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Happy dogs

Tragicomic Monologue



Jean-Pierre Martinez

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Happy Dogs

A darkly comic monologue

Jean-Pierre Martinez

*A*fter a routine mix-up leaves him without his identity card, a man sets out to recover his identity — only to find himself becoming someone else. Somewhere between noir fiction and the fantastic, this darkly comic first-person story can also be performed as a theatrical monologue.

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It's cold. The sort of cold you wouldn't leave a dog out in. And yet there are several dogs waiting outside the locked door of Happy Dogs. Poodles, mostly. White ones, black ones. Other breeds too, probably. I don't know much about dogs. All I know is that pampered little pets keep dog-grooming salons in business, just as little old ladies keep women's hair salons going. These poodles even have the same haircuts as their owners. And the same little coats. Nothing against small dogs, mind you. Or little old ladies. But here I am, standing on the pavement, the only one without a coat. Like an idiot, I thought I wouldn't need one. Happy Dogs is downstairs from my flat. It opens at ten. I was only going to pop down and pop straight back up. Now it's a quarter past ten and the door's still shut. I could go home, of course. But now I'm here... The owner will turn up with the keys and some feeble excuse: missed the bus, youngest child's got flu, mother died in the night. My condolences. Meanwhile, I'm freezing my backside off.

I know what you're thinking. What am I doing queuing outside a closed dog-grooming salon in minus-five-degree weather when I don't even own a dog? I only go to the hairdresser once a year. If there was a queue that day, believe me, I'd come back the following year. And no, I haven't come to pick up little old ladies. What do you take me for? I've come to collect a parcel. Happy Dogs is my collection point. With town centres turning into ghost towns, small shops have to earn a little extra somehow. So, to postpone bankruptcy by a few weeks before pulling down the shutters for the last time, they take in parcels. A corner shop, a convenience store, a florist... These days you can collect a package at almost any shop on your doorstep. Well, perhaps not a sex shop, a fishmonger's or a funeral parlour. Still, it beats queuing at the post office. Provided the woman opens on time. At least the post office would be warm. For me and all those miserable dogs.

A spotty young man appears, hood up, taking his time and dripping with sweat in spite of the Arctic cold. He fishes a bunch of keys out of his shapeless parka. Without bothering to remove his gloves, he tries them in the lock one by one, while explaining that his alarm failed to go off. To hear him, you'd think he was the injured party. Has anyone ever brought a class action against the manufacturers of alarm clocks that refuse to ring? Or pillows that stop working? He might be sixteen. Eighteen. Twenty, even. I'm hopeless at guessing ages. These days everyone under thirty looks twelve to me. He's tall. A little obese. Although I'm not sure you can be a little obese. The word already suggests rather a lot. Let's say fairly fat. With a cherubic face. I don't know exactly what cherubic means either, but it seems right for that round, vacant, chubby face under a curtain of long, greasy hair. Oh, to hell with it. If you want pages of precise description packed with rare words whose meanings the writer has dutifully checked in a dictionary, go and read a nineteenth-century novel. Nobody opens dictionaries any more. We look things up online. Faced with two spellings, we choose the one with the most hits. Surely the majority can't be wrong? Very democratic. Today's popular mistake is tomorrow's rule, and yesterday's fashion disaster becomes tomorrow's elegance as soon as the right people embrace it. That's how we ended up with tasselled loafers. Worn without socks.

The overgrown adolescent is wearing army boots. Dressed in black from head to foot, he looks like a one-man militia. The complete outfit of someone who goes through

life as though it were a video game, eyes fixed on the screen, finger on the trigger. In short, he's decidedly odd. I can picture him bursting into a college with an automatic rifle, picking off everyone in sight: the teachers who humiliated him, the boys who bullied him for no reason, and the girls he pestered to no avail. But imagine a massacre in a dog-grooming salon. I can see the headline already: MASSACRE AT HAPPY DOGS. SIX DEAD: THREE PEKINGESE, TWO GREAT DANES AND AN AFGHAN HOUND. THEIR OWNER, BREED UNKNOWN, IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION. No. Nobody would take it seriously. Even a terrorist organisation would refuse to claim responsibility. A song begins playing in my head: Psycho Killer. I'd better make a run for it.

At last the psychopath finds the right key. The door swings open and the dogs start barking in chorus. As I was first in line, I'm about to slip in behind our young Cerberus when a woman makes a dash past me. I didn't see her coming. She hasn't got a dog either. I block her way. 'Sorry, I was here first. And I'm in rather a hurry...' She steps aside with a sardonic smile. I suppose I don't look like someone with pressing engagements. 'My apologies. I didn't realise we'd been given queue numbers.' I go in ahead of her, followed by a pack of dogs in full cry. It's like being hunted through the woods, with me playing the wild boar. I'm fairly sure one of the little monsters nipped my heels. I decide to rise above it.

The moment I go in, a nauseating smell grabs me by the throat. It's soaked into the peeling wallpaper of this miserable canine beauty parlour. Dog smell is worse than cigarette smoke. You can vacuum up every hair, scrub the place with disinfectant and drown it in air freshener; it never quite goes away. Have you ever ridden in a German shepherd owner's car? Even if the dog died three months ago, it still reeks. I mean even if the corpse hasn't spent those three months in the boot. And even if the owner doesn't smoke like a chimney. I hold my breath. But sooner or later you have to breathe, and I can tell my visit is going to last longer than my pathetic capacity for staying underwater. I just want my parcel, then I can get out of this kennel and back to my own little den. But the pervert who could put an end to my suffering is in no hurry. He's already disappeared into the back room, presumably to switch off the burglar alarm and switch on the coffee machine. I look around, mostly to avoid meeting the eyes of the woman I barged past. Leather accessories. Studded collars. Chains. Leads. Without the Happy Dogs sign, I'd think I was in a bondage shop. One catering to people with a dog fetish, judging by the smell.

