



La Comédiathèque

# Dramedies

Jean-Pierre  
Martinez

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# **Dramedies**

## **Jean-Pierre Martinez**

If the world's a stage, the play is often little more than a flop. Its author remains unknown, and the supporting roles are the quickest to be forgotten. Between absurdity and farce, the tragicomedy of life unfolds. What matters is not missing your exit...

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*16 characters*

*Highly flexible in number and gender, with each actor able to take on multiple roles,  
and most roles adaptable for male or female performers.*

*From 4 to 16 actors (men or women).*

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## 1 – Fatally Funny

*On a coffee table: a coffee pot, two cups, and a newspaper. Peter enters in his dressing gown. He pours himself a cup of coffee and picks up the newspaper to read. Mary, his wife, enters.*

**Mary** – You all right?

**Peter** – I'm all right.

*Mary pours herself a cup and observes Peter.*

**Mary** – You look worried... Something wrong?

**Peter** – No... Well... I still don't have any ideas for my new play.

**Mary** – Don't worry, it'll come... It always does, doesn't it?

**Peter** – Yes... So far, at least...

**Mary** – Isn't there a good story in the paper for inspiration?

*He puts the newspaper down.*

**Peter** – The news is getting more depressing by the day... I think I might stop reading it. I've already given up on TV and radio...

**Mary** – True, none of it's particularly cheerful. On the other hand... that's why we'll always need writers like you.

**Peter** – Oh, really? And what's a writer like me?

**Mary** – You know... Someone who makes us laugh... A comedy writer!

**Peter** – A comedy writer? So that's how you see me?

**Mary** – Well, we need writers to create good comedies! Help us forget our worries... Give us a chance to have fun without thinking about anything...

**Peter** – Not think about anything?

**Mary** – Sorry... I mean... think about something else.

**Peter** – I see... So to you, I'm just an entertainer... someone who distracts, who diverts people's attention from society's real issues...

**Mary** – There you go with the big ideas... Entertaining people isn't something to be ashamed of, is it?

**Peter** – I don't know... Maybe it's worth wanting more.

**Mary** – Like what?

**Peter** – To be useful...

**Mary** – To me, making people smile, helping them find a bit of joy, is very useful. And not everyone has that talent.

**Peter** – Yeah...

**Mary** – What?

**Peter** – I've written nearly a hundred comedies.

**Mary** – And they've all been big successes.

**Peter** – Yes, but I'm starting to run out of ideas. I wonder if I haven't covered it all.

**Mary** – You want to stop writing?

**Peter** – I'm not sure I could do that either... No, I was just wondering if...

**Mary** – If what?

**Peter** – What if I tried another genre?

**Mary** – You mean a novel? I've been telling you for years you should try that. Some novels are funny, too...

**Peter** – Unfortunately, I'm not a novelist, I know that. Theatre's all I know how to do.

**Mary** – Well, then, you just need to find a good subject for a comedy.

**Peter** – And what if I wrote... a different kind of play?

**Mary** – A different kind of play?

**Peter** – Something that doesn't necessarily have to be funny, you see?

**Mary** – An unfunny comedy?

**Peter** – No, not a comedy!

**Mary** – You mean... a dramedy?

**Peter** – I mean, not a comedy at all!

**Mary** – You want to write a drama?

**Peter** – A drama, a tragedy... Call it what you like.

**Mary** – Right...

**Peter** – What?

**Mary** – I don't know... (*Silence*) Are you sure you're all right?

**Peter** – I've run out of ideas for comedies. I want to try something different. It's not a tragedy!

**Mary** – OK... (*Pause*) Would you like some more coffee?

**Peter** – No, thanks.

**Mary** – Right, I'll leave you to think... about your new play.

*She exits. He sighs and opens the newspaper again. The phone rings. He answers.*

**Peter** – Yes? Oh, yes... No, no, I was just about to call you, actually... Look, I don't know yet... No, right now, I'm out of inspiration. Yes, I know, I always said that doesn't exist. But you know, inspiration's like God. You say it doesn't exist until you really need it... And you, how are you? Right... I see... OK... Look, I'll have to go now... Let's call each other next week and try to plan a lunch? OK, let's do that... Cheers, take care.

*Mary returns, looking a bit awkward.*

**Mary** – I need to run a few errands; I won't be long. Are you all right?

**Peter** – Er... Yes. Things haven't changed much since just now, but yes, I'm all right.

**Mary** – All right, I'm off then.

**Peter** – Right. See you later.

*She exits. He resumes reading the newspaper, but barely starts before the doorbell rings. He steps out to answer and returns with a woman.*

**Alex** – I hope I'm not disturbing you?

**Peter** – No, no, not at all, I was just... Want some coffee?

**Alex** – Thanks, I'm fine.

**Peter** – Nice of you to drop by like this unannounced.

**Alex** – When you live in the same building as your agent, there's always the risk of them showing up uninvited...

**Peter** – I might have to move, then...

*They share a smile, followed by an awkward silence.*

**Alex** – So, what are you working on?

**Peter** – Nothing... I was on the phone with... What's her name again... You know, that actress who was in... She's become a publisher now.

**Alex** – A publisher?

**Peter** – You know how it is. Life's cruel for actresses. Especially for ingénues. Once they're over thirty...

**Alex** – Are you looking for a new publisher?

**Peter** – Not really... She's the one who called. Just wanted to check in... It's starting to worry me. Everyone's asking if I'm all right today...

**Alex** – So... are you all right?

**Peter** – I'm fine, thanks... It's ridiculous...



**Alex** – What is?

**Peter** – I ended the conversation with “Let's call each other and try to plan a lunch” Just came out of habit. Might as well have actually had lunch at noon today.

