs.

Sam – Honestly, you fell for it completely!

Gaby – So, is your friend arriving soon?

Sam – Yes, they're on their way.

Alex – When you say your friend, do you mean...

Gaby – A boyfriend or a girlfriend?

The doorbell rings.

Sam – I'll get it...

Alex – We'll finally find out...

Vic enters in jeans, leather jacket and motorcycle helmet. The helmet hides her face, making it impossible to tell whether the visitor is a man or a woman. She carries a bottle of champagne, which she hands to Sam.

Sam – This is Vic, the person who... shares my place.

Gaby – Vic? Short for Victor or Victoria? *(Vic removes her helmet.)* Victoria, then! A girl!

Alex shakes hands with Vic and winces.

Alex – That's quite a handshake. *(To Sam.)* And you bruise so easily.

Sam – Vic has a black belt in judo.

Gaby – Thank heaven. My son isn't gay!

Sam and Vic exchange an embarrassed look.

Alex – Being gay isn't a disease. Sometimes I think you're more homophobic than I am.

Vic – Lovely to finally meet you.

Gaby – Finally? So you've been keeping her a secret for quite a while, Sam.

Vic (*embarrassed*) – Well, that is...

Sam – Anyway, the good news is you won't have to wash my dirty underwear much longer.

Alex *(to Vic)* – So you're taking over his laundry? That's hardly a triumph for feminism.

Gaby – Don't let him get away with it, Vic. We've spoiled him terribly.

Sam – I meant we're going to buy a washing machine. Several, in fact.

Alex – Several?

Sam – I'll tell you about it later...

Gaby – Please, Vic, sit down. Make yourself at home.

Sam hands the bottle to Gaby.

Sam – Vic didn't want to arrive empty-handed.

Alex – Excellent! We've got plenty to celebrate.

Sam – Oh, really? You too?

Gaby – Well, we're getting married too. Aren't we, Alex?

Vic – You are?

Sam – Getting married...? To each other?

Alex – Very funny...

Vic – Actually, we're just flatmates and business partners.

Alex – See? They think marriage is old-fashioned too. They prefer to live together without the paperwork.

Gaby – 'Living together'. It doesn't exactly set my heart racing.

Alex – Sounds more like a tax form than a love letter, doesn't it?

Gaby – If you could take care of our guests for a moment...

Alex *(to Vic)* – Let me take your jacket.

Vic – I'm fine, thanks.

Gaby – I hope you found it easy to come to our place.

Vic – Sorry I'm late. There are police everywhere outside.

Sam – They've blocked off the entire street.

Gaby – Really?

Sam sees the bag.

Sam – Whose designer bag is that? I thought you both hated that sort of thing. Are you turning posh on me?

Gaby – Should we tell him?

Sam – Tell me what?

Alex – Why are there so many police outside?

Vic – Apparently there's been a burglary at a mansion nearby. A wealthy billionaire's house.

Alex – No kidding...

Sam – A wealthy billionaire? Are there poor ones? Times must be hard.

Vic – The thieves apparently escaped on the metro.

Gaby – The metro?

Sam – They've closed the nearest station.

Vic – Fortunately, I came on my motorcycle.

Gaby *(to Alex)* – You got off at that station, didn't you?

Alex – I must have got through just before they shut it.

Gaby tries to push the designer bag behind the couch.

Sam – By the way, what were you going to tell me?

Alex – I've forgotten. Probably nothing important.

Vic takes a seat on the couch where the bag is discreetly hidden.

Vic – It smells lovely in here.

Sam – It's like a perfume counter in here. Where's that smell coming from?

Alex and Gaby exchange an embarrassed look.

Alex – Shall we open that champagne?

Sam – Oh, right, the champagne...

Vic – I don't think it's very cold.

Gaby – I'll grab some glasses.

Sam – We'll get the glasses. Come on, Vic, give me a hand.

Sam and Vic leave.

Alex – The good news is that the notes are genuine.

Gaby – The bad news is that they're almost certainly stolen.

Alex – We've got to hide them until we decide what to do.

Gaby – We're in over our heads, Alex. Look at us, lying and hiding things... even from our son.

Alex – If he hadn't brought that biker here, we could've discussed it as a family. But we don't know Vic. We don't even know for certain she's a woman!

Gaby – You're right. She could be a police officer. Or a tax inspector.

Alex – Either way, we'd be in trouble.

Gaby – What do you mean?

Alex – The police would arrest us. The tax inspector would ask for a cut.

Gaby – And you told me this money was a gift from our guardian angel!

Alex – Even guardian angels have accountants.

Sam and Vic come back empty-handed.

