La Comédiathèque

For real or Just Kidding?





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For Real or Just Kidding?

A Collection of Comic Sketches

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Sometimes it is hard to tell what is real from what is made up. But mixing the two can be wickedly entertaining. Just for a laugh.

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All the roles may be played by performers of any gender.

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1 – The Day of the Dead

A grave, with a portrait of the deceased and a plaque reading "In memory of Jacky". An old newspaper lies on the ground. Two people arrive separately, each carrying a pot of flowers, which they awkwardly place in front of the grave. They seem not to know each other. An embarrassed silence.

One – My condolences.

Two – Thank you...

One – You must be one of the family...?

Two – Uh... not really. And you?

One – Neither am I.

They look around to make sure they are alone.

Two – Maybe we're early.

One – Yes...

Two – Or late.

One – It's strange that there are so few of us here.

Two – Still... he was very well-liked.

One – Yes.

Two – Did you know him? I mean... did you know him well?

One – Not really... And you?

Two – Me neither. To be honest, I'm not even sure why I'm here.

One – Isn't that what everyone asks themselves at a funeral?

Two – Yes... You come to be polite, and then... you end up wondering why you're here.

One – I promised myself I'd never go to another funeral.

Two – Same here... Apart from my own, obviously.

One – Still, it's good that we came... otherwise, no one would have been here.

A pause.

Two – It's really sad...

One – It's no age to die, that's for sure.

Two – How old was he exactly?

One – Exactly...? I couldn't tell you. But he didn't look that old, did he? Judging by the photograph, anyway...

Two – Maybe it's an old photo.

One – Maybe... Have you noticed how the photograph on a gravestone usually shows the person when they were young and healthy?

Two – True. A picture of them before their illness or... accident.

One – Or... their decline.

A pause.

Two – By the way, do you know what he died of, exactly?

One – Oh, I don't know...

Two – What we do know is that he's dead.

One – That's the only thing we know for sure about him.

Silence.

Two – Your flowers are lovely.

One – Yours too.

Two – They're the same, aren't they?

One – We must have got them from the same place.

Two – Yes...

One – I found mine on a grave not far from here. I hadn't thought to buy flowers, so... I just grabbed these on the way.

Two – Oh, yes...

One – And you?

Two – Same here. I didn't have any money on me... I took mine from another grave a little further along.

One – Flowers are so expensive these days.

Two – And anyway, the one we took them from won't be lodging a complaint with the police.

The other one notices the newspaper on the ground.

One – What's this newspaper doing here? Someone could at least have picked it up...

The first character picks up the newspaper and looks at the front page.

Two – This cemetery isn't very well maintained. I don't know if there's even a caretaker. Anyone could steal flowers from a stranger's grave.

One – Look, it's odd, there's his photo on the front page...

Two – His photo?

One – It’s about his death...

Two – So? How did he die?

The other reads through the article.

One – Apparently, a car crash.

Two – Oh really?

One – He was well over the drink-driving limit, going too fast, and crossed the centre line straight into an oncoming car.

Two – Oh, shit.

One – The car right behind didn't have time to brake either.

Two – So, multiple victims then...

One – Three in total, including him.

Two – All because of a reckless driver...

One – If I'd known... I'm not sure I'd have come.

Two – No, me neither...

One – But did we really have a choice?

They exchange an enigmatic look. Another silence. A third character appears.

Two – Oh... here comes someone else.

One – Must be family.

The third character approaches. It's the person whose portrait is on the grave.

Two – That must be his brother, they look a bit alike.

Three – Hello... Thank you for coming... I mean...

Two – No, no... It's the least we could do.

They stand in silence for a moment.

Three – I hope you don’t hold it against me too much...

The other two exchange a puzzled look.

One – Why would we be upset with you? It's not like you killed him, I assume...

Three – No, of course not... Though in a way...

One – Oh really?

Three – Anyway, thanks for the flowers.

Two – You're very welcome...

One – It’s the least we could do... *(A pause)* You were... I mean, you used to be...

Two – You knew him well, then...?

The third character seems slightly surprised.

Three – Yes, you could say that.

Two – It's such a shame to go like that... So young...

Three – Yes...

One – Not to mention the two other victims who didn't deserve it.

Two – Drink-driving is a terrible scourge. We can never say it often enough...

An awkward silence.

Three – Well, it’s too late to change anything now. *(A pause)* Can I offer you something?

One – Excuse me?

Three – A drink? A glass of bubbly...

