

La Comédiathèque

The Pyramids

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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The Pyramids

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In a mysterious, enclosed setting—perhaps a madhouse, or maybe the theatre of the world—a few outcasts who have lost their Faith are being held. Not just Faith in God, but also belief in the principles upon which our society is built. What if the creator himself no longer believed in his creation? These skeptics must be re-motivated before their contagious scepticism triggers the collapse of the entire system.

Characters

Director

Assistant

Author

Actress

The characters in this symbolic play represent archetypes, and their genders are flexible. The specified genders in this version are indicative, allowing for adjustments based on casting choices or production constraints.

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An impersonal hall with a reception counter at its centre. Above the counter hangs a painting of a man with a long white beard, who could be God the Father or Santa Claus... A woman, the assistant, stands behind the counter, watching a screen. She wears a military uniform. A man, the director, enters, dressed in a cassock-like garment. The costumes, sets, and painting are not necessarily realistic—the play has a symbolic style. The set design can be futuristic, evoking a place of worship where the reception counter resembles an altar. The audience might be seen as the congregation at this unconventional service. Music will create a fantastical, slightly burlesque atmosphere.

Director – Seek and ye shall find... Or not. I've looked everywhere and I still haven't found him...

Assistant – I don't see him on the surveillance cameras either.

Director – Yet he's definitely missing.

Assistant – Do you think he could have slipped through the wall?

Director – The wall? You mean the ramparts?

Assistant – Yes, you're right... We've always been told there's nothing beyond the ramparts.

Director – Makes you wonder what they're for...

Assistant – And who or what they're supposed to protect us from.

Director – Who... or what?

Assistant – What?

Director – Are these ramparts to prevent an invasion... or an escape?

Assistant – Maybe both.

Director – Well, we do need to set boundaries.

Assistant – And prohibitions.

Director – As they say, once you cross the line, there are no limits.

Assistant – Sometimes, I feel trapped within myself, like I'm in a tomb, surrounded by an invisible wall. Inside, I am all-powerful. But outside, I am nothing...

Director – I hadn't thought about it that way, but you're right... We are all walled in, alive in a pyramid, fumbling through a dark maze, searching for a crack that might let in a bit of light.

Assistant – Each of us is the god of our own world, and from these narrow slits we call eyes, we contemplate the infinity of more or less hostile universes that surround us. Until the accidental collision with another planet... and the ultimate fate of being sucked into a black hole.

Director – Right... but that still doesn't tell us where he's gone.

Assistant – If this wall is impenetrable, how come he's no longer here?

Director – If he's always been here, he couldn't have left.

Assistant – And if he's not always been here, how did he get in?

Director – Yet it's a fact. There's a piece missing from this gigantic chess game. And this absence could bring the whole game crashing down.

Assistant – A piece?

Director – A key piece.

Assistant – The king.

Director – The grand architect of the universe. The one who designed the plans.

Assistant – Miss one supreme being, and everything is in disarray...

Director – But he was here, wasn't he? He's the one who built this wall!

Assistant – Are you sure it was him?

Director – What if, after building it, he got trapped on the other side?

Assistant – Trapped outside?

Director – You're right, it's a crazy story...

Assistant – So, could there be something on the other side of the wall? Someone?

Director – How can we know? There are no windows in these walls, which are supposed to protect us from the nothingness that threatens to overtake us.

Assistant – No openings. Not even a peephole...

Director – No, of course not... There's nothing in the beyond. The world is like an old sock. No matter how you turn it inside out, there's only one way to put your foot in it.

Assistant – Yes... but if the sock has a hole, a toe could always slip through to the outside.

Director – You mean, a hole in the wall? A breach where the void might seep in?

Assistant – It depends on who knitted the sock...

A pause.

Director – He'll turn up again, like he always does.

Assistant – That's been the case so far.

Director – So all we can do is hope.

Assistant – And maybe pray... But to whom?

Director – Come on, let's just keep believing...

Despite their words, it's clear they're not very convinced, though they try to persuade themselves.

Assistant – I can't remember... What exactly was he here for?

Director – Like all the others, right? A crisis of...

Assistant – A crisis of liver... Wow... I didn't know we treated that kind of condition. But then again, writers do tend to drink a lot – everyone knows that.

Director – No, no, not a crisis of liver... Definitely not cirrhosis. He just stopped believing. He'd lost his faith...

Assistant – Ah, yes, got it! I was wondering about that. A crisis of liver... (*Pauses*) I hope it's not contagious at least...

Director – Believe me, it's easier to stop drinking than to start believing again.

Assistant – Yes, faith is like shape; once you've lost it, it's very hard to get it back.

Director – What you say is so true. And so well put. Sometimes I wonder where you get all this...

The assistant looks at the director, unsure whether he was being sincere or sarcastic.

Assistant – So... he was an inmate.

Director – Or a member, I don't remember. (*Worried*) Maybe an administrator. Or even the director...

Assistant – The director? I thought that was you!