Sam – Are you two arguing again? Sorry, we couldn't find the champagne glasses.

Gaby – I moved things around in the cupboards. Can't remember where I put them.

Alex – Always tidying everything away. Then no one can find a thing.

Gaby – Don't move, I'll go...

Sam takes a few steps and stumbles over the designer bag.

Sam – You'd better move this bag. Someone could trip over it. *(Picks it up.)* Good heavens, it weighs a ton! Going on holiday?

Gaby – We haven't decided yet.

Sam – Who does the bag belong to, anyway?

Alex and Gaby share an embarrassed glance.

Gaby – We haven't decided that either.

Sam – What do you mean, you haven't decided?

Gaby attempts to steer the conversation in a different direction.

Gaby – Would anyone like a little something to eat with the champagne?

Vic – Sure, why not?

Sam – Got any biscuits? Or chocolate fingers, perhaps?

Gaby – Sorry, we've only got peanuts and crackers.

Sam – Not exactly the perfect match for champagne, but never mind.

Gaby exits.

Alex *(making conversation)* – So, Vic, what do you do for a living?

Vic – I deliver pizzas.

Alex – Oh. Very nice.

Silence ensues.

Vic – Just until Sam and I get our business going, though. I know what people think when they hear 'pizza delivery'...

Alex gives an anxious look to Sam, who still holds the designer bag.

Alex *(distracted)* – Don't worry, we're very open-minded. Besides, you don't look like a police officer or a tax inspector. I'll go and help Gaby.

Alex leaves. Sam puts the bag down in a corner.

Sam – So? What do you think of my parents?

Vic – I don't know. They're a bit... odd.

Sam – Odd? You mean because they're gay?

Vic – No, more like they're hiding something.

Sam – Yes, something's definitely bothering them.

Vic – Maybe they can't cope with your coming out as straight.

Sam – Parents always want their children to keep the family traditions alive.

Gaby comes back, placing some appetisers on the table.

Gaby – Everything all right, lovebirds?

Sam – All good...

Gaby – I'll go and give Alex a hand.

Gaby exits.

Vic – I feel as though I've walked into a trap. You said we were meeting your parents to discuss our business, not that you were going to introduce me as your fiancée.

Sam – I didn't say anything!

Vic – You didn't correct them, either!

Sam – They looked so pleased. Besides, if they think we're a couple, they may be more willing to invest. It makes us look respectable.

Vic – Well, they could just put a cheque in our wedding fund... Except there's one little complication.

Sam – Which is?

Vic – We're both gay!

Sam – Second-generation gays. We've done everything to fit in, and we still face prejudice.

Alex comes in with an ice bucket and puts the champagne bottle in it. Gaby follows with the glasses.

Alex – Let's give it another five minutes to chill.

Gaby – Help yourselves to some peanuts in the meantime.

Vic – Thanks.

They eat peanuts in an awkward silence. Vic prompts Sam to speak.

Sam – Vic and I wanted to tell you about a project we're working on together.

Gaby – You mean the wedding?

Vic shoots Sam a fierce glance.

Sam – A business partnership, actually. We've got a very innovative idea.

Alex – A startup?

Vic – Better.

Sam – A chain of self-service laundries!

Gaby – Laundries?

Vic – We'll start with one or two.

Sam – See how it goes.

Alex – Okay...

Gaby – Well... that's certainly unexpected.

Alex – Especially from someone who brings his washing home to his parents every week.

Sam – That's what gave me the idea!

Gaby – What concept?

Sam – Laundry and the family bond!

Vic – We want to put the magic back into doing the laundry. Make laundrettes places where people actually meet, not just wash their socks.

Sam – Bring people together.

Vic – Self-service laundries have become anonymous, soulless places.

Sam – Make them places to meet again.

A pause.

Alex – This is another joke, right?

Gaby – Like the business with the priesthood?

Sam – Not at all! It's very serious.

Vic – It's about bringing a little sacred meaning back to the place where we wash our dirty laundry, so to speak.

Sam – I wouldn't go as far as to say visiting one of our laundries will be like going to church, but we want people to feel a sense of community.

Alex – Of course...

Sam – The beauty of a self-service laundry is that it practically runs itself. You just turn up once a week to collect the money.

Alex – Like slot machines... or a brothel. Now I see the attraction. Running a laundry's the perfect job. Better than being a priest. Almost like being a pimp.

Sam – Except it's completely legal!

A pause.

Gaby – Aren't there plenty of laundries already?

Sam – Not gay-friendly laundries. That's our unique selling point.

Vic – We're targeting an untapped niche market.

Sam – And we could expand the concept.

Vic – Organic laundries, environmentally friendly laundries...