**Alex** – What can you do... We're all so busy...

**Peter** – Or we've got nothing to do and we pretend we're busy...

**Alex** – Yeah...

**Peter** – Like you, for instance. Particularly busy today? (*Silence*) No, obviously not, or you wouldn't be here. Imagine? You agree to lunch on a whim... The next day, everyone in the business will know you've nothing to do. That no one wants to work with you anymore. That you're unemployed. Or worse, blacklisted... And then no one calls, and you're really totally washed-up.

**Alex** – Yeah... (*Silence*) And... is she all right?

**Peter** – Who?

**Alex** – Your publisher!

**Peter** – I don't know... You're right... Maybe she's the one who's not all right. She called me because she needed someone to talk to. And I practically hung up on her... I should've suggested lunch... And you, are you all right?

**Alex** – I'm fine...

**Peter** – You're sure you don't want any coffee?

**Alex** – Positive... (*Silence*) Writing anything at the moment?

**Peter** – Not really. I think I've reached the end of something here. I need to change my style.

**Alex** – Yeah, I know. I ran into Mary on the stairs.

**Peter** – Don't tell me that's why you stopped by.

**Alex** – So, you want to write a drama.

**Peter** – Yes, well... Why not?

**Alex** – This is a joke, right?

**Peter** – See, Alex, that's my problem. The mere idea of me writing something other than a comedy, and people think it's a joke.

**Alex** – Let's just say... it's not exactly what people expect from you.

**Peter** – And?

**Alex** – It might surprise your audience... Maybe even disappoint them...

**Peter** – Disappoint them? I haven't even written a line yet, and you're already saying it'll be disappointing. Thanks for the encouragement. Nice to know why I have an agent.

**Alex** – So... do you have a subject in mind?

**Peter** – No... It's just an idea...

**Alex** – Right, so it's just an idea.

**Peter** – That's it...

**Alex** – Sorry, I might have jumped the gun a bit.

**Peter** – I don't know... I was thinking of writing something about those migrants who end up washed ashore on our coasts. Assuming they haven't drowned along the way, of course...

**Alex** – A comedy, you mean? (*He gives her a disappointed look*) Sorry, I don't know why I said that... So you're serious, you really want to write something...

**Peter** – I'm not twenty anymore... Neither are you... Maybe it's time we started thinking about the world around us, don't you think?

**Alex** – The world around us?

**Peter** – Imagine that after we die, we're reincarnated. Just like that. By chance. The world is mostly filled with people who have miserable lives. If you can even call it living. When you think about it, apart from a small minority of privileged people, the luckiest of whom live in tax havens, Earth is a hellhole.

**Alex** – So what?

**Peter** – So what? Statistically, reincarnation means guaranteed hell... If we don't change the world in our lifetime, we're pretty much destined to live in hell when we're reincarnated!

*Alex stares at him, stunned.*

**Alex** – OK...

**Peter** – I'll let you think about that. I'm going to get dressed...

*He exits. Mary enters.*

**Mary** – Well?

**Alex** – He's not doing well.

**Mary** – I told you.

**Alex** – He's losing it. He's talking about death, heaven, hell.

**Mary** – No?

**Alex** – He wants to write a play about refugees.

**Mary** – Tax exiles?

**Alex** – Economic refugees!

**Mary** – You mean... retirees who move to Portugal or Morocco because it's cheaper there?

**Alex** – Migrants! In the Mediterranean!

**Mary** – No way... He told you that?

**Alex** – I tried talking to him, but he wouldn't listen.

**Mary** – Where is he?

**Alex** – He went to get dressed.

**Mary** – I don't understand... This morning, he was completely normal. Well... he was his usual self, anyway...

**Alex** – It might just be temporary. He's probably a bit down. But we shouldn't take it lightly.

**Mary** – Definitely... I hate to say it, but... I feel like he might have suicidal tendencies.

**Alex** – We should suggest he sees a doctor.

**Mary** – A psychiatrist, you mean?

**Alex** – I don't know.

**Mary** – Sometimes a simple vitamin boost does the trick... Maybe a homeopath?

*Peter re-enters.*

**Peter** – Ah, you're still here?

**Alex** – I'll leave you two.

**Peter** – No, I'm not kicking you out.

**Alex** – I was about to go anyway. I've... I've got a big day ahead. Let's call and have lunch together sometime?

*She exits. Mary gives Peter an awkward look.*

**Mary** – I just told her you were here and that if she fancied a coffee, she could come up...

**Peter** – She didn't want one.

**Mary** – What?

**Peter** – Coffee. I offered her some, she didn't want it.

*Silence.*

**Mary** – What are you looking for, Peter, really?



**Peter** – I don't know...

**Mary** – Aren't we happy, together?

**Peter** – Yes, of course we are. That's not the issue.

**Mary** – You're seeing someone, aren't you?

**Peter** – No, not at all!

**Mary** – We've got the life we wanted, haven't we? You're doing what you love. You have no boss. You make a good living.

**Peter** – I know.

**Mary** – Then what's going on?

**Peter** – None of it makes sense to me anymore. I need... to try something else.

**Mary** – But why?

**Peter** – I don't know... So that, at my funeral, people don't just say: "Well, he was just a joker."

*Silence.*

**Mary** – Do you want us to move?

**Peter** – It would be the same anywhere else.

**Mary** – You're not going to do something stupid, are you?

**Peter** – Something stupid? Like what?

*Mary tries to hide her unease.*

**Mary** – I'll leave you to work...

*She exits. He stands there, puzzled for a moment. He takes a notebook and a pencil and tries to write, but clearly, inspiration isn't there. He picks up the phone and dials a number.*

**Peter** – Yes, sorry, it's me again... Listen, I managed to free myself for tonight. Could you come over for dinner? I'd like to talk to you about a new project... Yes, of course, bring your husband. Eight o'clock is perfect. Great, see you then...

