

La Comédiathèque

# Killer Sketches

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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# Killer Sketches

*A sketch comedy*

**Jean-Pierre Martinez**

Hitman is a little-known profession, but one of public utility, and very much a career for the future, especially in times of crisis. At a café table, characters from this noble trade cross paths with clients whose motives are as varied as they are surprising. And you? If you could eliminate just one person on this earth with impunity, would you do it? And who would you choose ?

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*24 characters*

Highly flexible casting in terms of numbers and gender, with each actor able to play multiple roles and almost all roles suitable for either men or women.

From 2 to 24 actors (men or women)

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# 1. The Contract

*Two characters are seated at a café table, each with a glass of red wine.*

**One** – Cheers!

**Two** – Cheers!

*They take a sip. The first grimaces. The other seems to enjoy it.*

**One** – It's really awful, isn't it?

**Two** – Yes, but to me, it tastes like freedom.

**One** – Why? You just got out of prison?

**Two** – Almost. My in-laws are staying at mine for the holidays. I managed to sneak out for an hour.

**One** – Ah, tough break.

**Two** – I told them I was going to check the oil in the car.

**One** – Don't you drive an electric?

**Two** – Yeah... You see what it's come to...

**One** – Right...

**Two** – They've only been here two days, and I'm already sick of them. Especially my father-in-law...

*Silence.*

**One** – Want me to get rid of him for you?

**Two** – You mean, take them in? If my wife agrees, I'd hand them over immediately. I'm willing to pay, you know. I'd pay double the B&B rate because, trust me, they're no gift.

**One** – No, I meant... make them disappear.

**Two** – Disappear? You're a magician? Unfortunately, whenever a magician makes someone disappear, they always reappear after a few minutes. What good would that do? And you're not a magician, are you?

**One** – No, of course not... No, I mean make them disappear... for good.

*The other one is taken aback.*

**Two** – Very funny.

**One** – I'm not joking.

**Two** – For good...?

**One** – I know a guy who could take care of it, if you want.

**Two** – You're kidding?

**One** – Not at all.

**Two** – You mean... a hitman?

**One** – He'd only do it as a favour, though. Not for free, of course.

**Two** – You know hitmen?

**One** – No, I don't know... *hitmen*. But I know one.

**Two** – Well, I don't know any, you see. Where did you meet this guy?

**One** – In prison.

**Two** – In prison?

**One** – We shared a cell for three years.

**Two** – You've been to prison?

**One** – Yeah.

**Two** – What for?

**One** – *What for?*

**Two** – Why did they lock you up? What did you do?

**One** – Attempted murder.

**Two** – Attempted?

**One** – I botched the job. I wasn't very skilled. But this guy's a pro, I swear. He's taken out more than a few, I guarantee it.

**Two** – You're pulling my leg here...

**One** – Not at all.

**Two** – You're serious?

**One** – Deadly serious.

*The other takes this in, processing the information.*

**Two** – That's crazy. I didn't know hitmen existed outside of movies. So, you just place an order, like ordering a pizza, and...

**One** – Yes. It's called a contract.

*The other thinks again.*

**Two** – A contract... And how much would it cost? I mean, just out of curiosity?

**One** – It depends...

**Two** – Depends on what?

**One** – Well, is it just for one, or for both of them? Since you said it's mostly your father-in-law who...

**Two** – I don't know. How much would it be per person?

**One** – I'd have to ask him... Around 8,500 euros maybe.

**Two** – That's... oddly specific.

**One** – He'd probably give you a deal for the pair.

**Two** – How much?

**One** – For a couple... about 15,000.

**Two** – We're talking VAT included, I assume.

**One** – Cash is simpler, unless you need an invoice.

**Two** (*thinking*) – Right...

**One** – Want me to ask him?

**Two** – No, not at all... I said “right” as in... I get it. Obviously, I don't agree. (*Pause*) Although it's pretty tempting...

**One** – Yeah.

**Two** – And it's risky, isn't it? I mean... the perfect crime doesn't exist.

**One** – What makes you say that?

**Two** – I don't know... that's what they say.

**One** – By definition, perfect crimes aren't classed as crimes. They're accidents, natural deaths, suicides... So, if a perfect crime exists, we wouldn't know about it. That's why they say it doesn't exist.