Director – I'm just the acting director.

Assistant – Ah, yes, that explains it...

He looks back at her, questioning the meaning of her comment.

Director – In any case, he's the author...

Assistant – Yes, that's unfortunate... And what does he look like, exactly?

Director – We don't really know... It's been ages since anyone's seen him. In the sketches, he has a long beard.

Assistant – The sketches? You mean... like the big painting hanging in this entrance hall, for example?

They both look at the painting.

Director – Well, now it might be a fake beard.

Assistant – Or maybe the painting is just a fake, plain and simple.

Director – A fake bearded man on a fake painting...

Assistant – That doesn't help us much...

Director – And besides, after all this time, he could have shaved it off.

Assistant – Shaved it off?

Director – His fake beard!

Assistant – With fake scissors...

Director – It's not going to be easy to recognise him.

Assistant – No...

Director – Imagine Santa Claus without his beard... Real or fake... Would you recognise him?

Assistant – But Santa Claus, he doesn't actually exist, right?

Director – Right.

A pause.

Assistant – Did you check stage left and stage right?

Director – Stage right, I only saw dwarfs...

Assistant – You know they say "people of short stature" now...

Director – In that case, I only saw... people of short stature in the garden.

Assistant – You mean garden gnomes?

Director – I'll check stage left. Otherwise, we'll have to resort to more drastic measures...

He exits stage left. The assistant goes back to staring at her screen. A man, the author, enters. He has no beard. He's wearing shorts and a floral shirt. He's not wearing shoes. One of his feet is bare, the other has a sock with a hole in it. He wanders around the hall, looking disoriented. The assistant eventually notices him.

Assistant – Sir? Can I help you?

Author – I don't remember what day it is... What day is it, exactly?

Assistant – Exactly? It's Sunday, Sir. Precisely Sunday.

Author – Sunday...? Are you sure?

Assistant – Well... Yesterday was definitely Sunday, wasn't it?

Author – But in that case, today would be...

Assistant – You should know, Sir, that in this noble institution, every day is Sunday...

Author – Ah, yes... *(To himself)* It must be dreadfully boring, then.

The author looks around, disoriented.

Assistant – Are you looking for something? Or someone?

Author – To be honest... I'm not really sure anymore.

Assistant – You don't know what you're looking for?

Author – I don't even know who I am! Do you have any idea?

Assistant – Honestly... I don't. Should I?

Author – So I guess I'm not someone famous?

Assistant – I couldn't say for sure...

Author – If I were famous, you'd recognise me, right?

Assistant – Not necessarily. There are famous people whose faces aren't well-known.

Author – Really? Like who, for example?

Assistant – Oh, I don't know... Jesus Christ, Napoleon, Jean-Pierre Martinez...

Author – Napoleon?

Assistant – Would you recognise Napoleon if you saw him on the street?

Author – Probably not...

Assistant – And as for Jesus Christ, the only image we have from that time is the Holy Shroud. But it's rather blurry...

Author – Martinez, you said... That name rings a bell.

Assistant – I might know yours.

Author – Mine...?

Assistant – Your name! Do you have an ID?

Author – I don't know... An ID? What's it for? To remember who you are?

Assistant – And especially to prove to others that you have the right to exist.

Author – So if you don't have an ID, you don't have an identity. And you don't have the right to exist?

Assistant (*suddenly authoritative*) – Your papers, please.

He searches his pockets and pulls out a business card.

Author – I have this...

Assistant – Let me see... (*She takes the card from him and examines it.*) This is more like a business card...

Author – A business card... What's that for?

Assistant – It shows others that, besides existing, you're not just anybody.

Author – So, does that mean I might be someone important?

Assistant – That depends on what's written on your business card. (*The assistant examines the business card.*) Oh, yes, I see...

Author – See what?

Assistant (*reading the card*) – God... So it's you!

Author – Me?

Assistant – We've been looking for you everywhere.

Author – Really?

Assistant – You gave us quite a scare, you know... We thought you'd disappeared for good...

Author – Now you're starting to scare me. God, are you sure?

Assistant – Well, that's what it says on your business card...

Author – Isn't it usually the crazy ones who think they're God?

Assistant – Wait a minute... Do you think you're God, or are you actually God?

Author – Neither, I think.

Assistant – But it clearly says "God" on your business card.

Author – Maybe that's just my name.

Assistant – Your name?

Author – My last name! And it's you who's convinced I'm God... If that's true, wouldn't that make you the crazy one?

Assistant – Oh, come on... Don't be so modest... If this place were an insane asylum, you'd be the director, I promise you...

Author – I'm not sure that's entirely comforting...

The director returns.

Director – No one stage left either... Just a few ghosts of writers. What about you?

Assistant – I found him!

Director – Not? So it is you? We were starting to get worried... We've been looking for you everywhere!

Author – I'm right here, so don't worry... But I do have occasional blackouts. By the way, where are we, exactly?

Director – Where? Come on... You don't remember?