Alex – Kosher laundries, halal laundries...

Gaby – And you thought of all this while delivering pizzas?

Vic – I do have a business qualification, you know.

Alex – Ah, I see...

Sam – Do you know how many gay couples met for the first time in a laundrette?

Alex – No...

Sam – Neither do I. But I'm sure there are lots.

Vic – It's where Sam and I met, anyway!

Awkward moment.

Sam – What we're proposing is more than a laundry. It's a social club.

Vic – Speed dating, while your washing goes round.

Sam – 'Spin Cycle Romance'! That could be our brand name!

Alex and Gaby exchange a concerned look.

Gaby – Well, we're very happy for you.

Alex – And we wish you every success.

Gaby – But what does it have to do with us?

Sam – Strangely enough, the bank isn't terribly keen on funding our brilliant idea.

Vic – Banks are terribly cautious these days.

Alex – Times are hard.

Gaby – No one encourages young entrepreneurs any more.

Sam – Which is why we thought you might like to get involved.

Vic – We wanted to give you the chance to share in this extraordinary opportunity.

Sam – As minority shareholders.

Vic – A moral and financial guarantee, so to speak. Mainly financial.

Sam – We know you haven't got much in savings, but...

Gaby's attention is drawn to the TV screen.

Gaby – They're talking about the burglary again.

Alex – Turn it up, quick!

Gaby – Do you mind?

Gaby turns up the sound, surprising Sam and Vic.

Newsreader – Following a burglary at a wealthy family's mansion, the thieves apparently escaped by metro, carrying the loot in one, possibly two, designer bags. CCTV images suggest an accomplice collected the bags at a nearby station. Police are examining the footage.

Alex turns off the sound once again.

Alex – We can't watch television when we've got guests.

Gaby – Do you think the police will catch them?

Vic – Depends on what evidence they've got. A witness description, perhaps.

Sam – I mean, the contents of a billionaire's safe could certainly get our business off the ground.

Vic – No doubt...

Sam – Imagine that bag stuffed full of cash.

Vic – Even half of it would do.

Alex and Gaby stare anxiously at the designer bag.

Sam – Well? What do you think of our proposal?

Gaby – What idea?

Sam – Our gay-friendly laundries! We need to act quickly before someone steals the idea.

However, Gaby and Alex are clearly preoccupied.

Alex – Oh yes, of course.

Sam – So?

Gaby – Why not, huh Alex? At least it would be for a good cause...

Alex – We'll see. As it happens, we've just had an unexpected bit of good fortune ourselves.

Vic observes Gaby and Alex's strange behaviour.

Vic – A windfall? Have you won the lottery?

Alex – Perhaps...

Sam – What do you mean, perhaps?

Gaby – We're still waiting for the draw.

Sam – Not much of a guarantee for the bank, then.

Gaby – So, are we popping this champagne?

Alex is about to uncork the bottle.

Alex – Come on, let's raise a toast.

Gaby – To all our projects!

As the cork pops, the lights suddenly go out.

Alex – Damn! The power's gone!

Sam – Maybe the cork hit the light bulb.

Alex – The wiring can't cope. Whenever we run the oven and the toaster together, the fuse trips.

Sam – Can't you reset the fuse? Have you got a candle?

Gaby – I don't remember where I put them... Oh, yes...

Gaby fumbles in the darkness and finally lights a candle.

Gaby – The fuse box is in the kitchen.

Alex – Stay here. I'll check the fuse box.

Sam – Vic, are you still here?

Vic – Where else would I be?

Gaby – He's always been afraid of the dark.

Sam – Oh, come off it!

Vic – This is just like a horror film I saw. It started with a power cut, and then...

Sam – I'd rather not hear what happens next.

The light comes back.

Sam – Ah!

Gaby – There, darling, nothing to be scared of.

Sam – Oh, come on...

Alex returns and blows out the candle.

Alex – Right. Let's finally have that drink.

Alex pours the drinks. They sip.

Sam – So you'd really consider investing in our venture? That's brilliant!

Gaby – I don't know... Alex?

Alex – Of course. Why not put some savings into a promising family business?

Sam – I've always known you had the souls of business angels.

Vic – You're certainly angels to us.

Alex – And we even have something else in common with angels. No one seems entirely sure what sex we're supposed to be.

Gaby – Alex, perhaps we should discuss it privately before deciding.

Sam shares a knowing look with Vic.

Sam – I'll pop out onto the balcony for a cigarette.

Vic – I'll join you...

Alex – This way. I'll find you an ashtray.

They go out.

Gaby – At last! Now we can hide the cash. But where?

Gaby heads towards the bag.