**Two** – I see... To avoid inspiring people.

**One** – For all we know, out of a hundred people who die, ten could be victims of perfect crimes, and we'd have no idea.

**Two** – You really think so?

**One** – I've known quite a few who'd committed perfect crimes.

**Two** – Really? And where did you meet them?

**One** – In prison.

**Two** – If they'd committed perfect crimes, what were they doing in prison?

**One** – Oh, they were in prison for something else.

**Two** – Yeah... Not very reassuring. I think I'll take some time to consider it. And fifteen grand, that's a fair sum...

*Pause.*

**One** – And your in-laws are planning to stay with you every holiday?

**Two** – Yeah... that's why I'm not saying no straight away...

**One** – Suit yourself.

**Two** – On the other hand, I don't want to end up in jail, like you.

*Pause.*

**One** – There's always kidnapping.

**Two** – Kidnapping?

**One** – It's less permanent, but... if you get caught, the sentence is lighter. Plus, you can ask for a ransom.

**Two** – A ransom?

**One** – And with the ransom, you can pay the kidnapper. Costs you nothing. Play your cards right and you might even make a profit.

**Two** – A ransom... Who'd pay a ransom to free my father-in-law? My mother-in-law, maybe, but even that's doubtful. Besides, she's broke.

**One** – No other family?

**Two** – Well, there's my brother-in-law. And my sister-in-law. They're arriving next week.

**One** – They're staying with you too?

**Two** – Yeah, unfortunately.

**One** – Ah, tough break...

**Two** – Quite.

*Pause.*

**One** – Don't tell me you want to get rid of them too.

**Two** – Depends. For four, would your mate give me a big discount?

**One** – Best not make it too obvious. Are there a lot more people you'd like to get rid of?

**Two** – Can't stand my parents either... And don't get me started on my two sisters and their idiot husbands.

**One** – They coming over for the holidays too?

**Two** – Oh no! They're not invited. But they still drive me up the wall. And once the holidays are over, there's my boss...

**One** – Just so you know, my friend's a hitman, not a mass shooter like in America.

**Two** – Right, because as long as there's one left to get on my nerves... No, I won't go down that road. It'd never end. And I don't have the funds...

*The other stands up.*

**One** – In that case, I'm off.

**Two** – Yeah, me too. Got people waiting for me at home...

**One** – Well then... Enjoy your holidays.

**Two** – Cheers...

**One** – And if you change your mind, you've got my number.

**Two** – OK... Who are you spending the holidays with?

**One** – Just the wife.

**Two** – Don't tell me the others...

**One** – If I told you... it wouldn't be the perfect crime.

*He leaves. The other is left thoughtful for a moment and then exits as well.*

## 2. Bloody Mary

*A rather sophisticated woman sits alone at a table, staring at an empty cocktail glass.  
A man approaches.*

**Him** – Hello, may I buy you a drink?

**Her** – Even two or three if you like.

**Him** – Well, I'm not sure I've got that much cash on me.

**Her** – Let's start with one, then. What's your name?

**Him** – Michael, but you can call me Mickey. And you?

**Her** – Mary. But you can call me whatever you like.

**Him** – Right... And what would you fancy, Mary?

**Her** – The same as before. A Bloody Mary.

**Him** – A cocktail... That's a bit pricey, isn't it? How much is it?

**Her** – I have no idea. (*Gesturing to a man across the room*) The gentleman over there bought it for me.

**Him** – Ah, I see...

*She gives the man a flirtatious smile, then turns back to her new companion.*

**Her** – So?

**Him** – Oh yes, excuse me... (*He fumbles in his pockets.*) I'm so used to getting turned down, I'm not even sure I've got enough. I spent my last bit of change on poison.