The apprentice serial killer returns with a customer-service smile. 'Who's next?' I quickly flash the slip of paper with the order number I got by email. He takes it and glances at it distractedly. 'So, a parcel for...?' He looks up. 'Are there any other deliveries? That would save me a second trip.' Overjoyed, my rival also waves her claim slip, as if it were the winning number for a lottery draw. She shoots me a triumphant smile. In the end, despite my rudeness, I won't even get served first. 'Can I see your IDs, please?' I hand mine over with some hesitation, a brief pause before letting go. He tugs a bit harder to pull it from me, with a sadistic grin. He's still wearing his gloves. To avoid leaving fingerprints? Either way, if I want my parcel, I have no choice. He takes both our cards, slips them into his pocket, and before heading back, he addresses the pack. 'The boss will be here soon. She'll take care of you.' The dogs bark even louder. I'm still not sure if it's because they're eager for

grooming or because they are desperate to avoid it. Dogs can be hard to read.

The fat kid comes back with two packages of roughly the same size, stacked on top of each other. 'Wow, that's heavy! What's in there?' As if I'm going to tell you, you little sod. We're not at customs, and you're not a cop. My rival, being more polite or maybe just wanting to get ahead of me, tells him they're books. The guy couldn't care less. I'm not even sure if he can read. He places the two boxes on the edge of the counter and whips out his handheld terminal for us to sign the receipt. As I struggle to scrawl a barely legible signature on the tiny screen, using a stylus the size of a cotton swab tied to the device with an overly short rubber band, I keep an eye on the two boxes as they teeter precariously. I check the screen to see how my signature turned out. I wouldn't even recognise it myself. I could have just drawn a cross. But apparently, nobody cares. They call it progress. A dull thud pulls my attention away from the screen. The two boxes have just toppled over. The chubby teen picks one up and shoves it into my arms without a word. I give him a hard look. 'I'll have you know that's fragile! I hope it's well-packed, because if it isn't...' He responds with a sarcastic tone: 'The important thing is that nobody got hurt.' He's got a point – if one of those rat-sized dogs had been hit by the box, it could've been their last grooming appointment.

Eager to leave, I head toward the exit. The guy calls me back with a chuckle, 'Your card!' Right, I'd forgotten. Why did he need to take my papers into the back room, anyway? To check my identity? In case I'd had a time bomb delivered to myself, set to go off exactly forty-nine hours later? I take my card, shove it in my pocket, and walk out without looking at anyone, clutching the box to my chest. Finally, I'm out on the street. Saved. I take a deep breath of fresh air. I'd rather breathe in traffic fumes than that dog smell...

I go straight upstairs. Five floors, no lift. This damned box is heavy. I leave it in the hall. I ought to get to work, but I can't face opening my little present just yet. First a nice hot bath to warm myself up. And a change of clothes. I can still smell dog. I sink into scalding water. Now I smell like a wet dog. A boiled dog. A hot dog, without the bun. I should have had a coffee while I was downstairs. Might have woken me up. Not that I need any more agitation. I doze off as the bathwater turns lukewarm, and have a peculiar dream. I'm a novelist. Or rather, I will be when I've written my first novel. If you want to make cakes or unblock drains, you can train as a pastry chef or a plumber. You qualify, then you make cakes or pump out sewage. Simple. There's no qualification for being a novelist. Same with psychoanalysts. To call yourself an author, you first have to produce a work. Your masterpiece. Except that with writing you're an apprentice with no master and no fellow apprentices. You judge a bricklayer by the wall he's built, and a novelist by the page he's filled. To become a writer is to travel from a blank page to the Yellow Pages: from anonymous existence to having a name and a profession. Until you've written anything, you're just an ordinary fantasist, practising unlicensed alternative facts. And until you've sold a book, you're like someone offering their charms for free because no one wants to pay for them. For the moment, I'm a nobody trying to make a name for myself. And I haven't the beginnings of an idea for my first novel...

I wake up in freezing water. How long was I asleep? I could have drowned. The

police would probably have called it suicide. Accidentally dying in the bath because you nodded off isn't terribly distinguished. He died as he lived: foolishly. Which is preferable: a stupid accident, or one last act of free will? Why am I speaking about myself in the past tense? I'm not dead. Am I? Give me another five minutes in this icy liquid and I soon will be. So much for warming up. I climb out, rub myself dry and get dressed. I'm hungry. My fridge is so empty I wonder why I bother keeping it plugged in. What time is it? My watch has stopped. Dead battery. Strange, the life of a battery. They can last five years, apparently. Five years. A bit like an electoral term. Long enough for you to forget all the broken promises, but not quite long enough for the sense of betrayal to wear off. Whenever my watch stops I wonder: when did I last change that battery? Where was I? What was I doing? With whom? Was I more alive then? Happier? How many watch batteries have I got left? Or pacemaker batteries, come to that. I can't face going down to the corner shop for another one. Perhaps I should get a new watch instead. Once you change the battery, watches are rarely waterproof any more. I don't dive, but if I have to remove my watch every time I take a bath... I order a pizza. It can't still be breakfast time. I ought to work. I don't want to. We'll see after I've eaten.

I switch on the television while I wait. Oh no. Elections again. A centrist party choosing its leader. Seven dwarfs fighting over which of them gets to kiss Snow White. Their only hope of measuring up would be to stand on one another's shoulders. Enough to send you back to the bath with a packet of sleeping tablets. I switch the television off. The parcel's still in the hall. I'm about to open it when the doorbell rings. The pizza. It hasn't come on its own, obviously. On the landing stands a man wearing a motorcycle helmet and holding a pizza box. I've run out of cash. 'Could I pay by cheque?' He asks to see some identification so he can write down the number. Really, this isn't my day. Everyone seems to doubt who I am, even pizza delivery drivers. Soon they'll ask for my papers before serving me an espresso at the café.