A moment of hesitation.

Two – Why not? It might lift our spirits a little...

Three – And now, what have we got to lose?

The third character goes off.

One – Why not...? It’s traditional to drink to the health of the deceased, isn’t it?

Two – To their memory, surely. You can’t exactly drink to a dead person’s health...

One – Yes, of course...

Two – And usually, you don't toast directly over their grave, do you?

One – I think they do that in Mexico, on the Day of the Dead.

Two – True... but we're not in Mexico.

One – And it's not the Day of the Dead.

Two – Are you sure?

One – About what?

Two – That it's not the Day of the Dead.

One – I don't know...

Two – In any case, we're not in Mexico... Are we?

Silence. The third character returns with three glasses of champagne on a tray and offers them with a broad smile. In the other hand is a bottle of champagne, which they set on the grave.

Three – Please, go ahead...

Each takes a glass.

Two – Thank you.

They all seem a bit embarrassed.

One – Well, then, to the memory of... *(Reading the plaque)* Jacky.

Three – That's right.

They raise their glasses and drink.

Two – It's nicely chilled.

One – Yes, it's good stuff.

The second character picks up the bottle and examines the label, intrigued.

Two – "The Merry Widow"...?

Three – There are no widows here... Sooner or later, everyone in this cemetery is reunited with their other half.

One – Of course...

An awkward pause. They drink again.

Three – Wouldn't this be even better with some finger food?

Two – Whose fingers?

The third character looks baffled for a moment, then breaks into a smile.

Three – Oh! I meant canapés. Something to eat!

Two – I know. I was joking...

Three – I'll go get them...

The third character exits again with the tray.

One – Canapés... At a funeral. Can you believe it?

Two – Yes...

One – And what was all that about widows?

Two – No idea...

One – Still, it's quite a nice funeral, isn't it?

Two – Yes, more like a barbecue with friends.

One – Except that no one knows each other.

Two – I'm not sure who he is... I mean, in relation to the deceased.

Another silence. The second character studies the grave and its portrait.

One – He looks a bit like him, doesn't he?

Two – I'd say he looks a lot like him...

One – Do you think it could be him?

Two – How could it be him? He's dead...

One – I don't know.

The third character returns with canapés on the tray.

Three – Here you go! Help yourselves...

One – Thank you.

They each take one.

Two – I think I'll try this one.

One – Yes, they're very good.

Two – And it's quite original, these canapés, shaped like...

One – Coffins.

Three – I thought, given the occasion...

Two – Yes...

They chew their canapés.

One – Makes you thirsty...

Three – I'll fetch her little sister...

Two – Her little sister?

Three – Another bottle!

One – Oh, right...

The third character goes off again. The others look at the portrait.

Two – It's really him, isn't it?

One – Seems like it.

Two – So he's not dead?

Pause.

One – Or maybe we are, too.

Two – Yes...

They exchange a troubled look.

One – Excuse me a moment... *(The first character goes away briefly, then returns.)* This is unbelievable...

Two – What?

One – I've found mine too...

Two – Yours?

One – My grave.

Two – Are you sure?

One – My name's engraved on the tombstone.

Two – Oh, right...

One – And there's my portrait. From when I was younger...

Two – Which one?

The other points to a grave.

One – The one where I got that pot of flowers. I hadn't noticed...

Silence.

Two – In that case... mine must be here somewhere too.

One – Maybe... *(A pause)* So this isn't exactly a farewell drink...

Two – More of a welcome drink.

One – Or a housewarming party.

Silence.

Two – Do you remember?

One – What?

Two – How we died...

One – I'm not sure, but...

The first character picks up the newspaper and reads the article again.

Two – What is it?

One – There's a picture of the crash.

Two – And?

One – The cars are smashed to bits, but... I think that red hatchback is mine.

Two – Let me see... *(Taking the paper and examining it)* I wouldn't have recognised mine, but... that's definitely my number plate.

One – So, we were in the cars on the other side...

Two – Apparently...

A pause.

One – And he thinks he can make up for it with that Merry Widow champagne...

Two – And his coffin-shaped canapés.

One – He’s got some nerve...

Two – I'm going to kill him.

One – He's already dead.

Two – And so are we...

The third character returns, smiling broadly, with another bottle of champagne.

Three – Shall I top you up?

The other two give the third character a murderous look.

Blackout

2 – The Trap

Two characters face each other.

One – So, it's decided, you want to get rid of her?