*He hangs up. He returns to the notebook and pencil, starting to write feverishly. He pauses and addresses the audience.*

**Peter** – You'll see. This time, you won't be laughing.

*He resumes writing.*

*Blackout.*

## 2 – It's not the end of the world

*He's there, looking embarrassed. She arrives, ready to leave.*

**Her** – Usually, it's you waiting for me... You're not ready yet?

**Him** – Yes, yes, I... I'm just putting on my jacket.

**Her** – Your leather jacket...

**Him** – I had it before I met you... It was a gift from my grandmother... No point in throwing it out now, is there? I mean... She's gone, anyway.

**Her** – Your grandmother passed away?

**Him** – Not my grandmother! The cow! It's made from cowhide...

**Her** – Yeah... The cow that was skinned in an abattoir so you could wear its skin...

**Him** – My next jacket will be made of plant-based leather, I promise. I hear they make lovely imitations now, from pineapple or mushrooms.

*He reluctantly puts on his jacket.*

**Her** – So, this is it, the big day?

**Him** – Yes, it seems so...

**Her** – I'm finally meeting your parents... I was starting to wonder if you were ashamed of me.

**Him** – What? No! If anything, it's the other way around...

**Her** – The other way around? Why? Are you ashamed of your parents?

**Him** – No, no, but...

**Her** – So, what are you afraid of, then?

**Him** – Nothing, I assure you!

**Her** – If anything, I should be the one worried. You're introducing me to your parents... This is official. It's almost an engagement, isn't it?

**Him** – Yes...

**Her** – Don't sound too excited!

**Him** – Listen, there's something I need to tell you.

**Her** – You're scaring me...

**Him** – It's about my parents, actually.

**Her** – Your parents? What about your parents?

**Him** – It's not easy to say...

**Her** – Go on, I can handle it... If it's important, I'd rather know now. I'll feel less stupid...

**Him** – Let's say this dinner won't exactly be what you imagined. My parents are... How shall I put it...

**Her** – They're deaf-mute. They communicate with sign language.

**Him** – No...

**Her** – Blind?

**Him** – No, not that either.

**Her** – They're very short...?

**Him** – Worse than that... Well, for you, anyway.

**Her** – I see... They're right-wing, and you didn't dare tell me? Is that why you didn't want me to meet them before now?

**Him** – No, it's not that.

**Her** – Of course, silly me. You told me they were booksellers. You can't sell books and vote right-wing!

**Him** – Don't worry, my parents don't vote at all.

**Her** – So what, then?

**Him** – It's about... the dinner... Well, food, in general.

**Her** – Food...?

**Him** – I haven't told you the whole truth.

**Her** – All right... Your parents are Jewish, and they eat kosher. So what? We can be vegan and eat kosher! It's actually much easier. Mostly, it's just meat that needs to be kosher, right?

**Him** – Yes... Well, I don't really know...

**Her** – Fruits and vegetables are very ecumenical. I'm sure veganism could end all religious wars. At least at the table, which is a start... While we wait for a solution to the Middle East conflict.

**Him** – It's a bit more complicated than that...

**Her** – What? The Middle East conflict?

**Him** – No, my parents.

**Her** – I get it... They're very traditional. To please them, you let them believe their future daughter-in-law is Jewish. And now you don't know how to tell them you're dating a Gentile...

**Him** – Don't worry, no one in the family is Jewish.

**Her** – What makes you think that would bother me? What do you take me for?

**Him** – No, the issue is that...

**Her** – Go on. This is getting weird.

**Him** – My parents aren't really booksellers.

**Her** – What do you mean, “not really”? You're either a bookseller or you're not. How can you “not really” be a bookseller?

**Him** – They're not booksellers at all... and they're not as vegan as I told you.

**Her** – What do you mean, “not as”?

**Him** – They eat vegetables, of course, but...

**Her** – They're only vegetarian? Well, that's not a tragedy, is it? You think I'm that dogmatic? But why did you tell me they were vegan?

**Him** – I said it because... I knew it was important to you.

**Her** – I'm with you! You share my values, and that's enough for me. You don't choose your family, as they say. Or your in-laws...

**Him** – I don't know how to say this...

**Her** – So, your parents aren't booksellers. So what? What do they do, then?

**Him** – They run the butcher's, just round the corner...

**Her** (*stunned*) – The butcher's...

**Him** – The horse butcher's... Between the cobbler and the tobacconist, you know?

**Her** – This is a joke, isn't it?

**Him** – No.

**Her** – You told me your whole family was vegan except for your grandmother, and now you're telling me I'm marrying a butcher's son?

**Him** – I'm not a butcher! I'm only the butcher's son...

**Her** – And when were you planning to tell me? At the wedding? During the reception! Between the donkey sausage and the horse steak?

**Him** – No! That's why I'm telling you now...

**Her** – I'll remind you, my parents are vegan. And they take it very seriously.

**Him** – Take it seriously?

**Her** – If you find it funny, I don't... So what do we do now?

**Him** – I'm truly vegan! I mean, I became one after meeting you... That doesn't change things for us, does it?

**Her** – It might not mean much to you, but to me, it means a lot...

**Him** – Are you mad at me?

**Her** – I need to think about all this, yes. (*She hesitates*) But I'm not going to do that right now. They invited us, didn't they? So I'll go... I'm not the type to run away. We'll talk about all this later. Shall we go?