Alex *(off)* – Where are the ashtrays?

Gaby – In the hallway cupboard!

Gaby looks into the bag, and his face freezes.

Gaby – Right, I'll hide the... *(Looks in the bag.)* What? The money's gone! *(Searches frantically.)* It can't be!

Alex returns.

Alex – What?

Gaby starts turning the sofa cushions.

Gaby *(shouting)* – The bag! It's empty! Someone's taken all our cash during the blackout!

Alex can't respond because Sam and Vic return too.

Sam – We heard shouting. What's happened?

Gaby – Nothing. I... I couldn't find the remote control.

Vic grabs the remote, left in plain sight, and hands it to Gaby with an ironic look.

Vic – Here it is.

Sam – Nothing escapes her.

Gaby *(suspiciously)* – So I see.

They sit back around the table.

Alex – More champagne?

Vic – Absolutely...

Sam – So you're on board with our project? Fantastic!

Gaby – It's just that... we're not entirely sure the money will be available.

Sam – But earlier, you seemed to suggest...

Alex – You don't even know how to use a washing machine. A whole chain of laundrettes might be a little ambitious.

Gaby – Couldn't a washing-powder company sponsor you?

Sam – Which one?

Alex – One that promises to get all your dirty laundry out of the closet.

Sam – Very subtle. I see what you did there.

Gaby – Sorry. Perhaps we got a little carried away.

Sam *(hurt)* – Never mind. We'll find another way, won't we, Vic?

Vic is as surprised as Sam by the sudden change of heart.

Vic – Is there something you want to tell us?

Sam – Are you having money problems?

Alex – Not at all, what makes you say that?

Vic takes the remote and turns up the television.

Vic – They're talking about the burglary again. *(Ironically.)* I know how interested you are.

Newsreader – Here is a police image of the person believed to have escaped with the loot on the metro, reconstructed from security-camera footage.

Sam – That's funny. It looks a bit like Alex.

Vic – The resemblance is uncanny.

Gaby mutes the television again.

Gaby – We're not going to sit here watching television all evening.

Vic – It reminds me of a film I saw recently.

Gaby – Another film? You're quite the film buff, aren't you?

Vic – Someone finds a bag full of cash on the metro.

Alex – Oh yeah?

Gaby – And how does it end?

Vic – In prison. The banknotes are all traceable.

Alex – How unfortunate.

Vic – Yes...

Sam senses the tension and stands up.

Sam – We shouldn't keep you any longer.

Gaby stands in front of Vic, aggressively.

Gaby – You're not leaving like that!

Vic gazes at Gaby, who eventually steps aside.

Vic – Of course not. We'll clear the table first.

Alex – Please, don't trouble yourselves.

Sam – I'll give you a hand.

Sam and Vic go into the kitchen with the glasses.

Gaby – We're in serious trouble.

Alex – Don't worry. It'll all come out in the wash.

Gaby – But where's the money? That woman must have taken it! And she's laughing at us!

Alex – I took it. I hid it somewhere safe.

Gaby – You?

Alex – After I overloaded the kitchen sockets to trip the fuse.

Gaby – Where did you put it?

Alex – Somewhere the police would never think to look.

Gaby – The microwave?

Alex – The washing machine.

Gaby – Have you lost your mind? I might have switched it on!

Alex – No one will think of looking there. Especially Sam.

Sam returns, followed by Vic, who is holding a bag of dirty laundry.

Sam – You'll be proud of me.

Gaby – Oh yes?

Sam – I managed to start the washing machine!

Alex – You didn't!

Sam – Vic helped a little. But if we're starting a chain of laundries, I need some hands-on experience.

Gaby and Alex look horrified.

Gaby – Which programme?

Vic – The longest one. For really dirty washing.

Gaby and Alex rush into the kitchen.

Sam – What's got into them?

Vic – I know. *(Sam looks at her, astonished.)* The money from that burglary... it's here.

Sam *(incredulous)* – Are you accusing my parents of robbing that mansion?

Vic – The thieves must have abandoned a bag on the metro, and Alex picked it up.

Sam – Really?

Vic – Didn't you recognise Alex in that police sketch on television?

Sam takes a moment to absorb this.

Sam – So Alex found it. That's not really stealing, is it?

Vic – Keeping stolen money is a crime too, you know.

Sam – I call it incredible luck. Have you got any proof?

Vic sniffs the air and approaches the bag.

Vic – Keep an eye on the door.

Sam – What for?

Vic – In case the police turn up.

Vic – This is the bag the thieves used.

Sam – Maybe. *(Opens it.)* But it's empty!

Vic shows Sam the banknotes she has taken out of the laundry bag.