Two – I can’t see any other way. Believe me, I’ve tried everything.

One – We're talking about murder. There's no going back. It's final.

Two – I know.

One – Do you think you can live with that on your conscience for the rest of your life?

Two – I'll take responsibility for it, but I can't do it myself. Would you be willing to take care of it?

One – It won't be free, of course.

Two – Of course.

One – When you don't want to get your hands dirty, there's a price to pay.

Two – How much?

One – Don’t worry, I’ll give you a special price. We are friends, after all.

Two – OK. And how do you plan to do it?

One – Are you sure you want to know?

Two – I'd prefer it if she didn't suffer.

One – I'll set a trap for her.

Two – Well... If you think that's the most effective way...

One – What were you thinking? A gun?

Two – I don't know...

One – I have my principles too. With a gun, it would be outright murder. A trap is somewhere between an accident and a killing. A kind of accidental suicide... or murder by misadventure.

Two – But a trap still involves an intent to kill...

One – Yes, but the victim has to play a part. If not with their tacit consent, then at least through their accidental participation.

Two – Really?

One – If you shoot someone, they don't stand a chance. With a trap, the victim might avoid it. The killer goes halfway; the victim has to do the rest.

Two – Unknowingly.

One – At least unconsciously.

Two – So... what exactly is your trap?

The first character takes a mousetrap out of a pocket and shows it to the other.

One – This.

Two – A mousetrap?

One – A bigger one, obviously.

Two – And you're going to build it yourself?

One – It’s hardly rocket science. You just need to get the proportions right.

Two – Right...

One – Of course, there'll be some extra costs...

Two – And what are you going to use to bait her? Not cheese, I assume...

One – That depends... What kind of mouse is she?

Two – A very high-maintenance mouse.

One – In that case, there'll be a little extra for the bait as well.

Two – Fine... As long as you get rid of her for me.

Blackout.

3 – A Mousetrap

Two characters who look like homeless people, and may wear mouse masks, stare straight ahead.

One – Do you see that cheese over there?

Two – I haven't been able to take my eyes off it.

Silence.

One – Why haven't we rushed over to it yet?

Two – I don't know. I'm suspicious.

One – Me too.

Two – It's too good to be true.

One – That cheese is a bit too fresh.

Two – It looks like it's just come out of the fridge.

One – It doesn't look like the bits of cheese you find on the ground or in the bins.

Two – All you find in the bins are the rinds.

Silence.

One – And what's that thing?

Two – What thing?

One – That bit of cheese is sitting on a little board.

Two – Oh yeah... I was so fascinated by the cheese that I didn't notice the board.

One – A little board, with a little yellow metal bar.

Two – Yellow like gold.

One – Yes.

Two – It's shiny, it's pretty.

One – What do you think it is?

Two – A cheese board?

One – Normally we have to scrape up crumbs from under the table. Now someone's serving us cheese on a board.

Two – What are we waiting for?

One – Then again, that bit of cheese isn't very big. It won't be enough for two.

Two – Yeah...

One – Go ahead, you take it.

Two – I don't know... What if it's a trap?

One – We can't just let it go to waste, that would be a shame.

Two – I think I'm going to give in to temptation.

One – After all... you only live once.

Two – Here I go...

Blackout.

A sharp snap as the trap closes.

Lights up.

Only the first character remains on stage.

One – Yes, you only live once... And sometimes not for very long. Well... at least I can have that piece of cheese all to myself now.

Blackout.

4 – The Cat and the Mouse

Two characters.

One – Remember? I told you I had a mouse in my house.

Two – Yeah.

One – You suggested I get a cat to get rid of it.

Two – And?

One – It worked. I don't have a mouse anymore.

Two – Great.

One – Yeah. *(A pause)* But now how do I get rid of the cat?

Blackout.

5 – Gold and Money

Two characters, visibly at a loose end.

One – What were we talking about again?

Two – Nothing...

One – Oh yeah... *(Another silence)* So, how are you doing?

Two – I'm fine... And you? You look worried...

One – No, no, it's just that...

Two – What?

One – I've run out of things to do with my money.

Two – You've got that much?

One – I don't know...

Two – Well, you're rich then.

One – When do you actually become rich?

Two – The moment you can't think of anything to do with it, I suppose.

One – Then I guess I'm rich.

Two – You really don't need anything anymore?

One – I already have everything I need. I'm financially secure, as they say.

Two – And there's nothing else you fancy?

One – Unfortunately, as you get older, you have more money but fewer desires.