**Him** – The problem is...

**Her** – Oh, there's another problem?

**Him** – I didn't dare tell them you don't eat meat.

**Her** – No, tell me you're joking...

**Him** – I'm not sure they'd understand... They're not young anymore... At their age, there's no point in upsetting them... It could even kill them, you know. My dad's heart isn't great...

**Her** – You could have found a gentle way to bring it up with them...

**Him** – Let's say I couldn't find the right moment...

**Her** – Of course...

**Him** – You can just eat the vegetables... Just say you're not very hungry... Or that you're unwell...

**Her** – You know what? I think you're the one who's seriously unwell.

*She takes off her coat.*

**Him** – So, you're not coming...

**Her** (*horrified*) – A horse butcher's?

**Him** – So you'd rather abandon the butcher's son, recently converted to veganism... Without you, I might go back, you know...

**Her** – Are you mocking me now?

**Him** – Don't look at me like that, I feel like you're going to kill me.

**Her** – I have to admit... I am feeling murderous.

**Him** – Calm down, please! Remember, you're vegan... and the sixth commandment is the most sacred of the ten for you.

**Her** – The sixth...?

**Him** – Thou shalt not kill!

**Her** – I'll strangle you, and confess later.

*She moves towards him, threateningly.*

**Him** – Don't do this, please.

**Her** – I don't know what's holding me back...

**Him** – So, you actually believed all this?

**Her** – What?

**Him** – But come on... Horse butchers haven't existed in ages! On the corner of our street, between the tobacconist and the cobbler, there's a bakery! If you did the shopping more often, you'd know...

**Her** – Your parents aren't butchers?

**Him** – My parents are booksellers, they vote left-wing, and they're vegan. Just as I told you.

**Her** – You're crazy! Why would you make up such a story?

**Him** – To see how much you love me... Now I know. So you'd have refused to marry the butcher's son?

**Her** – I don't know... Probably not. But I'd have ended up killing you, that's for sure.

**Him** – So it would have been a tragedy, then? The Capulets the butchers and the Montagues the vegans...

**Her** – But in the end, it's just another farce.

**Him** – Can't change who we are...

**Her** – It's not the end of the world.

**Him** – Right, shall we go? We're going to be late.

**Her** – Let's go. You didn't forget the carrot cake...

**Him** – Don't worry, darling, it's already in the car.

**Her** – By the way, was that a proposal?

**Him** – Yes...

**Her** – It's probably the most surprising one any woman has ever heard.

**Him** – I am a playwright, after all. I've been working on it all week. So, what's your answer?

**Her** – I'll wait until I've met your parents before deciding.

*They exit.*

*Blackout.*

### 3 – Behind Closed Doors

*A couple. Four chairs. They are sitting.*

**Her** – You all right?

**Him** – I'm fine... And you?

**Her** – I'm fine... (*Pause*) Do you want a drink?

**Him** – What?

**Her** – An aperitif? Some peanuts?

**Him** – No, I'm fine, thanks.

*A pause.*

**Her** – It's nice here, isn't it?

**Him** – Here?

**Her** – In this house.

**Him** – Yes... (*Pause*) But it's not ours.

**Her** – Oh, isn't it?

**Him** – No.

**Her** – That's true.

**Him** – Is it a house, or a flat?

**Her** – A flat, I think. I'm not sure.

*A pause.*

**Him** – Do you remember where our home is?

**Her** – Our home?

**Him** – Our real home. Where we belong!

**Her** – No... Do you?

**Him** – Neither do I. I can't even remember what it looked like.

**Her** – We've moved so many times.

**Him** – That's true. We do move a lot.

**Her** – Yes. More and more.

**Him** – We really should try to remember.

**Her** – Remember what?

**Him** – Where we live.



**Her** – All homes look a bit alike.

**Him** – Even when it's a flat.

**Her** – There are bedrooms. A dining room. A kitchen.

**Him** – In the kitchen, there's a fridge, a cooker, a table, drawers...

**Her** – In the drawers, there are forks, knives, teaspoons.

**Him** – In the bedrooms, there are children. Sometimes...

**Her** – When there aren't, it's because they've already left. To another home.

*A pause.*

**Him** – Do you think they'll come back one day?

**Her** – The children?

**Him** – The owners!

**Her** – Who knows... How long have we been here?

**Him** – I don't know... Quite a while, hasn't it?

**Her** – Yes.

**Him** – I'm always afraid someone will ring the doorbell, and it'll be them.

**Her** – The children?

**Him** – The people who live here! The real owners...

**Her** – Oh, right...

**Him** – Aren't you?

**Her** – Yes. Actually, I wonder if the doorbell works.

**Him** – What?

**Her** – The doorbell! We've never heard it.

**Him** – Anyway, when the people who live here come back, they won't ring.

**Her** – Why not?

**Him** – It's their home! They'll have the key.

**Her** – Of course.

**Him** – When people come home, they don't ring the bell. They have no reason to think anyone's inside when they're not here.