Author – Remember what?

Director – Surely you at least remember who you are?

Author – No.

Assistant – But you're a very famous author!

Author – An author?

Director – A playwright! Actually, a demiurge!

Assistant – If we're all here, it's thanks to you!

Director – And we're all at your service.

Author – Famous... You mean that... people know me, even though I don't know myself?

Assistant – Do they know you? They practically worship you! You're their idol! Their God!

Author – I don't remember anything.

Director – Believe me, no one has forgotten you.

Author – Well, sometimes I forget myself...

Assistant (*aside to the director*) – He really doesn't seem to believe anymore.

Director – "Know yourself, and you will know the universe and the gods", you must be kidding...

Assistant – If God doesn't know himself...

Director – I told you... Crisis of faith...

Assistant – It's sad to see.

Director – And it's also quite dangerous.

Assistant – Dangerous?

Director – If he's the one who wrote this play...

Assistant – What play?

Director – The one we're currently acting out!

Assistant – Him? Are you sure?

Director – Honestly... I'm not sure about anything anymore...

Assistant – I was afraid of that... This might be contagious...

Director (*to the author*) – You don't remember who you are, but... do you at least remember any part of the play?

Author – The play...

Assistant – Maybe not the whole plot or all the dialogue, but, I don't know... At least the general idea of the story.

Author – It's been a long time since I had a play idea. I thought about writing my memoirs, but...

Director – Writing memoirs when you're amnesiac...

Author – Do you think they'd sell? If I was famous, like you say...

Assistant – Selling memoirs while losing your memory...?

Director – Well, someone could write his autobiography for him.

Assistant – Do you mean a ghostwriter?

Director – Actually, I've seen a few looking for work backstage...

Assistant – An autobiography written by a ghostwriter... Why not?

Author – My autobiography? I'd be curious to read it.

Director – Who knows, maybe reading it would help you regain your memory.

Assistant – True... But finding a ghostwriter to write the life of an amnesiac author, hoping it will jog his memory...

Director – And that he might be able to give us the script of the play we're in the middle of acting out...

Assistant – It might take some time...

Director – Indeed.

Assistant – And now... it's about to go off the rails, isn't it?

Director – You think so?

Assistant – Even the audience is losing faith... Look!

The director and assistant turn to the audience.

Director – You're right... They've lost faith in this show too.

Assistant – I even see one or two who are nodding off. Like on Sundays at church.

Director – For now, it's the author we're losing...

They turn to the author, who still looks utterly disoriented.

Assistant – God... He looks more like a tramp, doesn't he?

Director – Or worse...

Assistant – Worse?

Director – An illegal immigrant.

Assistant – You're not far off... I asked for his papers, and he only has a business card.

Director – What if he's not really the author of the play, but just another character, like us?

Assistant – A character...?

Director – An author character! Just another impostor! He might be God only in this play... that no one has written yet!

Assistant – Ah, I see... Or maybe not really... This is all starting to get a bit confusing...

Director – I'm going to take him to the Memory Hall. While he's waiting for his memory to return, he can always read someone else's biography; it might give him some inspiration.

Assistant – Yes, because this is getting rather urgent...

Director – Come with me, my good man... You'll see, the lives of some people can be much more interesting than that of God himself...

The director exits with the author.

A woman, the actress, arrives and approaches the counter where the assistant is standing. She is dressed very conventionally and has a suitcase in hand.

Assistant – Hello, Madam. I don't think we've met before... Are you a resident here?

Actress – No.

Assistant – I notice you have a suitcase... So, this must be for an admission, then...

Actress – Have you seen my cat?

Assistant – A cat? I'm sorry, but no. And I should mention that pets aren't allowed here.

Actress – You don't like cats?

Assistant – I didn't say that. I said that animals aren't permitted in this facility.

Actress – Did you know that in ancient Egypt, cats were considered sacred?

Assistant – If you say so...

Actress – They were believed to ward off evil spirits.

Assistant – I didn't know that. But it's true that even today, they help keep mice away from homes.

Actress – Cats were also associated with a goddess who had a feline head. She was the goddess of pleasure and fertility.

Assistant – By the way, I'm allergic to cat hair.

Actress – I've always been wary of people who don't like animals...

Assistant – I don't like old people either, but don't worry, everyone is welcome here. What can I do for you, Madam...?

Actress – I'm looking for my husband.

Assistant – I thought you were looking for your cat.

Actress – Call me crazy, then!

Assistant – Didn't you say you were looking for your cat?

Actress – Yes, I was.

Assistant – And your husband isn't a cat, right?

Actress – If only! It would be so much simpler.

Assistant – Simpler for whom, exactly?

Actress – My husband's staying here at the institution. I'm here to visit him...with my cat.

Assistant – Unfortunately, let me repeat...

Actress – Yes I know. Cats are not allowed in this institution. I read the rules beforehand. That's why I hid my cat in a suitcase.

Assistant – A cat in a suitcase?