The man in the helmet looks suspiciously at my identity card. Then at my face. Then at the photograph. 'Is something wrong?' He hands the card back and hurries away. Strange, having a complete stranger hidden behind a full-face helmet demand proof of who I am on my own doorstep. For a second I thought he might refuse to let me back into my flat. I begin to understand what it must feel like to be stopped by a motorcycle policeman on Route 66 and asked to prove you're yourself. Why Route 66? No particular reason. It's the only famous road in America I can name. Nobody ever accused me of being good at geography. What's wrong with my face, anyway? I glance down at the card he's returned. And recoil. That isn't my picture. It's a woman. A woman of a certain age...

Luckily he left me the pizza. And returned the card. What else could he have done with it? The pizza, I mean. Sell it to someone else reheated? It's hardly wonderful the first time it comes out of the oven. Judging by the smell, this one's been badly burnt. Put it back in and you'd be cremating it. He probably thought I was a lunatic. Or that I'd changed sex and forgotten to update my photograph. Perhaps he was afraid of getting caught up in some elaborate discrimination complaint. Or he simply wanted to get away from this madhouse. Because it is mad. Who's this woman? What am I doing with her identity card? Where is mine? The answer's obvious. My only outing

today was to Happy Dogs. That imbecile handed me somebody else's card. Which means somebody else walked off with mine. Perhaps he did it deliberately, the little creep. And I'd been suspicious of him from the start. But how could I have expected him to hand me a false identity card? Well, it's probably genuine. It just isn't mine. Which, from my point of view, comes to much the same thing. I'd better get back there before they close.

I charge down the stairs, furious. In the end, it's lucky the pizza delivery guy asked for my ID, otherwise… Normally, you don't spend your time checking to see if your ID photo has changed. We're the ones who change over the years, not the photo. If you don't recognise yourself after a while, it's because you've gone grey, not because the photo has yellowed. But in this case, my sex seems to have changed altogether. I might not have noticed until months later, like when trying to board a long-distance train or a plane. No, it's utterly irresponsible to pull stunts like this!

I swing open the door to Happy Dogs like I'm entering a saloon, ready to draw my weapon. 'Where's that jerk?' The little lady behind the counter doesn't seem to understand right away what I'm talking about. I explain. She pretends to sympathise, without actually apologising. The lunatic isn't there. He's only a trainee. He only works in the morning. She looks at the ID card. The woman isn't a regular customer. So the owner doesn't know her. Just someone who came to pick up a parcel, like me, and might never come back. An occasional visitor, not a member of the canine club with a loyalty card. No. They don't have her contact information. And they have no way to reach her. But maybe she'll come back once she realises the mix-up. Sure... In six months or a year. If she hasn't died in the meantime.

The shopkeeper looks at me with a feigned apologetic expression and a hint of suspicion. 'Are you sure it's a mistake?' I feel like strangling her. I'm holding a woman's ID card right in front of her, and she's asking if I'm sure it's a mistake. I snatch the card from her hands. No way am I leaving it with her, hoping that this woman comes back to return mine. At least this way, I've got something to exchange. Because, obviously, she's in the same mess as me. She doesn't have her identity either. I mean, she doesn't have her ID card. I leave my number with the poodle groomer, just in case, and suggest she choose her trainees more carefully. She mumbles something that I'd rather interpret as a commitment to do just that. I leave, not feeling any calmer. Looks like I'll have to investigate this myself.

While I'm out, I buy a watch battery at the corner shop. It's still cheaper than getting a new watch. The second hand starts ticking again. I have a coffee at the café next door. A middle-aged woman is leaning on the counter right next to me. Her profile seems familiar, but I can't remember her name. Could she be the woman who walked off with my identity? How would I know? I've been avoiding making eye contact. I can't just ask her if she's got my ID in her bag instead of hers. It could be her. Or any woman in this city. I glance at the ID card. A name. An address. Thankfully, she lives in the neighbourhood. At least, according to the address on the card. She might have moved. The card's already quite old. Almost expired. The coffee is lukewarm. I hate it when they serve lukewarm coffee. Or maybe I just took too long to drink it. My mind was elsewhere. This whole thing is starting to obsess me.

The woman who was beside me is already heading for the door. Too late to ask her if she's got my ID instead of hers. She turns around one last time, like she's waving to her audience before exiting the stage. Suddenly, her name comes back to me—she's an actress we've seen on TV for years. Though she's been appearing less and less lately. Actresses of a certain age are easier to recognise from a distance than up close. Especially without make-up. Reality doesn't like close-ups. The truth is easier to perceive from afar. But who is this woman? Not this fading actress—the woman who stole my identity. The waiter shoots me an ironic look. What if he's in on it too? I'm starting to lose my mind. I wonder if I might have a slight fever. I decide to leave without finishing this horrid coffee.

The first thing I notice when I get home is the pizza box. Might as well have something to eat, even though by now the pizza must be cold too. And therefore even more disgusting. The universe's destiny, from its birth to its death, is a long and slow degradation from heat to cold. Until that absolute cold and total stillness that is the death of all things. I open the box. I had ordered a vegetarian. It turns out to be a tuna pizza. With an apparent extra helping of tuna. I hate tuna. I can't digest it. This really isn't my day. I do my best to scrape off most of the toppings and start eating. As I chew on this pizza stripped almost bare, with much the same texture as the box it came in, I glance at the illustration on the box. A pizza maker in green and red, wearing a chef's hat, sliding his pizza into an old-fashioned oven with a long wooden peel. When you eat with the devil, you need a long spoon. He probably left it in the oven too long. I feel like I'm eating charcoal. Below the ironic “Enjoy your meal” is handwritten the name of the lucky recipient, along with their address. I nearly jump out of my skin. It's my address, but not my name. It's the name of the woman whose ID I have! This is unacceptable! Is this some sort of conspiracy? What's this intrusion into my life? I can already tell this tuna is going to sit heavily in my stomach. I scraped off most of it, but there were still crumbs left. I'd better go lie down.