**Her** – You do look a bit desperate, but I'm not sure suicide's the answer, you know.

**Him** – Oh, no, but... it's not for me.

**Her** – You want to poison someone?

**Him** – Yes, well... No... It's ant poison.

**Her** – I see... I could settle for a coffee... if that's more in your budget.

**Him** – Actually, I don't think I have any cash at all.

**Her** – Is this your tactic to get someone else to buy you a drink?

**Him** – Sometimes it works.

**Her** – Well, let's say it's your lucky day. What will you have?

**Him** – I'll have the same as you.

**Her** – You've got expensive taste for someone who can't afford to buy a woman a drink.



**Him** – I do come into money from time to time, you know. But in my line of work, there are highs and lows.

**Her** – And what line of work is that?

**Him** – I'm a hitman.

**Her** – I see... So right now, it's a bit of a dead season.

**Him** – Exactly.

**Her** – And have you killed many people in your life?

**Him** – Quite a few.

**Her** – And are you working on something now? Besides the ants...

**Him** – You'll understand if I can't talk about that.

**Her** – Of course... Professional confidentiality...

**Him** – Sorry.

**Her** – I can't seem to find the waiter...

**Him** – I'll take care of it.

*He stands up.*

**Her** – I'll have another with you. Tell the waiter to put it all on Mr...

*She gestures towards the man across the room who supposedly bought her a drink. He heads offstage. She takes the opportunity to flirt with the man across the room. Her companion returns with two Bloody Marys and sits down.*

**Him** – Here you go.

**Her** – Well, cheers!

**Him** – Cheers!

*He raises his glass to drink.*

**Her** – Oh, I think someone's noticed you.

**Him** – Sorry?

*She nods towards a woman in the audience.*

**Her** – Haven't you noticed? She's been staring at you...

**Him** – Are you sure?

*He looks toward the woman in the audience, and she takes the opportunity to switch their glasses.*

**Her** – If things don't work out with me, you could always give her a try... She looks more your type.

**Him** – Why not...

**Her** – Here's to your next victim!

*They clink glasses and drink.*

**Him** – Thanks for the cocktail.

**Her** – Forgive my curiosity, but I'm a little intrigued, obviously. This is the first time I've met a hitman...

**Him** – When you meet a hitman, you know, the first time is often the last...

**Her** – True! I hadn't thought of that.

*He takes another drink.*

**Him** – So, what do you want to know?

**Her** – If you had to kill a woman, how would you go about it?

**Him** – There are a few ways, but for a woman... it requires elegance. Perhaps a bit of strychnine in her drink...

*She smiles.*

**Her** – I know who you're working for.

**Him** – Oh really?

**Her** – And I know you've been hired to kill me.

**Him** – Why would anyone want to kill you?

**Her** – I'm a hitwoman too. They call me Bloody Mary.

**Him** – I see...

**Her** – You're the third hitman they've sent after me. I must say, the other two weren't nearly as entertaining as you.

**Him** – And... what happened to them?

**Her** – They're dead. Quite suddenly...

**Him** – And yet, here you are, still alive...

**Her** – As you can see. In perfect health, in fact.

**Him** – Not for much longer.

**Her** – What makes you say that?

**Him** – I put strychnine in your glass.

**Her** – I swapped our glasses while you were eyeing that floozy.

**Him** – Ah...

**Her** – Don't worry, it'll be over quickly.

*He rummages through his pockets, pulling out two small packets, which he examines.*

**Him** – Oh, damn...

**Her** – What?

**Him** – I used the wrong packet. What I put in your glass – or rather, in the one I drank – wasn't strychnine. It was ant poison...

**Her** – So, you were telling the truth? You've actually got a contract on an ant colony?

**Him** – No, but I've got loads of ants at home, and they're a real nuisance, I assure you.

**Her** – Lucky for you, you're not an ant.

**Him** – And the ants don't seem too affected by it, either.

**Her** – Well then, you may as well finish your poisoned cocktail.

**Him** – I do feel a bit strange, though.

**Her** – Strange, as in... even stranger than usual?

**Him** – Feels like... ants crawling up my arms.

**Her** – Ants?

**Him** – Apparently, it's quite laxative, too. Sorry, but I think I'll have to leave you.

**Her** – It's been a pleasure having a drink with you. Perhaps we'll meet again...

*He gives a weak smile and hurries off.*

### 3. The Gift

*A character is seated at a table. On the table, a bottle of champagne sits in an ice bucket with two glasses. Another character arrives.*

**One** – Have you been here long?

*Two stands up.*

**Two** – Just five minutes. How are you?

*They exchange kisses on the cheek before sitting back down.*

**One** – I'm good. And you?

**Two** – I'm fine.

**One** – Champagne? What's the occasion?

**Two** – Can't you guess?

**One** – Obviously... So, how does it feel to be another year older?

**Two** – You remembered... That's thoughtful.

**One** – Better than that... *(He takes an envelope from his pocket and hands it over.)*  
Here, I didn't know what to get you, so... here you go.