Actress – But when I opened it, the cat had already made a break for it.

Assistant – Wait, who is your husband again?

Actress – He's a playwright.

Assistant – Oh, really?

Actress – My husband's having memory issues. When I last saw him, he seemed a bit depressed. I'd even say disillusioned. He doesn't remember we're married.

Assistant – So you're here to help him remember?

Actress – Honestly... I'm not entirely sure myself.

Assistant – You're not sure if you're married to him?

Actress – I know we had a wedding. I just can't remember if it was in a church or on a theatre stage.

Assistant – I guess churches and theatres can be similar... Except the storyline in church is always the same and the show isn't very exciting.

Actress – I'm an actress, you see. I've played thousands of roles in my life. And as I get older, I tend to blur the lines between reality and fiction. Between what's real and what's not...

Assistant – I think I understand... I...

Actress (*interrupting*) – When I was younger, nearly every play ended with a wedding. I've married hundreds of men in my long career. Mostly princes... Some soldiers... A few shepherds... Three firefighters... Two computer engineers... One serial killer... And even a priest!

Assistant – Okay, but I'm not sure I...

Actress – I've died at least a hundred times on stage.

Assistant – Died?

Actress – So I'm not sure if this man is really my husband. And even if he is, I wonder if he's not a widower.

Assistant – A widower?

The actress opens her suitcase, revealing it's empty.

Actress – What I do know for sure is that the cat is no longer in the suitcase...

Assistant – I can see that... This suitcase is as empty as Christ's tomb right before his resurrection.

The director returns.

Director – I gave him the Bible to read. That should keep him occupied for a while. Good day, Madam. Can we help you with something?

Assistant – This lady thinks she might be the wife of the author.

Director – Oh, really? I didn't know he was married... But you're not entirely sure? Although I do see you're wearing a wedding ring...

Actress – It could be fake.

Director – Fake?

Actress – A stage prop!

Assistant – Madam is a retired actress...

Actress – Correction, Miss. An actress is never unemployed or retired. She's temporarily without a role but is waiting for a new offer that could be the role of her life.

Director – You're absolutely right, dear Madam. The key is to believe in it. Otherwise, everything crumbles... (*Aside to the assistant*) Find this old bat a dressing room where she can gather herself while we figure out a role for her. Because until we get the script for the play...

Assistant – Sure thing. The world is like one giant casting call. Actors lining up to audition. Some get lead roles, some supporting, but most end up with tiny parts.

Director – If only we had the film script.

Assistant – I thought we were doing a play?

Director – Film, play, same thing... It's a metaphor! It's a symbolic production, right? Not some slapstick comedy... I think, at least...

Assistant – My dear Madeleine, would you follow me, please?

Actress – Madeleine? But that's not my name!

Assistant – From now on, you'll be known as Madeleine...

The assistant exits with the actress.

Director – That's odd, I thought I saw a cat around here earlier. But animals are strictly forbidden in this place. (*Turns to the audience*) You know in ancient Egypt, cats... Someone must have told you that, right? Anyway, back to what I was saying... If anyone has a copy of the script, I'd really appreciate it. Maybe someone who was here yesterday? No, of course not... Let's not go overboard... But if you do remember, feel free to let me know, okay? (*Muttering to himself*) We don't have a prompter anymore, and now there's no author to write the play... So, where was I... Oh yes, I think I exit now... But do I go stage left or stage right?

He exits.

The author enters, holding a device that looks like a metal detector. He scans the floor with focused intent. The actress arrives behind him with a similar device and begins scanning with the same level of seriousness. The author seems unfazed by her presence, and they ignore each other. After a few moments of searching, with no apparent results, they find themselves face-to-face.

Actress – Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you there.

Author – No worries at all.

They both take a moment to rest.

Actress – Are you looking for something in particular?

Author – I've lost faith. What about you?

Actress – I've lost my cat.

Author – Ah, I see...

Actress – And have you found it?

Author – Your cat?

Actress – No, I meant faith.

Author – Not yet, unfortunately.

Actress – Oh...

Author – But I did find a sock.

Actress – A sock...?

Author – Yes, with a hole in it.

Actress – Better than nothing.

Author – Now if only you can find the other one.

Actress – The other one...?

Author – The other sock!

Actress – Oh, right...

A pause.

Author – Have you ever found anything useful while searching?

Actress – A pair of scissors, about a week ago.

Author – Oh, really? What can you do with a pair of scissors...?

Actress – I trimmed my beard. How about you?

Author – I found a piece, just now.

Actress – A piece? You mean... a play?

Author – No, a coin!

Actress – Oh, got it... Because I'm an actress and... I'm actually looking for a role.

Author – Not with a metal detector, I imagine...

Actress – Who knows... It might be a golden role!

They share a somewhat forced smile.

Author – So, you've never found any treasure, have you?

Actress – No, never. What about you?

Author – Besides this coin...

Actress – It probably fell out of a piggy bank.

Author – A piggy bank...?