**Her** – True... Do we have the key?

**Him** – I don't know. Do you have the key?

**Her** – No.

**Him** – Neither do I.

**Her** – So how did we get in here?

**Him** – I can't remember.

**Her** – Maybe someone let us in.

**Him** – Who would have let us in?

**Her** – The owners?

**Him** – But we're alone in this flat.

**Her** – How long have we been here?

**Him** – I don't know...

*A pause.*

**Her** – That must be why we never go out. We wouldn't be able to get back in.

**Him** – No. Since we don't have the key.

*The doorbell rings. They exchange a worried look.*

**Her** – Do you think it's them?

**Him** – We said if it were them, they wouldn't ring.

**Her** – So who could it be?

**Him** – Who knows...

**Her** – What do we do?

**Him** – We should answer it, right?

**Her** – Do you think so?

**Him** – They've seen the light. They know we're here.

**Her** – This is it... We're done for...

**Him** – We're going to have to move again.

**Her** – But where will we go?

**Him** – I'll pack our suitcase.

**Her** – Do we have a suitcase?

**Him** – Everyone has a suitcase at home, don't they?

**Her** – I'll go and open the door...

**Him** – What are you going to say to them?

**Her** – I don't know...

**Him** – You'll have to say something, to explain why we're here. In their home.

**Her** – They're probably just back from holiday.

**Him** – I'll go see if we have a suitcase.

*She exits. He exits, too. She returns with another couple. Michael has a bottle in hand, and Christine a bouquet of flowers. He returns with a suitcase.*

**Her** – This is Michael and Christine.

**Him** – Oh, hello...

**Michael** – Hi. How are you?

**Him** – I'm fine, and you?

**Christine** – Great. Are you going on holiday?

**Him** – No, why?

**Michael** – You're holding a suitcase...

**Him** – Oh, yes, no, I... I was just about to put it away. You know how it is with suitcases, you never know where to put them.

**Her** – And an empty suitcase takes up as much space as a full one.

**Christine** – Yes. But it's lighter.

**Michael** – True. We should go on holiday with empty suitcases. We'd travel lighter.

*They all laugh, a little awkwardly.*

**Christine** – So, how are you?

**Him** – I'm fine.

**Michael** – Here, I brought some champagne to celebrate.

**Him** – Celebrate what?

*Michael bursts out laughing.*

**Michael** – Celebrate what? Always a joker, aren't you?

**Christine** – He's funny! Here, I brought some flowers.

**Her** – Oh yes, lovely.

**Him** – I'll go get some flutes.

**Her** – You want us to play the flute for them?

**Michael** – Flutes! For the champagne!

**Her** – Oh, right!

*They laugh again.*

**Christine** – She's funny!

**Her** – And I'll find a vase. For the flowers.

**Christine** – Would you like some help?

**Him** – No, no, please!

**Her** – Make yourselves at home.

**Him** – You know the place.

*They both exit.*

**Michael** (*smiling*) – They're so funny...

**Christine** – Yes...

**Michael** – They haven't changed. Still as...

**Christine** – You think so?

**Michael** – What?

**Christine** – That they haven't changed.

**Michael** – Now that you mention it, I suppose...

**Christine** – No, but they don't look anything like...

**Michael** – Well, a bit, maybe...

**Christine** – Hmm...

**Michael** – And you know, people... They change...

**Christine** – Not this much... Not in a week...

**Michael** – It was a week ago?

**Christine** – It was last week. The last time we saw them.

**Michael** – It's true, they've changed quite a lot.

*A pause.*

**Christine** – Or maybe... it's not them.

**Michael** – Not them? Then what would they be doing here? If it's not their home...

*A pause.*

**Christine** – You think we could have got the wrong door?

**Michael** – I doubt it... Besides, they seem to know us, don't they? If they know us, it means we know them too.

**Christine** – Yes, of course...

*The man returns.*

**Him** – I'm terribly sorry, I couldn't find any champagne flutes.

**Christine** – Oh, men...

**Michael** – Just ask your wife.

*The woman returns as well.*

**Him** – Do you know where the flutes are, darling?

**Her** – No... There might not be any...

**Christine** – What do you mean? No champagne flutes? Everyone has champagne flutes, don't they?

**Michael** – It doesn't matter. We'll drink it from regular glasses.

**Christine** – You've got wine glasses, surely?

*They don't look sure.*

**Him** – I didn't see anything...

**Her** – I couldn't find a vase either.

**Christine** – Surely you have some glasses. In a kitchen...

**Her** – I couldn't find the kitchen.

*An awkward moment.*

**Michael** – Well... You know what? We'll drink the champagne from the bottle. Like the Russians!

**Christine** – Do Russians drink champagne from the bottle?

**Michael** – The Cossacks, surely. Without even dismounting.

**Her** – But please, sit down.

*They all sit. Awkward smiles. Silence.*

**Him** – And the kids, they're doing well? (*Michael and Christine, who clearly don't have children, exchange a confused look*) No, I meant, kids in general. Not necessarily yours. If you don't have any...

**Her** – Or anymore... I mean... You could have had them, and they might have passed away.

*Awkward silence.*

**Her** – I'll see if I can find some peanuts...

*She exits.*

**Him** – Anyway, it's nice of you to drop by.

**Christine** – We're friends, aren't we?

**Him** – Of course.

*Michael and Christine exchange an awkward look. Christine signals Michael to go ahead.*