Two – Buy something beautiful.

One – Something beautiful?

Two – Buy art. It can even save you on tax.

One – Like what, for example?

Two – Paintings take up the least space...

One – Paintings are fragile, aren't they?

Two – True. You could buy sculptures then. Marble doesn't age.

One – I'm wondering if I should just buy gold instead.

Two – Gold?

One – Gold bars.

Two – You have so much money you don’t know what to do with it, so you’re going to spend it on... gold?

One – It's sturdier than paintings, isn't it? Or even marble. Gold is indestructible.

Two – Yes, but you can look at paintings or sculptures.

One – You can look at gold bars too.

Two – Can you really?

One – I've never seen a real gold bar. If I had one, I'm sure I'd enjoy looking at it.

Two – Yeah...

One – If you had gold bars, wouldn't you like to look at them?

Two – Yeah, I suppose I would...

One – Yeah... Gold bars, why not...

Two – Or... you could give some of your money away.

One – Give it away? Who to?

Two – I don't know... To those who have less than you.

A pause.

One – Do you have less money than I do?

Two – I don't know.

One – I think I'll buy some gold bars.

Two – OK.

One – If you like, you can look at them with me.

Two – Thanks.

Blackout.

6 – Disappearance

A character enters, looks around in bewilderment and bursts into tears. Another character arrives.

One – Hey, what's the matter with you?

Two – I've lost my wife...

One – I'm so sorry. My deepest condolences.

The other stops crying immediately.

Two – No, she's not dead.

One – Oh, she's not...?

Two – I was trying on shoes. She was right beside me, and then... a moment later, she was gone.

One – Right, so... you lost your wife.

Two – Yes, that's what I'm saying.

One – But she's still alive.

Two – Yes, at least I think so...

One – Even more reason not to cry.

Two – Yes, but... she was right there next to me and... the next moment, she was gone.

One – She can’t have vanished into thin air. People don’t just disappear!

Two – I told you! She was right next to me and...

One – The next moment, she was gone... Yes, I get it.

The other looks around, completely bewildered.

Two – Gone... She's gone...

One – We’ll find her. Why don’t we go to the information desk? They can put out an announcement.

Two – What kind of announcement?

One – What's your name?

Two – Alex.

One – Something like: “Little Alex is waiting for his wife at the information desk.”

Two – Or maybe she decided to leave me.

One – How long have you been married?

Two – Thirty years.

One – After thirty years, she'd suddenly leave you without a word? Right in the middle of a supermarket, taking the trolley with her?

Two – Oh God, the trolley, that's right! It's gone too...

One – Was it empty or full?

Two – Empty, I think.

One – In that case, she can't have gone far... What were the last words your wife said to you?

Two – Let me think... Oh yes! Her exact words were: "See you in the frozen-food aisle."

One – In that case, you might want to consider another possibility.

Two – Which is?

One – That she's waiting for you in the frozen food aisle.

Two – You think so?

One – I can't imagine someone ending a thirty-year marriage with "See you in the frozen-food aisle" unless she actually intended to go there...

Two – You're right, I'll go and check. Thank you! Thank you so much...

The second character is about to leave when a voice comes over the loudspeaker.

Voice-over – Little Jessie is waiting for her husband in the DIY aisle.

Two – Do you think that could be her?

One – What's your wife's name?

Two – Jessie.

One – You'd better go check...

The other leaves but comes back immediately.

Two – Where's the DIY aisle?

One – I'll come with you...

Blackout.

7 – Escape

Two characters in a prison cell.

One – How long have you been in prison?

Two – Ten years on Christmas Day.

One – Christmas Day? Did you murder Santa Claus and steal his sack?

Two – Almost... I killed my own father because he wouldn’t stop beating me.

One – And they gave you life for that?

Two – Judges have children too. They get nervous when children kill their fathers for such trivial reasons.

One – The judge who sentenced you must have beaten his kids too. Or worse...

Two – I should have done it two years earlier. I was still a minor, the sentence would have been lighter.

One – Thinking too long is never a good thing.

Two – And you?

One – Me? I don't remember...

Two – You don't remember why you're here or how long it's been?

One – Why? I'd rather forget. And as for how long... After twenty years, I stopped counting.

Two – I'm starting to wonder if they'll ever let us out.

One – I'm not sure I even want to get out anymore.

Two – Why do you say that?

One – After all these years inside... Out there, we won't recognise anything. Or anyone.

Two – And no one will recognise us.