Actress – You know, like the sock. Because it had a hole in it...

A pause.

Author – Sometimes I wonder if it's even worth trying.

Actress – What else can we do? We don't really have a choice. We have to keep believing, otherwise...

Author – Otherwise, we'd feel pretty silly spending money on these useless gadgets.

Actress – Just like how believers don't actually see God while they're alive, yet they still hope to meet Him after death.

Author – True... We have to keep the faith.

Actress – And when we lose it, we have to do our best to find it again.

Author – I guess I should get back to searching, then.

Actress – Have you checked stage left?

Author – Stage right too.

Actress – Let's double-check just in case. You never know...

They resume their prospecting until they exit backstage.

The assistant returns. She sneezes.

Assistant – I think there's a cat around here... I've been sneezing non-stop!

She exits.

The director returns and, seeing no one, seems hesitant.

Director – Oops... Did I come back too early? Or too late? My bad...

He exits.

The author and the actress return.

Author – I think today is my lucky day. I found a ring.

Actress – Let me see... Ah yes... Is it gold?

Author – Looks like it.

Actress – Could be a wedding ring.

Author – A wedding ring?

Actress – It looks like one.

Author – Well, it's definitely not yours—you already have one on your finger.

Actress – Maybe it's yours.

Author – You think?

Actress – You're not wearing a wedding ring.

Author – That's true.

A pause.

Actress – You wouldn't happen to be my husband, would you?

Author – By any chance?

Actress – Because if you are, it means you're not a widower, and I'm not dead...

Author – Who knows...

Actress – Or maybe we're both dead.

Author – Yes...

Actress – What's your name?

Author – I don't really know.

Actress – Do you have some form of ID?

Author – I have a business card.

He hands it to her.

Actress (*reading*) – God...

Author – So, if you're my wife, does that make you a goddess?

Actress – That, however, wouldn't surprise me at all...

She takes his arm. He's a bit surprised. They leave arm in arm.

The director returns and turns around, seemingly watching them depart. The assistant also enters the scene.

Director – Ah, I was looking for you...

Assistant – Who were those two people?

Director – I don't know, but they seem to have found each other.

Assistant – They look vaguely familiar... They seemed a bit dodgy, didn't they?

Director – What makes you say that?

Assistant – They looked like killers.

Director – You know, some killers can look like angels.

Assistant – True, but some really do look like killers...

Director – I prefer to think they just don't suit their appearance.

Assistant – Of course...

Director – There are character actors who spend their whole careers playing serial killers because they have that "psycho" look, but in real life, they are as gentle as lambs and have never harmed a soul.

Assistant – So, having a killer's face can be a career advantage?

Director – Let's just say they have a tough appearance. When in doubt, it's best to assume the best rather than the worst.

Assistant – You're right. Since we can't do anything about it... Why see evil everywhere?

Director – That's why we invented God, right? Because we prefer to believe our creator has good intentions for us.

Assistant – Even if God might be a dangerous psychopath.

Director – It doesn't protect us from anything, but as long as everything's fine, we can always pray for it to last.

Assistant – We can thank God for not giving us all the suffering He dishes out to most of humanity every day.

Director – And if, by some bad luck, something heavy falls on our heads one day, we can always thank God it wasn't a concrete block.

Assistant – You find comfort where you can... Kids have their teddy bears or imaginary friends.

Director – As long as they don't lose them.

Assistant – Speaking of which, how's our author doing?

Director – He's finished reading the Bible, but I think he skimmed it. He seems to be losing interest.

Assistant – It's quite a heavy book, to be fair.

Director – I gave him a couple of smacks on the head with it to help him remember, but it doesn't seem to be working. It hasn't inspired him much either.

Assistant – I've always thought that if God could read the Bible, He'd probably find it quite boring...

Director – Either way, it hasn't brought back his faith...

Assistant – When even God stops believing in himself...

Director – When the creator doubts his own creation...

Assistant – When the writer loses his inspiration...

Director – When the actors don't have a script to follow...

Assistant – When the audience starts checking their watches.

Director – And some even start to fall asleep.

Assistant – We're on the edge of the abyss!

Director – Doesn't our whole world rely on belief?

Assistant – Take banknotes. You go to a store, fill up your cart, and at checkout, you hand over a few pieces of paper that are supposedly worth as much as everything you've taken.

Director – They call it fiat money.

Assistant – Because its value relies on faith.

Director – The idea that the person receiving those notes can use them to buy other things of equal value.

Assistant – Economic growth is also driven by confidence.

Director – You buy things because you expect a raise from your boss, and you get a raise because the economy is fuelled by our spending. Unemployment is low, and workers are in short supply.

Assistant – That's what they call that a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Director – Same goes for the stock market. You buy shares because you think the price will go up... And by buying them, you actually make the prices go up.

Assistant – So when people start feeling pessimistic, both the economy and the stock market drop.

Director – Especially when the socks have holes.

Assistant – The whole system relies on faith.

