

La Comédiathèque

FOR real



Jean-Pierre Martinez



and

FOR fun

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For Real and for Fun

A sketch comedy

Jean-Pierre Martinez

While it can sometimes be hard to tell the real from the fake, there's a certain mischievous pleasure in blending them together. For fun.

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All characters can be played by either men or women.

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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." On the ground, there's an old newspaper. Two characters arrive, one after the other, each carrying a pot of flowers, which they clumsily place in front of the grave. They seem to be strangers and look embarrassed. Silence.

One – My condolences.

Two – Thank you...

One – You must be family, I assume...?

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 – That's always what you think when you attend a funeral, isn't it?

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 – Yes, me too... Except my own, of course.

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'm not sure. But he didn't seem that old, did he? Judging by his photo, at least...

Two – Maybe it's an old photo.

One – Maybe... Have you noticed? When they put a photo on a grave, they usually choose one of the deceased when they were still 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 found them at 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. I didn't have any money on me... I picked them off a grave a bit further over there.

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 – I don't know what that newspaper is doing here... Someone could have picked it up...

He picks up the newspaper and glances 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 accident...

Two – So? How did he die?

The other reads through the article.

One – Apparently, a car crash.

Two – Oh really?

One – He had three times the legal limit of alcohol in his blood, was driving too fast, crossed a yellow line, and crashed head-on into an oncoming car.

Two – Oh dear.

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 a puzzled look. A third character enters.

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're not too upset with me...

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... Well, 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 were...

Two – You knew him well, didn't you?

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 such a scourge... You can never say it enough...

An awkward silence.

Three – Well, nothing can change it now, so what's the point in lamenting? (*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 besides, what do we have to lose now?

The third character exits.

One – Why not...? It's not uncommon drinking to a dead person's health, is it?

Two – You mean in their memory, I suppose. Because drinking 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, offering them with a big smile. In his other hand, he holds a champagne bottle, which he places 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... (*Checking the plaque*) Jacky.

Three – That's right.

They raise their glasses and drink.

Two – It's nicely chilled.

One – Yes, it's good stuff.

Two picks up the bottle and examines the label, intrigued.

Two – Veuve Clicquot...?

Three – Here, widows don't exist anymore... In the cemetery, all couples end up reunited sooner or later.

One – Of course...

They drink again.

Three – It would be even better with some canapés, wouldn't it?

Two – Indeed.

Three – I'll go get them...

The third character exits again with the tray.

One – Canapés... Unbelievable, isn't it?

Two – Yes...

One – What did he mean with that stuff 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.

Silence. They look at the grave and the 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 look delicious.

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 – Let's get another one...

He exits 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 for a moment... (*He steps away and then returns.*) This is crazy...

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 – Probably... *(A pause)* So, this isn't... a farewell party.

Two – More like a housewarming.

One – Or even a housewarming in hell.

Silence.

Two – Do you remember?

One – What?

Two – How we died...

One – I'm not sure, but...

He picks up the newspaper and looks at the article again.

Two – What is it?

One – There's a picture of the crash.

Two – And?

One – The cars are total wrecks, but... I think that's my red Twingo...

Two – Let me see... *(He looks at the newspaper.)* Oh yes... I wouldn't have recognized mine, but... there's 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 his Veuve Clicquot...

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, grinning, with another bottle of champagne.

Three – Shall I top you up?

The other two give him a murderous look.

Blackout

2 – The Trap

Two characters are facing each other.

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

Two – I don't see any other way. I've tried everything, I promise you.

One – We're talking about killing here. There's no turning back. It's final.

Two – I know.

One – Are you ready to 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 – I'll give you a mate's rate, don't worry.

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 a real crime. A trap is a sort of compromise between an accident and murder. Between unintentional suicide and careless homicide.

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

One – Yes, but it also requires the victim's participation. If not their tacit approval, then at least their unwitting involvement.

Two – Really?

One – When you shoot someone with a revolver, you give them no chance. With a trap, the victim always has the opportunity to avoid it. The murderer goes halfway, and the victim goes the other half.

Two – Unknowingly.

One – At least unconsciously.

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

The other character pulls a mousetrap out of his pocket and shows it to him.

One – This.

Two – A mousetrap?

One – A bigger one, obviously.

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

One – It's not exactly sophisticated technology. As long as you 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 – The luxury kind.

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 tramps but could be wearing mouse masks, stare straight ahead.

One – Do you see that cheese over there?

Two – It's all I've been seeing for a while now.

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 – In the bins, it's only 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 platter?

One – Usually, we have to settle for crumbs under the table, and now they're serving it to us on a platter.

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.

Sound of the trap snapping shut.