One – Last time I had a coffee in a café, it cost next to nothing. Hardly anyone had a mobile phone back then. Can you imagine?

Two – It’s as though we’ve been dead all this time. Buried alive. One day they’ll suddenly throw us back into the world. Like being born again.

One – Except we won’t be babies with parents to look after us. We’ll be old, with no one to hold our hand.

Two – Like fish thrown back into the sea who don't know how to swim anymore because they've been out of the water for too long.

One – That's silly... Fish out of water die of suffocation anyway.

Two – Yeah... I feel like a fish in the air.

One – We ended up in prison because we couldn't fit into society. Do you think that after thirty years in the slammer, we'll fit in any better?

Two – We just made the wrong choices, that's all. What did you want to be when you were a kid?

One – When we played cops and robbers, I always wanted to be the cop. I don't know where it all went wrong. And you?

Two – I wanted to be an astrophysicist. But I was too stupid.

One – What's an astrophysicist?

Two – Stars, planets, that sort of thing.

One – Oh yeah... Astrology, then. What's your star sign?

Two – Pisces.

One – Oh, right...

Two – What do you think? Do you reckon we're alone in the universe?

One – Well, we're certainly alone in the world. So what does it matter if there are Martians or not?

Two – We're in for life. An alien invasion is the only thing that could save us now, right?

One – Yeah.

Two – Revolutions have freed prisoners before. The crowds storm the prison gates and let everyone out.

One – So that's your escape plan?

Two – Have you got a better one?

One – You're right, Martians are the only hope we've got left.

Two – Unfortunately, I haven't found a way to get in touch with them yet.

A pause.

One – And supposing Martians do exist, and you manage to send them a message. What would you say to convince them to come and free us?

Two – I don't know... Got any ideas?

One – It depends... Do you think aliens are on the side of the cops or the robbers?

Blackout.

8 – All Right

Two characters are present. The second seems lost in thought.

One – You all right?

Two – I'm all right.

One – You don't look all right.

Two – Yes, yes, I'm fine... It's just that...

One – What?

Two – You'll think I'm crazy...

One – Go on, say it.

Two – You know how people say of a dog, “All that’s missing is the power of speech”?

One – Yes.

Two – Well, my dog spoke to me this morning.

One – What did it say?

The second character stares at the first in amazement.

Two – What did he say?

One – Yes.

Two – I tell you my dog can talk, and you ask what he said?

One – Well, yes.

Two – The extraordinary news is that I've got a talking dog, not what he happened to say!

One – What did you expect me to say, then?

Two – I don't know. You could have said... “Come on, that's a joke, dogs don't talk.”

One – Sorry.

Two – You really will believe anything, won't you?

One – So it's not true, then.

Two – It is! It's absolutely true!

One – Right... So I'll ask again: what did he say? I'd love to know what dogs have to say to us.

Two – It wasn’t a press conference. Just an ordinary chat between me and my dog.

One – A regular conversation? About what?

Two – Well, I was just telling him...

One – You talk to your dog?

Two – Of course! Everybody talks to their dog. Don't you talk to your dog?

One – I don't have a dog. I do talk to myself now and then, like everyone else, but... So, you were talking to your dog. And what were you saying, exactly?

Two – I was saying... I don't remember the exact words, but... it was about his dog food.

One – His dog food?

Two – I was giving him his dinner, as usual, and I must have said something like, "Is that nice, then? Is doggy enjoying his dinner?"

One – "Is doggy enjoying his dinner?"

Two – Yes...

One – And then?

Two – He said... "Not bad."

One – "Not bad"?

Two – "Not bad." I took that to mean it was quite acceptable.

One – And after that?

Two – Then... he ate his food.

One – That's all he said?

Two – That's not bad for a dog, is it?

One – Still. He's not much of a conversationalist, is he?

Two – Yeah.

One – And you're sure you heard him right.

Two – I'm telling you, he said "Not bad."

One – And since then, nothing?

Two – Nothing.

One – Still, if he said it wasn't bad...

Two – Yeah.

One – Maybe you should try asking him a less silly question next time.

Two – Like what?

One – I don't know...

Two – I could say... "Nice weather today, isn't it?"

One – I said a less silly question...

Two – I'm hardly going to ask him what he thinks of an election! He's only a dog.

One – I wonder if it wouldn't be simpler to just stop talking to him.

Two – Maybe. But I'd miss talking to my dog. Until now, I talked and he listened in silence. We were both happy with that.