Director – It would only take someone not to believe at some point for the whole system to collapse.

Assistant – It's the same for marriage.

Director – It's a contract based on trust.

Assistant – You exchange vows in front of two witnesses.

Director – You just say a simple "I do."

Assistant – And you're stuck with monogamy for the rest of your life.

Director – But men and women are like socks. It's not easy to keep them together after several washes.

Assistant – Yet you always hope that the missing sock will eventually reappear.

Director – You keep the faith. You keep the system going with mismatched socks.

Assistant – Until you finally accept wearing mismatched socks.

Director – Until you buy another pair, hoping this time they'll stay together for good.

Assistant – Life is like a play. If even one character stops believing and refuses to play their role...

Director – If the director decides to call out the absurdity of the play.

Assistant – Even worse, if the writer himself has lost faith.

Director – To the point where he forgets to write the script.

Assistant – Everything falls apart.

Director – The characters start wandering like lost souls... and the audience loses faith.

Assistant – The proof of the writer is his work.

Director – Like the proof of Santa Claus is the presents he brings.

Assistant – As long as everyone believes, everything's fine...

Director – But God doesn't give us presents.

Assistant – At least not to everyone.

Director – God is like Santa Claus without the gifts. But we keep worshipping him because we're afraid he'll take back the few things we've already unjustly received from a Santa who doesn't even exist.

Assistant – But what happens if people stop believing?

Director – What if one day the Messiah returned to Earth to tell us that God the Father doesn't exist?

Assistant – That he's feeling down in the dumps, that he no longer believes in anything...

Director – And that he's not even sure he still knows who he is.

Assistant – Except maybe that he's the son of one of the Three Wise Men.

Director – But not knowing exactly which one.

Assistant – That would be the end of the world...

The author enters, wearing shorts with mismatched and holey socks. Everyone stares at him.

Author – What? What's going on?

Director (to the assistant) – We can't let this continue...

Assistant – It's clear as day.

Director – Go get the device!

Assistant – I'm on it...

She exits.

Director – Lie down here, my friend...

Author – But I'm not sick, I promise... I feel fine. I just found my wife...

Director – Trust me, it'll be okay...

The author, visibly nervous, lies down on the counter. The assistant returns with one of the metal detectors and hands it to the director. The director starts scanning the author, beginning at his feet.

Assistant – What did you find?

Director – I can tell you already – his socks don't match...

Assistant – That's not a good sign... What else?

The director moves the detector over the author's left hand.

Director – And he's got a wedding ring on his left hand.

Assistant – He did mention he found his wife.

Director – Do you think he's lying?

Assistant – Even if he now remembers he's married, it doesn't mean he's regained faith in the institution of marriage.

The director runs the detector over the author's head.

Director – Despite being quite sensitive, this device finds no trace of moral values or eternal truth in this poor brain.

Assistant – Well, an author's job is to make up stories...

Director – In a brain like his, it's hard to separate fact from fiction...

Assistant – Sometimes the things he makes up might be the truest part of him...

Director – Oh, I think I heard a beep...

Assistant (*to the author*) – Open your mouth... (*He opens his mouth, and she leans in to look inside.*) It's a gold tooth...

Director – You can close your mouth now.

The assistant jumps back, holding her nose.

Assistant – You could have given me a warning! He almost bit my nose off...

Director – Sorry, I...

Assistant – What should we do with him...?

Director – We don't have much choice... We need to neutralize this subversive element that undermines our values and demoralises the residents of this noble institution.

Assistant – You really think so?

Director – Don't move, buddy...

The director and the assistant exit. The author gets up.

Author(*to the audience*) – So apparently, I'm the author. Hard to believe, right? Well, I'm playing the character of the author in this play because the real author... let's be honest, he's nowhere to be found. Does he even exist? No one's seen him here. So they picked me for the role. But I don't know this play! I'm supposed to give direction to all this nonsense. I'm supposed to prompt everyone with their lines. And since I can't do that, everyone's upset with me! I didn't sign up for this! Why did they pick me to play God? God doesn't exist! Well, he does, but... he's a human invention. He's a way for us to comfort ourselves, to find some sense in all this absurdity. And that's not easy to do.

The truth is, humans are trapped in their fleshly shells, which are both a refuge and a prison. They can only glimpse the Universe through the cracks in this space-time sarcophagus, buried deep in a labyrinth at the heart of a windowless pyramid. This limited perspective has led them to imagine religions that fit their own scale, asking naïve questions about origins, beginnings, creation ex nihilo, a creator, and thus a god. Seeking a simple answer to a problem beyond comprehension, humanity prefers to cling to the only question it can conceive, even though it makes no sense: 'Who created what has always existed?'—rather than accepting, with clear insight, that the part can never truly understand the whole.