I wake up sweating. Night has fallen. What time is it? My watch has stopped again. So it wasn't the battery after all. I should have bought a new watch. Too late. A new watch comes with a new battery, and then I'll have this spare one on my hands. Batteries don't only run down when you use them. They keep dying quietly in the dark, just like a heart beating away in an empty life. A lonely heart, left behind after an impostor has run off with the rest of its body. As if it had made peace with being transplanted, only to learn that the patient has found a better one elsewhere. I have to find this woman. I locate her address on a map. A few streets away. I try the White Pages, the old residential phone directory. Nothing under her name. The White Pages. The name says it all: white pages, nothing on them. Who lists a telephone number these days? In another age, people used to leave their names, numbers and addresses in a book for complete strangers to consult. That was before our private lives became public property and our names became secrets. Some progress. At least a name in a phone book once had a fair chance of belonging to a real person. Now even that seems an act of faith. I'll try the address tomorrow. We'll see.

It's not an apartment, nor a house. It's more like a kind of shop with nothing for sale. Or maybe it's a store with the display window on the wrong side, facing the back office. Inside, I see two desks, some computers, and a few filing cabinets. A few decorative items too, some odd little pieces of designer furniture, quirky lamps, and

knick-knacks. It's unclear if these handcrafted items, unlike the flat-pack office furniture, are actually for sale, or what they might cost. Strange business. I don't see anyone inside, but the lights are on. So, it must be open. I wait on the pavement for a bit, hoping someone shows up. Maybe the owner. Or some customers. But it's definitely quieter than Happy Dogs, that's for sure. I'm not feeling too comfortable, given the cold reception I got from the woman I met at Happy Dogs the first time we met. On the other hand, I'm not here to ask her for a favour. She'll probably want her ID card back, too—assuming she's realised it's missing by now.

A door opens in the office and a woman appears. Not bad, actually. From a distance. I couldn't begin to guess her age. Excellent. I've always liked women whose age you can't guess. At one end of the scale, if you can tell exactly how young they are, you may be risking a prison sentence. At the other, once you can start counting the years again, you're in danger of becoming a gigolo. The ideal woman, for me, is ageless. Young women are all very well for a little while, but there's no conversation. No sense of humour, especially. And precious little patience. They can't appreciate a decent wine. They drink grape juice. Or vodka and cola, then throw up everywhere. Older women? I don't know. I'd rather not. I'll find out soon enough. For now, I prefer women of an uncertain age, for whom going to a restaurant isn't just a formality but part of the foreplay. We should be preparing for the day when the restaurant is all we'll have left. Provided our stomachs can still manage it. Otherwise there'll still be conversation over a nice cup of bedtime herbal tea.

I push open the shop door and step inside. She's seated at her computer, not looking up right away, maybe to show that they don't pounce on customers as soon as they walk in. They're above that. They don't sell vacuum cleaners. In fact, there's nothing for sale. I move forward tentatively, pretending to glance around the decor, desperately searching for something with a price tag. She finally deigns to look at me, seems a bit surprised, and gets up. 'Can I help you?' Unlike the actress I saw at the café, she's better up close than from afar. But I still don't recognise her. I wouldn't mind inviting her back to my kennel for a little tête-à-tête. But the first time I saw her at Happy Dogs, I was in a terrible mood. I almost barked at her. Don't worry, that's just to keep the metaphor going. I'm not going to play some experimental-novel trick where you find out at the end that the narrator is actually a dog.

Honestly, if it weren't for the address, I wouldn't be sure she's the woman I saw at Happy Dogs. She doesn't really look like the photo on the ID card, but then again... Women often change their appearance. All it takes is a trip to the hairdresser. And maybe it's an old photo. Or, like me, maybe someone gave her someone else's card a long time ago, and she never noticed. And it's this same card that got passed on to me by mistake. It's like taking a ten-euro note from my pocket and trying to find its original owner based solely on the print pattern. A banknote is dirty. It goes from hand to hand, even across borders. An ID card is supposed to be unique to each of us. You only show it to authorised professionals – cops, customs officers, doctors... You should never part with it. Much less swap it with someone else's, especially if they're not even the same gender as you. This is all getting more and more confusing in my head. For a moment, I can't even remember why I'm here. Sure, she's not bad-looking, but... enough to throw me off this much? Or maybe I'm a lot more desperate than I thought.

I start to stammer out an explanation. 'Do you ever go to Happy Dogs? Have you been there recently?' She looks more and more perplexed. If she thinks this is just a pretext to start a conversation, she's probably thinking it's the weirdest pickup line she's ever heard. I'm not sure she'll give me credit for creativity. But I must look so pathetic that she feels sorry for me. She might think I'm homeless. Someone without papers. Or a harmless lunatic who escaped from a psychiatric hospital, looking for a bit of comfort and human warmth in her shop. 'Would you like a coffee?' She takes my silence as a yes and pours me a cup. 'Thanks.' 'Sugar?' 'No, thanks.' I said that just to be polite. But I hate coffee without sugar. I drink it anyway, trying not to make a face. At least it's hot. I explain that I've lost my ID card. I'm not sure if I should tell her I have hers. Maybe she found it? 'Found it? Where?' 'I don't know... In your bag, maybe?' From her reaction, I sense I'll need to elaborate a bit.

But the door she came through opens once more, and another woman appears. Apparently, this back office has an even further back office. And maybe it just keeps going, like Russian dolls. The rooms, I mean. Though, speaking of dolls, these two aren't bad either. One blonde, one brunette. I wonder whether one fits inside the other. The first one, the blonde, explains my situation with a hint of compassion: 'The gentleman has lost his papers.' 'That's odd,' says the brunette. 'Oh, really?' She explains that she's a visual artist. She takes photos of anonymous people and makes up their stories. I look at the photos. One of these missing persons looks a bit like me. And all of these photos have a strangely familiar vibe.