Lights up.

Only the second character remains on stage.

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

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. (*Silence*) But now, how do I get rid of the cat?

Blackout.

5 – Gold bars

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 don't know what to do with my money anymore.

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 – When you no longer know what to do with your money, 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 – Art. Besides, it's tax-deductible.

One – Like what, for example?

Two – Paintings are the least bulky...

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 don't know what to do with your money, so you're going to use it to buy 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? To whom?

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. He looks around, a bit lost. Then he starts crying. Another character enters.

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 – It's just that... I was trying on shoes, she was right next to me and... the next moment, 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 didn't just vanish into thin air! People don't disappear like that.

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, don't worry... Do you want me to take you to the customer service desk? I'm sure they'll make an announcement.

Two – What kind of announcement?

One – What's your name?

Two – Anthony.

One – Something like... “Little Anthony is waiting for his wife at customer service.”

Two – Or maybe she decided to leave me.

One – How long have you been married?

Two – Thirty years.

One – And after thirty years, she'd suddenly decide to leave you, just like that? In the middle of a supermarket, she'd ditch you and walk off with the trolley.

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, I remember. She said exactly : “I'll meet 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 doubt a woman would leave her husband after thirty years of marriage and say as a farewell, “I'll meet you in the frozen food aisle” without intending to actually go there...

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

He's about to leave when a voice-over is heard.

Voice-over – Little Mildred 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 – Mildred.

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 – It'll be ten years on the 25th of December.

One – The 25th of December? Did you kill Santa Claus to nick his sack?

Two – Almost... I killed my father to stop him from beating me up...

One – And you got life for that?

Two – Judges have kids too. It scares them when kids kill their dads 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 – The last time I had a coffee at a café counter, I paid 50 cents for it. And the cell phones didn't exist. Can you believe that?

Two – It's like we've been dead all this time. Buried alive. One day, they'll throw us back into life. It'll be like being born again.

One – But instead of being newborns, with parents to look after us, we'll be old men, with no one to hold our hands.

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 – During the French Revolution, they stormed the Bastille and freed the prisoners.

One – So that's your escape plan?

Two – 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 there; 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 that expression : “All he needs is to talk”?

One – Yes.

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

One – And what did he say?

The other looks at him, surprised.

Two – What did he say?

One – Yes.

Two – I'm telling you my dog talks, and you're asking me what he said?

One – Well, yes.

Two – Er... The big news is that I've got a talking dog, not what he said, right?

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 be curious to know what dogs have to say to us.

Two – It wasn't exactly an official statement. Just a... a regular conversation between my dog and me.

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 – Yes, I was giving him his food, like I do every day, and at some point, I must have said something like... “So, is the doggy's food good?”

One – “Is the doggy's food good?”

Two – Yes...

One – And then?

Two – Then he said... “It's all right.”

One – “It's all right?”

Two – “It's all right.” I guess he meant, it's OK, not too bad.

One – And after that?

Two – Then... he ate his food.

One – That's all he said?

Two – That's quite a lot, don't you think?

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

Two – Yeah.

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

Two – I swear, he said “It's all right.”

One – And since then, nothing?

Two – Nothing.

One – On the other hand... if he said it was all right...

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 not going to ask him what he thinks of the US elections! He's just a mutt, after all.

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

Two – Yeah, maybe. But I'd miss talking to my dog. Until now, I talked to him, and he didn't answer. That suited me just fine.

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 – He's a dog! There might be things dogs know that we 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 – Yeah... but he'll think I'm sulking. Honestly, I don't know what to do with this dog anymore. Maybe I should just get rid of him.

One – Get rid of him? You mean...

Two – You're right, I can't do that. Abandoning a dog at a motorway service area is already a terrible thing to do, but 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.

He exits. The other remains thoughtful for a moment, then addresses the audience.

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

Blackout.

9 – Authentication

One character is sitting at a desk. Another character enters.

One – Hello, I'm here to authenticate a signature.

Two – Yes...

One – It's a power of attorney for the sale of our country house.

Two – Very well.

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

Two – No.

One – I won't be able to attend the signing of the contract because... Anyway, I need to make a power of attorney, and the solicitor told me that the signature needs to be authenticated at the town hall.

Two – I see...

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

The other looks at the ID card.

Two – Mr. Smith.

One – That's right.

Two – Okay... (*He also glances at the power of attorney*) John Smith.

One – Yes, you see, it's the same name.

Two – Indeed...

One – So, shall I sign?

Two – If you'd like.

One – You are watching closely, right? Because I don't have a duplicate. I don't want to hear later : "Sorry, I wasn't looking, could you do it again?"