Humankind wants to explain the origin and purpose of the Universe in terms of its own limitations – the beginning and end of an individual's life – ignoring that life and death generally follow a perpetual cycle. If eternity has no end, how could it have a beginning? If nothing is created and everything is transformed, how could the whole come from nothing? In its futile quest to understand the world, humanity redraws it in its own image. But humanity will never truly understand the world. It's the world that understands humanity. God didn't create the Universe. Humankind created God to give meaning to its existence. Humanity clings to this belief like a shipwrecked sailor to a lifeboat. But when creation sinks into the ocean of meaninglessness, the creator drowns with it.

The actress returns, still carrying her suitcase.

Actress – Jesus! Is that you?

Author – Jesus?

Actress – That was your name when we met, don't you remember?

Author – No.

Actress – It just came back to me. I must say, back then, you had a beard, like me...

Author – Whatever the case, I really need your help. I think these people want to harm me...

Actress – How can I help you?

Author – Get me out of here, and fast!

Actress – Unfortunately, once you're in here, there's no way out. Unless it's feet first.

Author – But where exactly are we?

Actress – Opinions differ, but most people agree it's a madhouse.

Author – And you're a patient too?

Actress – For now, I'm just visiting.

Author – There has to be a way to escape...

Actress – Alas, they have eyes everywhere. Except in my suitcase, I suppose...

The author looks at the suitcase.

Author – To fit in there, you'd have to be a contortionist...

Actress – Or a cat. By the way, in ancient Egypt...

Author – Yes, I know, I'm supposed to have written this play... But we need to move. We can't stay here, Madeleine...

She exits.

The director, still in his cassock, and the assistant, in her military uniform with a bandage on her nose, re-enter with somber expressions.

Director – Unfortunately, after much deliberation...

Author – You were gone for barely five minutes!

Assistant – We have decided that we cannot allow you to sow doubt in the minds of the faithful in our holy congregation.

Director – Because if faith is the only thing that can save us, then doubt could drag us all into an abyss of meaninglessness. We struggle to survive at its edge, holding onto a few basic certainties.

Assistant – Like the value of work and money.

Director – Economic growth and the Nasdaq index.

Assistant – Consumer confidence and monogamous marriage.

Director – Military morale and UN-recognised borders.

Assistant – All these values that you shamelessly trample on...

Director – When we had such high hopes for you.

Assistant – In any case, we need a scapegoat, and your fate is sealed.

Author – My fate?

Director – We've made our judgement, and it's effective immediately. You must accept the ultimate sacrifice.

Assistant – But we're not heartless. We'll hold a little ceremony to make it seem more dignified.

Director – And after your death, we'll honour your memory every Sunday, we promise.

Assistant – Every Sunday, which basically means every day. Because here, every day is Sunday.

Director – I'd even say it's Christmas every day.

Assistant – We'll build you a statue. We'll organise pilgrimages.

Director – You might even throw in a little miracle now and then, if you're up for it.

Assistant – And of course, you have the right to confess before you give up your soul to... To your successor.

The director moves to one side of the counter, while the author goes to the other. The assistant leaves, her heels clicking as she walks away.

Director – This is the time to confess your sins and atone for your transgressions. I'm listening. It will ease your conscience, you'll see.

Author – Doubt dwells in me, I admit it.

Director – I have my moments of doubt too, you know. But I'm not God... Isn't there a saying that faith can move mountains?

Author – Faith moves mountains... but it replaces them with pyramids.

Director – Pyramids? I only know the ones in Egypt, and the Sphinx that guards them. You know the Sphinx, right? That big cat with the missing nose. Speaking of which, you almost cut off my assistant's nose earlier...

Author – I meant the pyramid scheme used by the biggest financial fraudsters to swindle their victims. The scammer promises huge returns and pockets the funds from the most gullible investors, using new deposits to pay off the first ones.

Director – And... does it work?

Author – Brilliantly! As long as everyone believes and the number of investors grows exponentially. As long as the pyramid keeps expanding its base quickly enough to pay off those at the top. The system collapses when doubt sets in, and new funds no longer come in fast enough.

Director – And that's when the pyramid collapses...

Author – Religion operates on a similar principle. Because no one returns from the afterlife to confirm whether Heaven and Hell exist only on Earth or that there's no more God in Heaven than here below, as long as people keep believing, the scam can continue indefinitely. The scammers are never exposed.

Director – Are you saying that the Pope is just another crook?

Author – He's the biggest crook of all time! Just look at the wealth amassed by the Vatican!

Director – Then why do people keep believing in God?

Author – Well, billionaires with degrees from the most prestigious universities willingly hand over their fortunes to a crook promising miraculous returns, hoping to earn a few extra millions they absolutely don't need. How could the wretched of the Earth not be tempted to believe in the stories told by those promising them paradise after death, to dissuade them from demanding even the basic necessities on Earth? Because, of course, many exploiters have a vested interest in maintaining this system, as it benefits them.

Director – But that's awful...

Author – You don't realize how true that is. When you create a monster, it always ends up escaping its creator and devouring everything... including those who created it. At some point, the system runs on its own, imposing itself on everyone, and leading the entire planet toward ruin.