The brunette stares at me intently. She collects photographic traces of people she has never known: pictures rescued from rubbish dumps. Or flea markets. I hate flea markets. There's one every autumn in my neighbourhood. Nothing looks more like a garbage dump than a flea market. Except maybe the prices. People from all the surrounding towns rent stalls at exorbitant rates and bring their junk to sell. Their old chipped plates, their youngest kid's outgrown underwear, their ancient computer... The worst part is, it actually sells. Sometimes at prices that rival new items. It's quite picturesque. And very depressing. There's a funfair, too. Funfairs are quite curious. Completely out of time. Even when I was a child, they were already outdated. And they haven't changed since. Same old rides. Same old candy floss. Same awful background music, with tracks so obscure that even the songwriters would probably deny responsibility. Round and round! A classic is something that never goes out of fashion. A fairground is the opposite: something that was never fashionable and never will be. And yet people keep taking their kids there, as if it were some kind of initiation rite. So that's life: an open-air rubbish tip where even the junk is for sale. And the only thing they'll offer you for entertainment is one ride on the carousel, once a year.

I haven't really been listening to the beginning of her explanation. I was still thinking about that rubbish-tip business. She's telling me about her artistic project. She rummages through the waste of society, looking for traces of people who have vanished, then tries to imagine the original lives. To bring the ghosts back. I grab at that last thought, just to show I've been listening, in case she asks me a question I can't answer. 'I'm the opposite. I'm still here, but all trace of me has disappeared. I

don't even have a card with my photograph on it to prove I exist.' I begin to understand how someone might arrive in a foreign country, throw away their papers for fear of being sent back, then discover how difficult life is without a name. Only I want my name back. And I want to go home. The two women smile at me. I don't know why they're being so kind, or telling me so much about themselves. It's warm in here. Almost heavenly. I'm ashamed of having been rude to one of them over a place in the queue. Now I can hardly bring myself to mention why I came.

Out of politeness, I ask the blonde what she does. After all, she's the one I came to see. I think. She tells me she's a fortune-teller. At first I assume she's joking, but she's good-humoured enough not to be offended. I told you: women of a certain age have a sense of humour. Still, the answer rather cools my ardour. An affair with a fortune-teller would be terribly predictable. Living with a woman who could see right through you. Not to mention into your future. Although she apparently hasn't noticed that she went home with my identity card, which is reassuring. But a fortune-teller? Isn't that a sort of witch? A charming one, admittedly. I'd be terrified she'd spend the night sticking pins into a little doll that looked like me, punishing me for all my misdeeds. Even the ones I hadn't committed yet. She asks what I do for a living. Partly to challenge her, partly because I'm no longer quite sure myself, I suggest she guess.

She kindly offers to read my palm. For free, presumably. I'm not keen. If something dreadful is going to happen, I'd rather it came as a surprise. Still, I give her my hand. Perhaps that's all she wanted. Hers is warm and soft. She doesn't speak. I feel awkward. She seems uneasy too, though perhaps for another reason. 'Bad news?' 'Not exactly. But I can't see a single line on your palm.' 'Is that a bad sign?' She tries to make light of it. 'Well, if you're a novelist, I can't see much of a future for you.' 'Why not?' 'A writer with not a single line to his name?' I'm not sure about her sense of humour. The trouble is, she doesn't seem to be joking. If I've lost the lines on my palm, I can only hope I've still got my fingerprints...

She lets go of my hand, almost reluctantly. An awkward silence. They both look at me with a somewhat indulgent expression. If it's better to be envied rather than pitied, I think I'm on the wrong track. Then again, women tend to like stray dogs without collars. If I had to choose a partner, I wouldn't know which one to pick. Or maybe both. Okay, that's a bit cliché, but what's the point of being the narrator in a novel if you can't fantasise a little? Have you ever had a dream where you realise you're dreaming? And then you think, 'Great, I can do whatever I want! No consequences.' The worst that can happen is you wake up. Damn. What if they're together? I mean, as a couple. I don't know if that should make me more excited or completely discourage me. Probably both. I think it's time to get to the point before this really goes off the rails. I quickly explain the possible card mix-up. Maybe to get rid of me, the blonde agrees to check.

While Mary Poppins rummages through her handbag, a few posters on the wall catch my eye. They're about a pretty radical animal-liberation group. About recognising animals as people. About fighting against the exploitation of animals. About the torture inflicted on these poor defenceless creatures we claim to be our friends. And about the various legal and not-so-legal actions taken to ensure their rights are

respected. I gather this office is also the headquarters of an activist organisation. Its legal front. The brunette notices my surprise. 'Are you into animal rights?' 'Not really. Well… I mean, yes, but... I have to admit I've never thought about it much until now.' To be fair, I don't usually eat my friends. And anyway, I don't have any. So, at least the blonde and the brunette share the same convictions. Even if they don't share the same bed. 'If you'd like to join us, you're welcome.' It takes me a moment to realise she's only inviting me to join their animal-liberation group, which might have some armed resistance. Suddenly, I feel less enthusiastic. I say I'll think about it... I'm now keen to wrap things up.

The blonde has her ID card. So, the one I have in my hand isn't hers. I have to admit, the photo didn't really look like her. But then again, photos can be deceiving. On my ID card, I looked more like a terrorist on a wanted poster. A premonitory sign? So, the fortune teller wasn't wrong. She didn't lose her papers. I just hope she's not also right about her predictions of my total lack of a future... But then, why does the address match? There's a building above. It's the same address. The entrance is just a bit further down the street. Eight floors. Three apartments per floor. That's twenty-four possibilities. Thank you, I can count. I thank them anyway, and leave after vaguely promising to come back to buy something. But buy what, exactly?

I check the mailboxes. I don't see the name I'm looking for. But she might have moved since she got her ID card, which is already a few years old. I'm starting to wonder if I'm the one who's a bit lost. You wouldn't mistake me for Columbo – I can't even find my own ID card. Or maybe the mix-up happened with someone else. Somewhere else. Earlier. But with who? Where? When? How? And even, possibly, why? Not to mention the question that's starting to bug me. What if the lady from Happy Dogs was right? What if it wasn't a mistake?