*Two looks a bit hesitant.*

**Two** – An envelope? What is it?

**One** – Open it, and you'll see...

**Two** – Let's toast first, while it's nice and cold.

*He fills their glasses. They toast.*

**One** – Cheers! Happy birthday!

**Two** – Thanks! Cheers!

*They drink.*

**One** – So, aren't you going to open it?

*Two still doesn't look too enthusiastic.*

**Two** – Oh, yes, right... I'm intrigued... What could it possibly be?

*He opens the envelope.*

**One** – I wasn't sure what you'd like, so I thought, at least, this would be an original gift.

**Two** – Don't tell me it's another voucher for a parachute jump or something...

*He pulls a piece of paper from the envelope and looks at it.*

**One** – Well?

**Two** – A voucher... for a hitman.

**One** – Told you... it's original.

**Two** (*still reading*) – “Take out anyone you like...”

**One** – You just need to fill in the name of the target in the blank space.

**Two** – The target?

**One** – The person you'd love to get rid of!

**Two** – Right...

**One** – To make sure there's no mistake, you can also add the address and attach a photo.

**Two** – Got it...

**One** – Do you like it?

**Two** – Yes, it's... It's definitely an original gift.

**One** – So... have you thought of anyone yet?

**Two** – Thought of anyone?

**One** – The name of the person you'll put in the blank space!

**Two** – Oh, I... Not yet... I'll have to think about it...

**One** – Be careful, you only get one name. And you can't do it again. That's clearly stated in the contract.

**Two** – Right...

**One** – Otherwise, it might look suspicious, you see.

**Two** – Of course. Well... Yes, I'll give it some thought...

**One** – Don't take too long, though, okay? It's valid for only a year.

**Two** – Got it...

**One** – They promise to execute the contract within six months of receiving the form. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back!

**Two** – No, no, it's... It's a fantastic gift.

**One** – Surely, you've got someone in mind... If you had to take out just one person on this earth...

**Two** – A name does come to mind but...

**One** – Well, it's specified that it has to be an ordinary person, yeah? Not a sitting president, a TV presenter, or any celebrity. No, someone like family, a friend or...

**Two** – A friend?

**One** – A friend who's betrayed you.

**Two** – Betrayed me?

**One** – Someone who slept with your wife, for instance.

**Two** – Are you telling me my wife is cheating on me?

**One** – Not at all! It's just an example. It could be... I don't know... Your mother-in-law, your boss, your tax inspector... Or even your wife, for that matter.

**Two** – Because she's cheating on me?

**One** – Because you can't stand her anymore! You want your freedom back, but you're not keen on paying alimony for the rest of your life either.

**Two** – I get on very well with my wife.

**One** – Don't tell me there isn't someone in your life who wouldn't make things a bit easier by... not being around.

**Two** – To the point of killing them? No, can't think of anyone...

**One** – You're so frustrating sometimes... I don't know, just... someone who annoys you.

*Two starts to lose patience.*

**Two** – Someone who annoys me... like, say, someone who gives me ridiculous gifts every year for my birthday, for example?

**One** – Do you think I always give you ridiculous gifts?

**Two** – Last year, it was a gift certificate for ten sessions with a psychotherapist! And the year before that, it was a package to arrange my own disappearance!