Director – But how can we stop this infernal machine...?

Author – Questioning everything is already a healthy act of rebellion. Perhaps then, the pyramids can become springboards to the stars instead of windowless tombs.

The assistant enters.

Assistant – So, has he confessed yet?

Director – The thing is... I'm starting to have doubts myself.

Assistant – I see he's contaminated you... Let's carry out the sentence without delay, before the demoralisation spreads to all of us!

Author – And what am I condemned for?

Assistant – For atheism!

Author – But if you say I'm God...

Assistant – That makes your case even worse.

Director – You don't even believe in yourself!

Assistant – We had entrusted our fate to you, and you've betrayed our trust once again!

Director – It's ironic that the world's largest religion is based on a deicide, isn't it?

Assistant – We invented gods to fill the emptiness that lies beyond our inner walls. In the hope of seeing something through the cracks, on the other side of this boundary of nothingness. And now you're telling us there's nothing there? No "other side," just the flip side of the same coin?

Director – You mean that God plays heads or tails?

Assistant – That the universe generates itself in an endless cycle with no final goal, aiming only to realise the infinite range of possibilities?

Director – The best of worlds and the worst...

Author – Exactly. Gods and writers find their purpose in exploring the entire spectrum of their potential.

Assistant – That's why, when they run out of imagination, they must disappear to make way for others who can explore different realities.

Director – Well, see? It's for a good cause! t's for a good cause! You have to admit you were running out of ideas, right?

Assistant – Back to your cell now. Here's the key. Don't forget to lock the door behind you.

The author leaves.

Director – Aren't you worried he might escape?

Assistant – Where would he go?

Director – Good point...

Assistant – We'll execute him tomorrow morning at dawn.

Director – Why not do it now?

Assistant – I don't know. Executions are usually at dawn, aren't they?

Director – You're right... It's best to stick to tradition. What day is tomorrow?

Assistant – Sunday.

Director – Sundays are so boring. A little execution might liven things up for our residents.

Assistant – In that case, let's get some rest. Tomorrow, we'll need to find his replacement.

Director – How about a cat...?

Assistant – A cat?

Director – You know that in ancient Egypt, cats were considered sacred animals?

Assistant – And even the pharaohs worshipped a goddess with the head of a cat.

Director – And at least cats already believe they're gods.

Assistant – Unlike this degenerate writer who's starting to doubt himself.

Director – Have you heard this joke? A dog and a cat show up at the gates of heaven, where Saint Peter awaits. The dog confesses his sins, swears he's sorry, and begs for forgiveness. Then Saint Peter turns to the cat to hear his case. The cat looks at Saint Peter on his throne and says, with an air of disdain, "You're sitting in my seat."

Assistant – It's true that felines have some divine tendencies...

Director – Isn't the lion the king of the jungle? Even though it lives in the savannah...

Assistant – The problem is, I'm allergic to cat hair.

Director – Then we'll get a hairless cat!

Assistant – A hairless cat?

Director – They're called Sphinx cats. They're actually from Mexico.

Assistant – Which brings us back to the pyramids... and that big cat that got its nose eaten.

The actress enters wearing a cat mask, carrying a suitcase.

Actress – The little cat is dead... But it came back to life...

They look at her, puzzled.

Actress (*aside to the suitcase*) – You doing okay in there? Not too cramped?

Director – So, it's a cat, then...

The actress exits, and they follow her. After a moment, the actress returns, still holding her suitcase.

Actress – I told you. Once you're here, there's no way out.

She sets her suitcase on the floor and pulls out a tablecloth, draping it over the counter, which now resembles an altar. The tablecloth's visible edge bears the Eye of Horus. She takes out an Egyptian statuette of a deified cat and places it at the centre of the altar. She then turns a painting to reveal an image of herself wearing a cat mask with a backdrop of pyramids. After setting the scene, she exits with the suitcase.

The director and the assistant, dressed as a pharaoh and a pharaoh's wife, enter and take their positions on either side of the altar. They turn to face the audience.

Director – Come on, let's believe!

Assistant – Let's keep the faith!

They kneel with clasped hands in prayer. Sacred music plays, accompanied by the sound of cats meowing.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez was first a drummer for several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then began a career writing television scripts before turning to theatre and writing plays. He has written close to a hundred scripts for television and as many plays, some of which have already become classics (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker*). He is one of the most produced contemporary playwrights in France and in other francophone countries. Several of his plays are also available in Spanish and English, and are regularly produced in the United States and Latin America.

Amateur and professional theatre groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his website La Comédiathèque (<https://comediatheque.net/>). However, public productions are subject to SACD filing.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Comedies for 2

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
Preliminaries
Running on empty
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Joker
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
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
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Smell of Money

Comedies for 5 to 6

All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools

Comedies for 7 or more

Backstage Comedy
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
Neighbours' Day
Open Hearts
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Him and Her
Lost time Chronicles
Open Hearts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stories to die for

Monologues

Like a fish in the air

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