**Michael** – My question might sound silly, but... do you actually live here?

**Him** – Why do you ask?

**Christine** – Well... Our friends who live here don't look anything like you.

**Michael** – The last time we came, they looked nothing like you...

*She returns.*

**Her** – I found the peanuts!

**Christine** – So, you found the kitchen...?

**Her** – I even found some glasses.

**Michael** – Then we can have a drink!

**Christine** – Go on...

*Michael opens the bottle and pours the drinks. They toast.*

**Michael** – To your health!

**Him** – To friendship!

*They drink.*

**Her** – Have some peanuts.

*They eat peanuts.*

**Christine** – I've never dared to ask, but...

**Him** – Yes...?

**Christine** – Where did you two meet? (*Awkward silence*) Sorry, I don't know what came over me...

**Her** – No, no, it's just that...

**Him** – We don't really remember.

**Christine** – You don't remember?

**Michael** – You don't remember where you met?

*A pause.*

**Her** – I think it was here, wasn't it?

**Christine** – Here?

**Her** – One day, we realised we were living in the same flat.

**Him** – Yes, funny that... I think that's how it happened.

**Her** – It was a while ago, of course.

**Him** – Yes... A week, maybe.

**Her** – Yes, that's right, about a week ago.

**Christine** – Ah, well...

**Him** – And you?

**Michael** – Us?

**Her** – Have you known each other long?

**Christine** – No, not very...

**Michael** – I'd say... Yes, not very long.

**Christine** – We met in the lobby, downstairs.

**Michael** – I had a bottle of champagne.

**Christine** – And I had a bouquet of flowers.

**Michael** – We figured we must be going to the same place.

**Christine** – Since I didn't have the door code...

**Michael** – Neither did I. I rang a few doorbells at random. You were the first to open.

**Christine** – Since he seemed to know where he was going, I followed him.

**Him** – Ah, yes...

**Her** – Yes, it's... quite a story.

**Him** – Very romantic.

**Her** – You'll see, it'll end in a wedding.

*Michael and Christine exchange an uncomfortable look.*

**Michael** – So, if I understand correctly, no one here really knows each other.

**Her** – Apparently not...

**Christine** – And no one has any business being in this house.

**Him** – Apparently not...

**Michael** – So whose house is it?

*Silence.*

**Christine** – Would you like more champagne?

**Her** – Thank you, but it's getting late. We should probably go.



**Him** – Anyway, thanks for the hospitality.

**Michael** – No trouble at all.

*He picks up the suitcase and heads towards the door with Her.*

**Christine** – Shall I see you out?

**Her** – Don't bother; we know the way.

**Michael** – Want help with the suitcase?

**Him** – No... It weighs nothing... It's empty.

**Christine** – Well... See you again sometime!

**Michael** – And thanks for stopping by!

*They exit. Michael and Christine sit back down. Silence.*

**Christine** – You all right?

**Michael** – I'm fine... And you?

**Christine** – I'm fine... *(Pause)* Want another drink?

**Michael** – No, thanks, I'm fine.

**Christine** – Some peanuts?

*He grabs a handful of peanuts and begins chewing.*

**Christine** – It's nice here, isn't it?

**Michael** – Yes... *(Pause)* But it's not our place.

**Christine** – That's true.

**Michael** – Is it a house, or a flat?

**Christine** – A flat, I think.

*Blackout.*

## 4 – Anonymous Author

*She stands in the middle of the empty stage, looking around. He enters.*

**Him** – Ah, there you are! I was looking all over for you...

**Her** – That's it, the last truck has just left with the final boxes.

**Him** – You checked everywhere? Nothing left in the house?

**Her** – Nothing. Except our memories...

*He places a hand on her shoulder.*

**Him** – Come on... We'll make new ones!

**Her** – Of course... But plans don't erase nostalgia.

**Him** – Any regrets?

**Her** – No...

**Him** – Do you remember the first time we walked into this house, to view it?

**Her** – It was empty then, too.

**Him** – And between those two emptinesses, we lived. We filled this house. With furniture. Paintings. Children...

**Her** – And it filled us. With joy. Happiness. Memories.

**Him** – We're taking those with us.

**Her** – And we're leaving this place almost as spotless as we found it.

**Him** – Much cleaner, if you ask me.

**Her** – I wonder who'll come next... We know nothing about them.

**Him** – And they'll know nothing about us.

**Her** – Just as we know nothing of those who were here before us.

**Him** – People come and go, houses remain.

**Her** – Until the houses crumble too. Or are demolished. To make way for blocks of flats.

**Him** – Some houses are haunted by bad memories.

**Her** – Yes... Every house has a story. Stories.

**Him** – Like the story of a crime, for instance.

**Her** – A crime?

**Him** – Not all crimes happen out in the open, you know. Most are committed at home. Often within families... And when it becomes a headline, the house becomes unsellable. Sometimes, I imagine, they end up demolishing it to build a new one in its place. A house without a past...

**Her** – Thank you, that's very uplifting.

**Him** – Who knows... Maybe this house, before us, didn't only witness happy times.

**Her** – Well, we never found any skeletons in the closets.

**Him** – Maybe if we'd dug around in the cellar...

**Her** – Right... Well, in that case, I think we should get going.

**Him** – See? You just had to ask...

**Her** – Thanks... I know I can always count on you in difficult times.

*They head toward the exit. She bends down and picks something up from the floor.*

**Him** – What is it?

**Her** – Looks like a manuscript.

**Him** – A manuscript?

**Her** – Seems to be a play.

**Him** – How can you tell?

*She flips through the pages.*

**Her** – People talking, if you like. Not like a novel.

**Him** – I see... Dialogues...

**Her** – Or it could be a film script.

**Him** – Is it about a crime?

**Her** – I don't know.

**Him** – It must have been wedged behind a radiator, and with the move, it fell to the floor. The paper's completely yellowed.

**Her** – But it's still legible. After all these years. Can you believe it?

**Him** – What is it? A comedy? A drama?

**Her** – We'd have to read it.

**Him** – Who could have written this?

**Her** – Someone who lived here before us, I suppose.

**Him** – Incredible... What if it's a masterpiece...

**Her** – It could just as easily be rubbish.

**Him** – Is it signed?

**Her** – No... I can't see an author's name.

**Him** – It might be unpublished. An anonymous manuscript, can you imagine? You could sign it and publish it... You're a publisher. For you, it'd be easy.