Two – I'm watching.

The other signs the document.

One – There you go, I initial each page... and sign.

Two – Perfect... Is there anything else I can do for you, Mr... Smith?

One – Well... yes, actually!

Two – And what might that be?

One – The stamp! You also need to sign. And put the town hall 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 – Oh yes, of course... Now, the ink pad... (*He inks the stamp*) There we go... I hope I used enough ink... You know how it is with stamps. Either there's not enough ink and it's illegible, or there's too much and it smudges. Which do 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 prefer it to smudge a bit.

Two – I'll do my best... (*He inks the stamp again and prepares to stamp the document with a concentrated look, but stops at the last moment.*) But wait a minute...

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 proves to me that the person in front of me is the same one mentioned in this power of attorney?

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 forged that signature. Besides, between us, it doesn't look that difficult to imitate.

The other starts to doubt.

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

Two – Exactly.

One – But then... what can I do to prove to you that... I am indeed John Smith?

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 John Smith out there. 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 – On this planet, no, but if there were other people elsewhere, on 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... A good, honest face, like a proper John Smith.

One – And?

Two – I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt. (*He stamps the document, signs it, and hands it to the other.*) There you go, Mr. Smith!

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

He takes the document and glances at 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... (*He takes the document and looks at it.*) You're right, it's not 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... But to answer it, I suggest you head across the street.

One – Across the street? Why's that?

Two – Because that's where the Town Hall Annex is.

One – And what's this place, then?

Two – This is a driving school.

One – I see what you mean...

He hesitates to leave.

Two – Another problem, Mr. Smith?

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

Blackout.

10 – Idiots

A character is standing there as another one 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? This is a unique moment in human history! For the first time, we're going 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 get here, it means they've mastered techniques we know nothing about. They must have loads to 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 – It's true, we might not be role models in every domain, but... we don't have to tell them everything right away.

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

The phone of the second character pings, indicating a new message has arrived. They both freeze for a moment. The second character glances at the screen.

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

One – We're finally going to know.

Two – What do I do?

One – Well, read it!

The other looks at the screen of his phone, clearly surprised.

Two – It's pretty short...

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

Two (*reading*) – "Out of fuel. Requesting permission to refuel hydrogen on your planet... to continue our journey."

One – Out of fuel?

Two – They're basically running on empty.

One – To continue their journey... So, they see us as a petrol station?

Two – Looks like it.

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

The other checks his screen again.

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

Both are dismayed.

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 other taps something on his phone.

Two – Sent.

Silence. They exchange anxious glances. Another ping signals the arrival of a response. The second character looks at his screen.

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

Two (*reading*) – "We are searching to see if, besides ourselves, there is any intelligent life elsewhere 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 complete idiots.

They exchange a look of dismay.

Blackout.

11 – The Map

A character is standing there, looking perplexed at the map he's holding. Another character arrives. The first one addresses him.

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 – Sure... *(He looks around.)* Well, you're more or less... between that tree over there and me.

One – Sorry?

Two – Or if you prefer, you're... directly under the sun, since it's noon, and as it's spring, you're standing on these primroses, which you're currently trampling.

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 other hands him the map, a little wary. The second character examines the map attentively.)

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, I assure you. *(Pointing at the map)* Look, you're not on it. And neither are the primroses, by the way. If you were on this map, we'd 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 we go beyond our limits without even realising it.

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

A pause.

Two – So, you're someone who's still looking for themselves.

One – What?

Two – When you ask where you are, it means you're searching for yourself, doesn't it?

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're looking for yourself on a map, instead of searching where you actually are.

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

Two – You're simply where you are. Right 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? For what? To pay off the loan on 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 – In a way... I used to be, just like you. I came here to get lost. In this godforsaken place... Eventually, I found myself here. And now, I'm a local, as they say.

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

The other gives him a perplexed look.

Two – Your car, it's a red Ford Fiesta, right?

One – Yes.

Two – It's just behind you, in the lower car park, on the other side of 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 now you know where you stand... Here, I'll give you back 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 – Just 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 – It makes a difference because if it's the 21st, then today is the first day of spring. But if it's the 20th, it's tomorrow. And if it's the 22nd, it was yesterday.

Two – Do you really think spring arrives just like that, on a specific day? The 21st of March, to be exact?

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 if it was the 20th or the 21st to start blooming.

One – That's true.

Two – So let's just say that it's already spring.

One – Agreed...

Two – One swallow doesn't make a spring, but once you've seen two, you've got a reason to hope.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

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

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

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
A Skeleton in the Closet
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
Is there a critic in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
One marriage out of two
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money
The Tourists

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

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

Collection of sketches

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

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air

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