One – The ideal conversation partner, really.

Two – And I have to admit, I'm a bit scared.

One – Scared? Of what?

Two – Of what he might say.

One – What do you mean?

Two – Dogs might know things we humans don't.

One – Things? Like what?

Two – I don't know! If I knew, it wouldn't scare me...

One – Well... yeah. Maybe you should just stop talking to him.

Two – Yes... but then he'll think I'm sulking. I don't know what to do about this dog. Maybe I should get rid of him.

One – Get rid of him? You mean...

Two – No, you're right, I couldn't. Abandoning an ordinary dog by the roadside is bad enough. But abandoning a talking dog...

One – Yeah...

Two – Anyway, I'm glad I talked to you about it.

One – Glad to hear it...

Two – See you later, then.

One – Sure.

The second character leaves. The first remains lost in thought for a moment, then turns to the audience.

One – Woof! Woof, woof! Woof, woof, woof!

Blackout.

9 – Authentication

One character enters. Another is sitting behind a desk.

One – Hello. I need to have my signature officially certified.

Two – Yes...

One – It’s a power of attorney for the sale of our holiday home.

Two – Very well.

One – We hardly go there anymore anyway and... Well, I won't bore you with the details.

Two – No.

One – I can’t be there when the sale agreement is signed, so I need to authorise someone else. The lawyer said the signature had to be certified at the town hall.

Two – I see...

One – Here's the document, and my ID card.

The other looks at the ID card.

Two – Alex Morgan.

One – That's right.

Two – Alex Morgan.

One – Yes, as you can see, it’s the same name.

Two – Indeed...

One – So, shall I sign?

Two – If you'd like.

One – Make sure you watch. This is my only copy. I don’t want you saying afterwards, “Sorry, I was looking away. Could you sign again?”

Two – I'm watching.

The other signs the document.

One – There. I’ve initialled every page... and signed.

Two – Perfect. Anything else I can do for you, Morgan?

One – Well... yes, actually!

Two – And what might that be?

One – The stamp! You need to sign the document too, and put the official stamp on it.

Two – Of course! What was I thinking? Now, where did I put that town hall stamp...

One – It's right there, next to you.

Two – Ah, the ink pad... *(Inking the stamp)* There we are. I hope that's enough ink. With these stamps it's either too pale to read, or so wet it smudges. Which would you prefer?

One – Which do I prefer?

Two – Do you prefer it to be illegible or to smudge?

One – If I really have to choose... I'd rather it smudged a little.

Two – I'll do my best... *(Re-inking the stamp and raising it carefully over the document, then stopping suddenly)* But hang on...

One – What?

Two – After all... how do I know it's really you?

One – Excuse me?

Two – I'm here to authenticate this signature, aren't I?

One – Yes.

Two – What proof do I have that the person standing in front of me is the person named in this document?

One – I just gave you my ID card...

Two – True... You're right...

One – Okay.

The other gets ready to stamp the document.

Two – Hold on a minute...

One – What now?

Two – What proves to me that the person in front of me is really the one on this ID card?

One – Well, because... I'm the one who just handed it to you.

Two – You could have stolen it.

One – But the signature I just put on this power of attorney matches the one on my ID card.

Two – You could have copied the signature. Frankly, it doesn't look very hard.

The other starts to doubt.

One – You're right... Actually, it proves nothing...

Two – Exactly.

One – Then... what can I do to prove that I really am Alex Morgan?

Two – Even that wouldn't prove anything.

One – How do you mean?

Two – You could be a namesake.

One – A namesake?

Two – Admit it, there must be more than one Alex Morgan in the world. Unfortunately...

One – Of course...

Two – How do we know you're the right one?

One – I'm even starting to doubt myself...

Two – So what do we do now?

One – Fingerprints?

Two – It's possible for two people to have identical fingerprints.

One – You think so?

Two – It's rare, but it's possible.

One – What's the probability?

Two – One in 64 billion.

One – There aren't 64 billion people on this planet.

Two – Not on Earth, perhaps. But what about other planets?

One – I see... So my power of attorney is ruined, then?

Two – You know what?

One – What?

Two – I like the look of your face.

One – Really.

Two – Yes... You have an honest face. You look like an Alex Morgan.

One – And?

Two – I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. *(Stamps and signs the document, then hands it back.)* There you are, Morgan!

One – Thank you for your trust! I don't know how to thank you.

The first character takes the document and examines it.

Two – Is there a problem?