I go back home with my ears drooping and my tail between my legs. I'm not quite sure where I stand anymore. Worse. I'm not even sure I know who I am anymore. Alright. Time to get to work. I'll try, at least. I reluctantly pick up the package I left in the hallway. And that idiot who dropped it on the floor! I hope nothing's broken inside. But I guess for such fragile equipment, and at that price, it's well protected. I'm still surprised the package is so heavy, though. It should be full of polystyrene. And when I open the box, all I find is bubble wrap bound with sticky tape. I have a bad feeling about this. Surely it's not drugs...? I cut the plastic with a knife to see what's wrapped inside. I called it a present, but it's turning into a lucky dip... It's not at all what I ordered! Nor is it cannabis resin, for that matter. It's books... Not only did this idiot give me the wrong ID card, but he also gave me the wrong package!

I go back to Happy Dogs, even more furious. This time, I think I might kill someone. There's another crowd on the pavement, but much larger than a simple queue outside a shop at opening time. A siren. Flashing lights. The shop is surrounded by police. The firefighters are there too. Snippets of conversation. They're talking about a suspicious package that nobody has come to claim. The bomb-disposal team have arrived to blow it up. The whole business is beginning to smell of trouble. And burning. I hear a muffled explosion. Did they really just heroically destroy the computer I ordered to write my first novel? Like the other day, the young psychopath shows up with his key ring. He doesn't even seem surprised. The actress I saw at the

café is also there, watching the scene among other onlookers. I could approach the police, of course. But it's a bit too late anyway to get my package back. And I'm not sure it's the best moment. I prefer to slip away before they ask me for my ID. Especially since I don't have one...

Before leaving, I pick up a leaflet from the pavement. It bears the name Domestic Animal Liberation Front. A claim of responsibility? But why attack Happy Dogs? Surely this is a place where animals are pampered, not exploited. It's hardly an animal-testing laboratory. It would be like bombing a holiday resort to protest against the exploitation of workers. Or blowing up a luxury spa to campaign for better pensions.

Then again, dressing dogs in little coats, dragging them to the hairdresser and sometimes even to a therapist... Isn't that an assault on their dignity as dogs? I don't know. I'm trying to understand. Human hypocrisy towards animals really is extraordinary. On one side we have the pets we treat like our own children. Better, sometimes. Or at least just as badly. On the other, there are living, feeling creatures we regard as nothing more than meat. How do we justify treating equally sentient beings so differently? Apparently an octopus is cleverer than a three-year-old child, yet we happily order calamari. Why is a pig, so close to us in so many ways, dinner, while a dog, whose ancestors were wolves, is the family's best friend? Species prejudice, if you ask me. People who are horrified by the thought of eating dog may be perfectly happy to eat rabbit or horse, or even frogs' legs. Meanwhile, the next country along may regard cows as sacred and pork as forbidden. A great deal of moral certainty resting on the accident of where we were born. None of it makes sense.

And, I suppose, a bomb in the middle of town, where everyone can see it, makes a greater impression than one in a slaughterhouse miles out in the countryside, where nobody ever goes. Why did they hide concentration camps away in forests? So that afterwards people could say they hadn't known. Slaughterhouses work a little like that. Everyone knows they're there, but faced with a steak tartare nobody wants to know. I think of the two firebrands at that shop where nothing is for sale. I can't quite picture either of them with blood on her hands. But appearances can change. Women, too. Could they have had anything to do with the attack?

Back home, I examine the parcel again. I'd ordered everything I needed to write my first novel: a laptop, a few reams of paper and some printer cartridges. Now I have nothing to write with. An excellent excuse for doing nothing at all. I bend over the box and pick up a book. The White Pages, says the title. Odd. It's considerably slimmer than the telephone directory. Some sort of joke? The other books are identical. And the author on the cover... That's my name! Well, the name on the woman's identity card. The one that was handed to me by mistake. Or perhaps not by mistake. What if it really is my card? Except I'm not a woman. At least I don't think I am. There have to be limits. I seem to be losing my mind. And my sense of time. I look down at the books again. Could these be copies of my first novel? The one I thought I hadn't written yet? I'm not sure whether to be pleased. And what am I supposed to do with so many copies? I count. A hundred in a bundle. Fifty bundles. Five thousand books! I never imagined myself a bestselling novelist. I'd have printed

five hundred at most. Already I dread the printer's bill...

I rush to the neighbourhood bookshop with a copy of the novel, to have it examined. Like an atheist who discovers a communion wafer and takes it to a laboratory to see whether it really contains the body of Christ. Or at least traces of human flesh. These days, entering a bookshop is like entering a church. An act of faith. We know God is dead, but we'd so like to believe. I show the assistant the author's biography on the back cover. It's the woman on the identity card. She says she knows her. A customer. An actress who lives nearby. Of course! The woman I saw in the café! She must have been coming from Happy Dogs. She's the one I pushed past, not the blonde at the strange shop. I really can't remember faces. Or I'm extremely short-sighted. Or suffering from amnesia. Possibly all three. 'Do you think this book would sell?' The assistant gives me a condescending look. 'Well, you know... self-publishing...' The owner approaches and looks at me oddly. I thank them and start to leave. As I go, the owner draws her assistant aside and whispers something, still looking in my direction. I don't hang about.

Outside, I look back at the shop. There's a notice stuck to the glass door. WANTED. With my photograph. So I'm not the only one looking for myself. Perhaps someone found my identity card and wants to return it. People put up notices like that for missing cats and dogs. I step closer. It's a police sketch of the suspected bomber at Happy Dogs. A dangerous terrorist, allegedly a member of the Domestic Animal Liberation Front. Through the window, the two booksellers are still watching me. One of them is picking up the telephone. I hurry away.