Vic – I took the money out of the machine before switching it on.

Sam – You didn't!

Vic – People used to hide their savings in old washing tubs. Now they just put the money straight into a washing machine.

Sam – That's progress for you.

Alex reappears briefly.

Alex – Sorry. A little trouble with the washing machine.

Vic – You didn't break anything, did you?

Alex – Not at all. But put in too much liquid and it all overflows.

Sam – Too much liquid...

Alex – It's an old machine.

Alex goes back to help Gaby.

Vic – Shall we keep it all, or share it with your parents?

Sam – That's stealing! I won't steal from my own parents.

Vic – Your parents took it from people who'd already stolen it.

Sam – And we could get into serious trouble.

Vic – If we get rid of it before the police search the apartment, we're actually saving your parents from trouble.

Sam – There are police all over the street.

Vic – That's what worries me.

Sam – Turn up the television. They're talking about it again.

Vic picks up the remote control.

Newsreader – Police have arrested the suspects in today's mansion burglary. The stolen valuables were recovered in a second designer bag: gold bars, diamonds and jewellery. The victim was reportedly less delighted when the tax authorities asked her to account for the contents of her safe.

Vic mutes the television.

Sam – So what's the money Alex found on the metro?

Vic – Perhaps one bag wasn't enough for the whole haul. But it takes the pressure off us.

Sam – How do you mean?

Vic – If the old lady never declared that cash, she won't report a second bag missing. And the burglars are hardly going to complain.

Sam picks up a bundle of notes and examines it.

Sam – Are the notes traceable?

Vic – I doubt it. Small denominations, and they've been in circulation for ages.

Sam – Then if nobody claims it, after a year and a day we could call it ours.

Vic – Or call it a tax adjustment. And appoint ourselves tax collectors.

Sam – A private wealth tax!

Vic – Taking money from a billionaire hardly counts as stealing.

Sam – We're like Robin Hood.

Vic – Taking from the rich...

Sam – And keeping it for ourselves.

Strange noises come from the kitchen, as though someone is hammering on metal. Gaby reappears.

Gaby – Nearly sorted. But once a machine starts running, it's not easy to stop it.

Gaby goes back to the kitchen.

Vic – Now, how are we going to launder this money?

Sam – We'll open a chain of laundries!

Vic – Launder money by buying laundries?

Sam – Didn't Al Capone run laundries? Isn't that where the phrase 'money laundering' comes from?

Vic – Al Capone? I thought you were a committed socialist. Now you're taking career advice from gangsters?

Sam – I've seen the light. And if you're feeling guilty, we can always make a donation to charity.

Vic – What charity? A fund for the children of fallen police officers?

Sam – Didn't you say you grew up without your parents?

Vic – Yes.

Sam – Then we'll support an orphan. You can make the donation to yourself.

Vic – And what about your parents?

Sam looks at the travel brochure.

Sam – They'd probably have lost it all in Las Vegas anyway.

Vic – Better to invest in washing machines than slot machines.

Sam – Let's go before the police start searching everyone.

Vic – All right.

Sam – I feel a bit guilty. Let's leave them a tip.

Vic – Just one bundle, then. *(Drops a bundle back into the bag.)* 'For the staff', as they say in casinos.

Sam – We can't leave without saying goodbye. I'll write them a note.

Sam writes a note, leaves it on the table and departs with Vic. Gaby and Alex return, distraught, carrying wet laundry which they hang on a line.

Alex – I don't understand. The money can't have dissolved in the wash and gone down the drain!

Gaby – Who knows? They do call it 'liquid assets'. And you know what they say: easy come, easy go.

Alex – Where have they gone?

Gaby – The banknotes?

Alex – Sam and his biker girl!

Gaby – No idea.

Alex – They've vanished like thieves in the night.

Gaby – It hurts to think he's getting married. He won't come home to wash his dirty laundry any more.

Alex – We've still got the bag. *(Looks inside, delighted.)* And there's a bundle left! We haven't lost everything!

Gaby – Enough for two tickets to Las Vegas. Let's try the slot machines. I can feel our luck changing!

Alex – Wait. There's a note on the table. *(Picks it up and reads.)* 'I'm gay.' Signed, Sam.

A police siren sounds. Gaby gives Alex an anxious look.

Gaby – Do you think there are gay-friendly prisons?

Blackout.

Alex – Damn! The fuse has gone again.

The police siren grows louder, then cuts off abruptly.

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 ...
Neighbours' Day
Nicotine
Of Vegetables and Books
Offside
Open Hearts
Reality Show
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
Such a lovely village
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Most Beautiful Village in France
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

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

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

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https://comediatheque.net/

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