**Her** – That would be plagiarism.

**Him** – If the author's dead. And no one knows they wrote it...

**Her** – I'll start by reading it...

**Him** – Isn't it strange?

**Her** – What?

**Him** – We're leaving this house, and we're taking someone else's story with us.

**Her** – I hope it's not a tragedy...

**Him** – At least we didn't find a body.

**Her** – It almost makes me want to search...

**Him** – You think?

**Her** – Maybe the author's buried in the cellar...

*They leave.*

*Blackout.*

## 5 – Scene Change

*The beam of a torch in the darkness. Then a second one. The first light shines on the second person's face.*

**Him** – Ah, it's you! You gave me a fright...

**Her** – Well?

**Him** – It's done, everything's in the truck.

**Her** – It all went smoothly?

**Him** – The usual.

*She directs her torch beam toward the audience.*

**Her** – So, no one was there...

**Him** – With the racket that mutt made when I arrived... If anyone had been in the house, they'd have woken up.

**Her** – Or maybe they're dead.

**Him** – Don't tempt fate. Can you imagine? Breaking into a place at night only to stumble on a corpse...

**Her** – With my luck lately, it wouldn't surprise me.

**Him** – Yeah... I saw that happen in a film once. Can't remember what it was called...

**Her** – You can tell me about it another time. And the dog... Is it all right?

**Him** – Thanks for asking if I got bitten...

**Her** – Did you?

**Him** – Tore a hole in my trousers. I had to knock it out...

**Her** – If there's no one around, we can turn on the lights, right?

**Him** – Go ahead, all the houses around here are empty. Mostly holiday homes. Not to mention those who've already moved away.

**Her** – Because of all the burglaries, probably.

**Him** – If this keeps up, there'll be nothing but empty houses left to rob around here.

*She flips a switch, and the lights come on. His clothes are in tatters.*

**Her** – Ah yes, that dog really did a number on you. Poor thing... You didn't hurt it too much, did you?

**Him** – Why? Are you going to report me to the Animal Protection Society?

*They look around.*

**Her** – You've really done a clean sweep. Nothing left.

**Him** – Everything's loaded in the truck.

**Her** – Anything interesting?

**Him** – Mostly furniture. Some trinkets. Pretty tasteless.

**Her** – I see...

**Him** – New-money style.

**Her** – Better new money than newly poor.

**Him** – There was a safe, though.

**Her** – Really?

**Him** – I managed to open it.

**Her** – How much?

**Him** – It's all in the truck. I didn't count it.

**Her** – We'll check it out in a bit. Let's not hang around here. You checked the other rooms?

**Him** – I cleared them all. Did you come with Bob?

**Her** – I dozed off in the car on the way here; I don't even know where we are. (*She looks around again*) It's amazing how much an empty house can look like any other.

**Him** – Yeah...

**Her** – You're sure it's the right house?

**Him** – You saw the cross marked on the wall outside. Bob scouted the place last week.

**Her** – Yeah... The kind of cross that means valuables, no alarm, easy access...

**Him** – He got it right. Except for the dog. It must've been asleep when he came by.

**Her** – Funny. This house looks vaguely familiar...

**Him** – Maybe it belongs to someone you know...

**Her** – Maybe...

*She picks something up from the floor.*

**Him** – What's that?

**Her** – An electricity bill.

**Him** – Must've fallen from a drawer.

**Her** – It's in my name...

**Him** – No...?

**Her** – I thought as much...

**Him** – You mean...

**Her** – This is my place! I can't believe it... You burgled my house!

**Him** – How was I supposed to know! There was a cross on the wall. Didn't you tell Bob where you live?

**Her** – No... Did you?

**Him** – It never crossed my mind...

**Her** – Oh, for heaven's sake... One in a million chance...

*Silence.*

**Him** – Well... Guess the move will be quicker...

**Her** – I had no intention of moving.

**Him** – So what do we do?

**Her** – What else? We'll just have to put everything back in its place. You know, the furniture and all those tacky trinkets. New-money style...

**Him** – OK...

**Her** – And you're going to give me my money back. Maybe I'll have enough to buy a new safe with it. Now that you've cracked mine open...

**Him** – Don't get too sentimental about that safe. It was junk. I got it open in five minutes...

**Her** – Unbelievable. I hope the dog's all right, at least...

**Him** – You're still worried about that bloody mutt?

**Her** – It's my dog! My dog that you knocked out!

**Him** – Oh, right, sorry... Don't worry, it'll be fine.

**Her** – Yes... I saw him lying by his kennel when I came in. I wondered why he didn't bark when he saw me.

**Him** – Well, he recognised his owner, didn't he?

**Her** – Yeah... And I didn't even recognise my own house...

**Him** – And then they say animals aren't as clever as us.

**Her** – Right then, let's get to work. We're not done here, are we...

**Him** – Or we could report the burglary, and you could claim it on the insurance.

**Her** – You think?



**Him** – We'll get rid of all this junk, if we can pawn it off on someone. And you can use it as an excuse to redecorate...

**Her** – Yeah... And the stage designer can skip the scene change.

**Him** – Shall we go out through stage right or stage left?

*They exit.*

*Blackout.*

## 6 – Crime Scene

*Ramirez, a police inspector, enters, followed by his deputy, Sanchez. They look around.*

**Ramirez** – You haven't touched anything?

**Sanchez** – No... What would I have touched?

**Ramirez** – True... I've never seen a crime scene so... desperately empty.

**Sanchez** – Yes...

**Ramirez** – Finding clues here is going to be tricky.

**Sanchez** – I don't see what we could send to the lab... aside from the air we're breathing.

**Ramirez** – You know, that's an idea...

**Sanchez** – You want me to send an air sample to the lab?

**Ramirez** – There's no visible weapon... Maybe it was gas poisoning.

**Sanchez** – Only an autopsy would tell us that...

*Ramirez looks around again.*

**Ramirez** – An autopsy, fine, but... where are the bodies?

*Sanchez looks around too.*

**Sanchez** – Apparently, there are no bodies either.

**Ramirez** – What do you mean, no bodies? If there are no bodies, there's no crime! And if there's no crime, there's no crime scene...