One – Er... are you sure that's the town hall stamp?

Two – Are you implying that I might... not be who I claim to be?

One – No, but...

Two – So now you're the one doubting my identity?

One – You could have used the wrong stamp.

Two – The wrong stamp?

One – It's not the town hall stamp.

Two – Let me see... *(Taking the document back)* You're right. That isn't the town hall stamp.

One – Are you sure you're actually a town hall employee?

Two – Sure...? No. In fact... I'm actually quite sure I'm not.

One – You're not a town hall employee?

Two – No.

One – But then... if I'm not who I claim to be, and you're not either, who are we?

Two – To be or not to be, that is the question... For an answer, you should try the place across the street.

One – Across the street? Why's that?

Two – Because that’s where the town hall’s public service office is.

One – And what's this place, then?

Two – This is a driving school.

One – I see what you mean...

The first character hesitates, about to leave.

Two – Another problem, Morgan?

One – I told you... *(Pointing to the document)* I didn't have a duplicate...

Blackout.

10 – Idiots

One character is already there. Another arrives.

One – So, did you manage to decode their message?

Two – Our top specialists are on it. It shouldn't take much longer. I've asked for the transcription to be sent straight to my phone.

One – And what about their spaceship?

Two – It's already in orbit around Earth.

One – Can you believe it? A historic moment for humanity! We're about to make contact with an extraterrestrial civilisation.

Two – Yes. I can't wait to hear what they have to say to us.

One – If they've managed to travel all the way here, they must have technology we can barely imagine. Think what they could teach us.

Two – And they'll be curious to know about us, too.

One – Even if they're more advanced than us technologically, we can surely offer them plenty of things they don't have.

Two – Of course. In the arts, for example.

One – Yes. Or... I don't know... politics?

Two – Politics, really?

One – No, maybe not politics.

Two – True, we're hardly role models in every field... But we don't have to tell them everything at once.

One – You're right, let's show them our best side to begin with.

The second character's phone chimes. Both freeze for a moment. The second looks at the screen.

Two – That's it, we've managed to decode their message.

One – At last! We're going to find out.

Two – What do I do?

One – Well, read it!

The second character reads the screen, visibly astonished.

Two – It's pretty short...

One – It's a first contact. But what does it say?

Two *(reading)* – "Running low on fuel. Request permission to replenish our hydrogen supply on your planet, then continue our journey."

One – Out of fuel?

Two – They're basically running on empty.

One – Continue their journey...? So, to them, we're just a filling station?

Two – It would seem so.

One – So... they have no intention of getting to know us?

The second character checks the screen.

Two – Apparently... they just want to refuel.

They are devastated.

One – Now that we've decoded their message, we can communicate with them, right?

Two – Yes, I suppose so.

One – In that case... ask our visitors from space what the purpose of their journey is, exactly.

The second character types a message.

Two – Sent.

Silence. They exchange anxious looks. Another chime announces a reply. The second character checks the screen.

One – So? What's the goal of this exploration mission? If not to meet us...

Two *(reading)* – "We are trying to find out whether there is intelligent life anywhere else in the universe."

One – Intelligent life?

Two – Intelligent life...

One – And what about us, then?

Two – Sadly, I can only think of one possible answer to that.

One – I think I know what it is...

Two – They think we're a bunch of complete idiots.

They exchange a look of dismay.

Blackout.

11 – The Map

One character studies a map in utter bewilderment. Another arrives, and the first calls out.

One – Excuse me... Are you from around here?

Two – That depends. Which part of here?

One – No, I mean... I don't know if you're local.

Two – Yes...?

One – It's just that I'm not from around here, and... I'm a bit disoriented.

Two – Disoriented...

One – A bit lost, if you prefer.

Two – How can I help you?

One – Well... I'd just like to know where I am, simply. Do you know where we are?

Two – Yes.

One – And can you tell me where I am?

Two – Certainly... *(Looking around)* You're roughly halfway between that tree and me.

One – Sorry?

Two – More precisely, you're standing right under the sun, since it's noon. And as it's spring, you're standing on those primroses. Trampling them, in fact.

One – Yes, I see that, but... what I'd like to know is where I am... on this map.

Two – Oh, sorry, of course. Your map... Let's have a look...

The first character hands over the map reluctantly. The second examines it closely.

One – Well?

Two – I don't see anything... No, you're not on this map...

One – No?

The other looks at the map again.