I stagger home, out of breath, and slam the door behind me, thinking for a moment that I'm safe. But the moment I step inside, I feel a presence. The police already? With police dogs, presumably, because I can smell something like a German shepherd. A quick glance tells me nothing's missing. Admittedly, there's so little here that a burglar would deserve a medal for finding anything worth taking. The flat isn't exactly mine, anyway. I'm subletting it. Well, perhaps 'borrowing' would be more accurate. I've never met the owner. The previous tenant left the keys under the doormat before disappearing. I don't think he'd paid the rent for ages. So there we are. I'm not in my own home, the police are looking for me, and I've got no papers. Or rather, I have an identity card, but it belongs to somebody else. I check the empty room I use as an office. Nothing's missing there either. Quite the contrary. My old computer, which died after picking up a nasty virus, has miraculously come back to life. It's sitting on the plank laid across two trestles that serves as my desk. The screen is on. A document is open. I read it. Just a title: The White Pages. I've got a bad feeling about this...

I go back into the hall and pick up one of the books. The White Pages. Yes, that's the title. I open it. Every page is blank. White pages. Like a telephone directory from which all the names have suddenly vanished. Or a novel that still has to be written. But by whom? Books are difficult enough to sell when they've actually got words in them. I return to the computer and close the document to see whether there's another file on the desktop containing the manuscript. I save this one first. Just in case. Save what, exactly? Apart from the title, there's nothing in it. A wonderfully stupid title, too. Not much help.

And that's when the actress makes her entrance. Not in person. She's there on the wallpaper of my old computer, resurrected from the dead. Her face fills the screen in front of me, like a mirror with someone else's reflection, slightly raised, almost three-dimensional. She looks as though she's about to speak. It's a blurred black-and-white picture, one of those supernatural photographs I saw at the shop where the otherworldly photographer shared a back room with her fortune-telling accomplice. Perhaps when they're not planting bombs by day, these two Russian dolls spend their nights holding séances with computers in their innermost room. Perhaps they have conjured up the image of the missing author of this unwritten novel, here in my flat, from a distance. Who is this woman facing me? Did I see her ghost at the café? Does she live here? Did she live here before? Or am I living in her home? I'd rather not ask whether I'm living inside her. Could she be the real author of this novel, with me reduced to a mere narrator? And to think I wanted to avoid one of those experimental novels where you find out at the end that the narrator is actually a dog. At least I'm not a dog. Or am I...?

My watch starts again. So do I. Dogs don't wear watches. That's reassuring. Though some wear little coats to the hairdresser. Perhaps in five years I'll have filled all these white pages, made a name for myself and sold the five thousand books. Written my own life, or someone else's. Like a waking dream. Because my life up to now... Maybe that's why the little bastard decided to shuffle the cards. Identity cards. It's my first novel. That's news to me. I'm not at all sure there'll be a second. You don't become a writer by filling white pages with dark thoughts. I open the window wide and look out at the buildings opposite. Behind every window is a name in a directory. A borrowed identity. I close my eyes. The pattern of windows remains printed on my retinas. I lean a little farther out. For a fleeting moment I have the sensation of falling inward. Before the memory finally fades, before I hit rock bottom, I try to slip through one of those windows and into another possible life. Hoping it won't be a dog's life. I open my eyes again. I'm still alive. As far as I can tell.

I have to go out sometime. If only to buy food and fill the fridge. Otherwise I'll starve to death and all my problems will be solved. The trouble is, when the police are looking for you and your papers aren't in order, the street is a dangerous place. I can see only one way to stay alive. And free. Become that woman. If the card doesn't match my identity, I'll change my identity to match the card. Two problems solved at once: I'll have papers, and a clean criminal record. It may create a few unexpected complications, but at this stage... I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Until now I've been trying to find my way across America with a map of France. No wonder I couldn't find the right road. Perhaps it's time to take Route 66.

I go to the dressing room door and open it. Like Bluebeard's wife, I wasn't supposed to open certain doors. The dressing room door, specifically. Not really the kind of room I desperately needed, given the size of my wardrobe. Am I going to find women's corpses in this closet? The previous owner's wives... That would be bad news. The dressing room is filled with women's clothing. I didn't know the owner was a woman. She'd left some of her things here, neatly arranged on the shelves or hanging in the wardrobe. I'm going to give life to this possible existence. Hers. It's almost exciting. Who hasn't dreamed, at some point, of shedding their skin?

So today I begin a new life. A woman's life. The life of this woman that I'll have to reinvent, since I know nothing about it. It's always better than a dog's life. Well, that remains to be seen. What am I going to wear to go out on the street? I'll start by going to the hairdresser's to get a new look. Then, maybe, when I'm a bit older, I'll get myself a poodle and buy it a little coat. And I'll return to Happy Dogs with my head held high, as a proper lady customer. But for now, I've got a book to write...

I still haven't started writing the novel of my new life. As for booking an appointment at the hairdresser's, I'll opt for a wig for now. Until my real hair grows a bit longer. That's not guaranteed, because I don't have much left. I even feel like I lost more after the ordeal I've just been through. Fortunately, there were also two wigs in Bluebeard's dressing room. A blonde and a brunette. They look like real hair. They could be the scalps of his last wives who were a bit too curious. I went with the blonde. But I might switch to the brunette one day.

I've decided to risk everything. All or nothing. I'm going back to Happy Dogs. I don't have a dog, but I'll say I'm looking for a gift for mine. For its birthday, maybe. If nobody recognises me there, I've succeeded. I can live my life as a fake blonde with genuine papers, without being bothered. I spruce myself up a bit before heading out. A touch of make-up. Without being too garish. It's the high heels that give me the most trouble. Especially on the stairs.

So far, so good. Nobody turns to stare at me in the street. Growing bolder, I go into the café. The barman greets me with a 'Hello, gorgeous. What can I get you?' Borderline indecent. A promising sign. I drink my usual lukewarm coffee and leave, delighted with myself. I feel like a double agent on a mission, living under an assumed identity. A member of the Resistance under an occupation. A Mata Hari in borrowed clothes. Still, I decide not to push my luck any further today.