**Sanchez** – There must be victims, though. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here.

**Ramirez** – There are victims, but no bodies?

**Sanchez** – I don't see any...

**Ramirez** – The perpetrator must have disposed of the bodies... But how?

**Sanchez** – I suppose that's what we're here to find out...

*They look around again, then at the floor.*

**Ramirez** – I don't see anything.

**Sanchez** – Ah, I think I've got something.

**Ramirez** – What is it?

**Sanchez** – A book.

**Ramirez** – A book?

**Sanchez** (*flipping through it*) – A play.

**Ramirez** – How do you know it's a play?

**Sanchez** – It's published by Comediathec Editions.

**Ramirez** – Do you think it could help with our investigation?

**Sanchez** – Who knows... (*He keeps reading*) It's unsettling... The characters in here have the same names as us...

**Ramirez** – No?

**Sanchez** – Inspector Ramirez and his deputy, Sanchez...

**Ramirez** – Let me see... (*He takes the book and reads a few pages*) And their descriptions match exactly those of the victims we've been sent to investigate.

**Sanchez** – So... if we go with that theory... we're characters in a play?

**Ramirez** – Worse than that: we're dead...

**Sanchez** – And we've been assigned to investigate our own disappearance...?

**Ramirez** – This is the strangest case I've encountered in my entire career.

**Sanchez** – What type of play is it? Comedy? Tragedy?

**Ramirez** – You know me, theatre's not really my thing...

**Sanchez** – What's the title?

**Ramirez** – *Dramedies*.

**Sanchez** – Dramedies?

**Ramirez** – That's the title of the play.

*They exchange baffled looks.*

**Sanchez** – How could characters in a play die? Since they don't actually exist.

**Ramirez** – This is all a bit unusual.

**Sanchez** – Dying on stage, no less...

**Ramirez** – So you think... we're on a theatre stage?

*Sanchez turns to the audience.*

**Sanchez** – Look at all these people, sitting in the dark... Looks like they've come to watch us...

**Ramirez** – Hell, you're right... Who do you think they are? Witnesses?

**Sanchez** – Maybe they're here to watch the re-enactment.

**Ramirez** – This is crazy... Don't tell me they even paid to be here.

**Sanchez** – Why don't you ask them?

**Ramirez** – You think we can talk to them?

**Sanchez** – I don't know...

**Ramirez** – It might help with our investigation...

**Sanchez** – Maybe they saw something...

*Ramirez approaches an audience member.*

**Ramirez** – Did you pay for your ticket?

*A little improvisation based on the response or non-response of the audience member.*

**Sanchez** – And... did you see anything?

**Ramirez** – Looks like we're on our own, as usual.

**Sanchez** – Yes, because it seems our characters didn't leave much of an impression...

**Ramirez** – Sadly, that's the fate of most ordinary mortals. To leave no trace after their time on Earth.

**Sanchez** – Still... Us, theatre characters...

**Ramirez** – True... We might have hoped for a bit of recognition...

**Sanchez** – The play was probably a flop. When it's a masterpiece, people remember the characters, don't they?

**Ramirez** – Especially the leads... Some characters even become more famous than their authors.

**Sanchez** – Take Sherlock Holmes, everyone remembers him. But who remembers the name of the author of Sherlock Holmes?

**Ramirez** – Elementary, my dear Watson. It's Conan Doyle.

**Sanchez** – Alas, you're no Sherlock Holmes.

**Ramirez** – And you're no Doctor Watson.

**Sanchez** – Otherwise, we'd have solved this mystery ages ago.

**Ramirez** – What can you do... We're just minor characters.

**Sanchez** – The ones nobody remembers once the curtain falls... Who said life is but a dream?

**Ramirez** – Life... It feels long, especially at the beginning. You start saying your lines in the first act.

**Sanchez** – At first, you don't realise the play's already written.

**Ramirez** – And gradually, you remember the words as you're saying them.

**Sanchez** – Until you remember them before you say them.

**Ramirez** – And when the story nears its end... You just hope you don't mess up your exit...

**Sanchez** – It's a bit musty in here, isn't it?

**Ramirez** – That's the smell of the theatre.

**Sanchez** – The good news is, we've managed to find the bodies.

**Ramirez** – Yes... And they seem to be starting to stink.

**Sanchez** – The smell of decomposing characters... The ones from all those flops that couldn't hold the stage.

**Sanchez** – Plays that never found their audience, as they say...

**Ramirez** – The one we were in must not have been very timely... Take an air sample. We'll send it to the lab for confirmation.

*Sanchez takes a small bottle from his pocket, uncaps it, waits a moment, then caps it and puts it back in his pocket.*

**Sanchez** – And there we go. Curtain call.

**Ramirez** – Time to exit the stage. For good. For us, this was the last performance...

**Sanchez** – Let's head out this way.

**Ramirez** – To think all these poor people paid to be here...

**Sanchez** – *Dramedies*.

**Ramirez** – We should have called it *Autopsy of a Flop*.

**Sanchez** – I'd have preferred to be in a masterpiece... To leave a legacy.

**Ramirez** – Maybe next time...

*They exit.*

*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 13<sup>th</sup>  
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 13<sup>th</sup>  
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  
Reality Show  
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  
For real and for fun  
Him and Her  
Lost time Chronicles  
Open Hearts  
Sidewalk Chronicles  
Stage Briefs  
Stories to die for

### **Monologues**

Happy Dogs  
Like a fish in the air

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