Two – No, honestly. *(Pointing to the map)* Look, you're not there. Neither are the primroses. If you were on the map, we'd be able to see you, wouldn't we?

One – But that's impossible. I can't have gone that far. To the point where I'm no longer on the map.

Two – Sometimes you go beyond the boundaries without even noticing.

One – But then... where could I possibly be?

A pause.

Two – So you're still trying to find yourself.

One – What?

Two – If you need to know where you are, perhaps you're searching for yourself.

One – Thank you very much for your help. I think I'm even more lost now than I was before I met you.

Two – You're lost because you keep looking for yourself on a map, instead of looking for yourself here, where you actually are.

One – Oh, really? And where exactly am I then?

Two – You're exactly where you are. Here.

One – The problem isn't knowing where I am, it's knowing which direction I need to go in to find what I'm looking for.

Two – And what are you looking for?

One – My car.

Two – To go where?

One – To go home.

Two – I'd suggest you camp here instead.

One – Camp? But I don't have a tent! And I've got things to do...

Two – Like what, for example?

One – I don't know... I need to get to work.

Two – Work? Whatever for? To pay off your car?

The other seems a bit downhearted.

One – Or to buy a new one if I can't find mine... You're right, I might just have to sleep here, under the stars.

Two – The nights are mild this time of year...

One – So you're lost too, are you?

Two – More or less... I wasn't from around here either. I came to this backwater to get lost. And in the end, I found myself. Now I'm a local.

One – Yeah, well, I'd rather not put down roots here...

The other gives him a perplexed look.

Two – Your car's a small red hatchback, isn't it?

One – Yes.

Two – It’s right behind you, down in the car park across the path.

One – Really? Thank you so much, you've saved my life!

Two – You think so?

One – But honestly, you could have told me sooner...

Two – Well, at least you know where you stand now. Here’s your map.

Blackout.

12 – The Primroses

A character is standing there, another one arrives.

One – Excuse me, do you know what day it is?

Two – I think it's today.

One – Today?

Two – Somewhere between yesterday and tomorrow.

One – Yes, but... is it the 20th, the 21st, or the 22nd? I can't remember.

Two – The 21st... of what?

One – The 21st of March.

Two – What difference does it make?

One – Well, if it’s the 21st, spring starts today. If it’s the 20th, spring starts tomorrow. And if it’s the 22nd, spring started yesterday.

Two – You really believe spring arrives all at once, on a precise date? On 21 March, for example?

One – Well, yes... Doesn't it?

Two – So, if it's the 20th, it's still winter, and if it's the 22nd, it's already spring?

One – I don't know... I don't know what day it is.

Two – Neither do I.

One – Right...

Two – It's a lovely day today, isn't it?

One – Yes... It's got that... spring-like feel.

Two – Look at these primroses. They didn’t wait to find out whether it was the 20th or the 21st before flowering.

One – That's true.

Two – Then let’s say it’s spring already.

One – Agreed...

Two – They say one swallow doesn't make a summer. But two can certainly give us hope for spring.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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

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

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

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues
Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

Comedies for 2
A Thwarted Vocation
EuroStar
Heads and Tails
Him and Her
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Last chance encounter
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
Not even dead
Pentimento
Preliminaries
Running on empty
Russian Roulette at the Kremlin
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Dressing Gown
The Joker
The Rope
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3
A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cards on the Table
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Horizons
Ménage à trois
One small step for a woman, one giant leap backward for Mankind
The Ways of Chance

Comedies for 4
A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
A Skeleton in the Closet
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Déjà vu
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
Hangover
Happy Hour
How to get rid of your best friends
Is there a critic in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
One marriage out of two
Perfect In-laws
Quarantine
Requiem for a Stradivarius
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The Fishbowl
The Perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money
The Tourists
The Worst Best Man Ever

Comedies for 5 to 6
All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
Dead End Boulevard
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
The Castaways of New Year's Eve
The President's Draw
The Rebels
Traffic Jam on Graveyard Lane

Comedies for 7 or more
At the bar counter
Backstage Comedy
Blue Flamingos
Check to the Kings
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
False exit
In flagrante delirium
Just like a Christmas movie
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
Music does not always soothe ...
Neighbours' Day
Nicotine
Of Vegetables and Books
Offside
Open Hearts
Reality Show
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
Such a lovely village
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Most Beautiful Village in France
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches
Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Blackouts
Don't panic!
Dramedies
Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
Every Colour under the Sun
For real and for fun
Funny Stories
Him and Her
Hold on, Butterfly
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

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