To look even more convincing, I've decided to borrow a dog. All right, 'borrow' may require a little explanation. A poodle. Black all over. At least the dirt won't show. I was walking through the park, dressed as a woman, when he came trotting up to me, wet nose forward, tail wagging. He didn't appear to belong to anyone. No collar, no lead, nothing attaching him to another human being. Anxious to spare him the horrors of the dog pound, I may have been a little quick to decide he was lost. When I walked off carrying him in my arms, I think I heard a very large woman shouting behind me. I chose not to answer and walked faster. The deed was done. No going back. Some people would call it kidnapping. But I don't intend to ask for ransom. I only need the poodle for a few hours, to make the right impression at Happy Dogs. It's astonishing how easy it is to kidnap a poodle. Much easier than a child. And considerably less risky. Besides, what would I do with a child? After his initial astonishment, the dog proves quite docile. I'll keep him at home for a few days before we go out together. To give him time to get used to things. And me too.

I'm almost growing fond of the little beast. He hardly eats. Sleeps all day. I don't know his name. Between naps he gives me a mournful look in which I choose to detect a certain complicity. I hope his dreams are pleasant. In a way, he's just like me. He's lost his identity, separated against his will from the one person who knew what to call him. His mistress. A second birth, in a sense. Sooner or later you have to cut

the cord. Only in his case the cord was a lead. Should I give him a new name? I could lend him mine. I'm not using it. I call him by my own name and he responds. Frankly, I could call him anything. He wouldn't care, provided there were biscuits afterwards.

It's our first outing together. Since I couldn't steal the chain with the dog, I'm leading him on a length of string. I hope I haven't tied the slipknot of his new umbilical cord too tight. He seems to have understood that pulling on it isn't advisable. This time I go straight to Happy Dogs. The smell is less fierce than I remember. Almost pleasant. Familiar, at any rate. Perhaps that's what happens when you've been living with a poodle for a while. I feel at home. As though I'm returning to my own house. Or kennel. I must have been a dog in a former life. At least I now know what a dog's life feels like.

The trainee is there. So is the owner. Evidently she hasn't seen fit to sack the little bastard. Perhaps she's his mother. Or he's her lover. Several ladies are waiting to have their dogs groomed. Their dogs, I mean. No particular reaction when I enter, beyond a vague 'Good morning, madam.' Nobody seems to know me. Or recognise me. To this respectable businesswoman, I'm just another customer. Better still, a potential regular. I inspect the collars and leads for my poodle. The young gigolo passes close behind me, almost brushing against me. In a rather suggestive whisper he asks, 'Looking for anything in particular?' 'No thanks, just browsing.' I told you he was a pervert. The owner pretends to take no interest in me. Waiting for me to bite before she reels me in, no doubt. She shuffles some papers, picks up the telephone and dials. At once my mobile starts vibrating. Perhaps I've pushed my luck too far. One call and she's hooked me. 'Hello, sir. I've got good news for you.' 'Yes?' I whisper. 'We've found your identity card. The lady brought it back. You can come and collect it from the shop.' I mumble a few words as quietly as I can, covering my mouth with my hand, and put the phone away.

That was close. I'm sweating. Cold sweat. I feel like a fish hauled abruptly from the water, half its mouth torn away, then thrown back in as a grand gesture of compassion for the animal kingdom. I'm still struggling to grasp the consequences of this sudden, unforeseen resurrection of my original identity. In a daze I listen to the conversation around me. The Domestic Animal Liberation Front has claimed the parcel-bomb attack. Two women have been arrested. So at least I'm no longer a suspect in that affair. I've noticed that my police sketch has disappeared from the walls around town. But now there's another notice pinned up behind the counter. A missing black poodle. Very like the one at the end of my string. There's a photograph, of course, but what could look more like a black poodle than another black poodle? I could always have mine dyed white. Nobody seems to have recognised the star of this canine missing-person appeal. It's my string that appears to upset the other customers. I must admit the poor animal is on the verge of suffocation. I loosen the noose round his neck, choose a leather lead and a matching collar, pay, and head for the door.

At that moment a woman bursts into the shop like a hurricane. Now this one really is obese. I wonder how she managed to get through the doorway at such speed. She points an accusing finger at me and snarls, 'That's my dog! Yuki!' The poodle rouses himself and pricks up his ears. The name seems vaguely familiar to him. He starts yapping. Softly at first. Then louder. 'Yuki! It's Mummy!' All the other dogs begin

barking, and the little old ladies start shouting at me too. If I stay, they'll lynch me. The woman keeps shrieking, 'Yuki! Yuki! Come to Mummy!' Forgetting the noose round his neck, the poodle leaps towards his former mistress. The string snaps taut like a bowstring. The knot tightens round his throat like a lasso. He stops in mid-air and crashes to the floor, yelping and convulsing. The woman is about to faint. 'Oh God! Yuki!' The owner rushes to catch her as she falls backwards while the trainee slashes through the dog's improvised hanging rope with a box cutter, almost slicing through his vocal cords as well. In the general confusion I spot my identity card on the counter, beside my change. I snatch it and run, high heels and all.

My mad dash ends in a limp. I've broken a heel. Once round the corner I pull off my wig and catch my breath. The nightmare is over. I'm myself again. I've recovered my papers. Then I sense someone behind me. A police dog come to put me on a lead and take me to the pound? I no longer want to run. I've never felt so alone. I turn. It's the alleged Yuki. But is that really his name? What if the woman claiming to be his owner is as much of an impostor as I am? The poodle, for his part, is delighted to see me. He barks happily, wagging his tail, as if we'd been separated for months instead of a minute. Now he's even peed on me. He seems to have grown attached to me too. In the end I may not need a lead.

I set off with this remarkably forgiving dog. I'll still have to get him dyed white. I haven't written the first novel that will make me an author, but at least I've found a travelling companion. All I need now is a road. Come to think of it, I don't even know if my new friend is a he or a she. The weather is grey and damp. Everything around me is ugly. Nothing is certain, but anything is possible. Even the worst. We haven't seen much of the sun here for some time. In less than five billion years it will be dead. And the Earth with it. But dogs don't know that. Happy dogs...

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:

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

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