**One** – And yet, you didn't even use that one.

*A pause.*

**Two** – I'm going to put your name down...

*The other watches him scribbling on the paper, looking uneasy.*

**One** – Now, now, you can still think it over... Shall I top up your glass?

## 4. Unionising

*A character sits at a table with a drink. Another character arrives.*

**One** – Hey. You here on your own?

**Two** – Looks like we're the first ones.

**One** – I'm not sure how many will show up. Honestly, I almost didn't come myself.

**Two** – It's the first meeting. Maybe they couldn't get the word out to everyone in time.

**One** – Just hope the police didn't get the memo.

**Two** – You're not wrong... A Hitmen's Union... I'm not sure it's a good idea.

**One** – True, together we'd be stronger in defending our interests, but still...

**Two** – Our interests?

**One** – Standardising our rates, for example. To avoid undercutting each other with unfair competition.

**Two** – Yeah... But we don't want to be accused of price-fixing either.

**One** – Price-fixing?

**Two** – You're right. Besides... We're already working outside the law.

**One** – Like sex workers.

**Two** – I think they managed to get health insurance and even pension contributions.

**One** – Do you think our profession could ever be state-recognised?

**Two** – Maybe even classified as a public service? After all... Crime has always existed. It always will.

**One** – It's the oldest profession in the world. Older than prostitution.

**Two** – That's true. Was anyone already on the street when Cain killed Abel?

**One** – He should have hired a professional; would've saved him a lot of trouble.

**Two** – Murder is a profession, so why not regulate our activity with laws?

**One** – Yeah... But they'll say it's not democratic. Only the wealthy could afford to kill those who annoy them.

**Two** – Unless it's reimbursed.

**One** – By the National Health Service, you mean?

**Two** – I don't know...

*Pause.*

**One** – So, how's business going?

**Two** – A bit dead at the moment.

**One** – What was your last job?

**Two** – A woman who didn't have the courage to end it herself. She wanted me to take care of it.

**One** – Easy money. At least no one will come complaining.

**Two** – You'd think. Last minute, she changed her mind. Since she had a credit with me, she asked me to kill her husband instead. Now, things seem to be going better for her... *(Pause)* And you?

**One** – I was supposed to take care of an old lady. A bloke had bought her house on a life annuity, and she was already a centenarian.

**Two** – Bad luck... But it's cases like that where our profession really serves a social purpose.

**One** – Right after she signed the contract for me to help her go with dignity, she died bungee jumping.

**Two** – Bungee jumping?

**One** – Her grandkids gave it to her as a present for her hundredth birthday.

**Two** – And the bungee cord snapped...

**One** – No. Her heart did.

**Two** – Ah, damn.

**One** – So the client wanted a refund.

**Two** – And?

**One** – A contract's a contract.

**Two** – After all, she did die.

**One** – He wouldn't listen. Instead of killing the old woman, I had to get rid of the client.

**Two** – Killing your clients is never good for business.

**One** – That's why in cases like these, a union could help resolve business disputes...

*A pause. A police siren is heard in the background.*

**Two** – Ah, I don't think we'll be alone after all...



## 5. Eulogy

*Two characters sit at a table, looking sombre. Silence.*

**One** – So, that's another one gone.

**Two** – He'll be missed.

**One** – It's always the best ones who go first.

**Two** – Yes... (*Pause*) Although, in his case, I'm not sure we can really say he was one of the best...

**One** – True, but... a colleague is a colleague. We're in such a tough line of work.

**Two** – And so underappreciated.

**One** – And yet, he was an endearing chap, all the same.

**Two** – Yes.

**One** – I didn't quite get it. How exactly did he die?

**Two** – Work-related accident.

**One** – An accident?

**Two** – He accidentally swallowed the poison meant for one of his targets.

**One** – Oh no... What kind of poison?

**Two** – You won't believe it, but from what I heard... it was ant poison.

**One** – Ants?

**Two** – Yep...

*Pause.*

**One** – No, he definitely wasn't the best.

**Two** – You could even say he tarnished the professional image we'd like our trade to have.

**One** – Yes, it was time for him to stop.

**Two** – How many times did I tell him to switch professions? It was obvious he wasn't cut out for this.

**One** – You've no idea the kind of blunders he pulled.

**Two** – I heard once, when he was supposed to kill a woman's husband, he ended up poisoning her lover instead.

**One** – How did that turn out?

**Two** – Well, they accused the cuckolded husband of killing his rival, and he ended up in prison.

**One** – In a way, he still managed to get rid of her husband for her.

**Two** – Yes... but her lover was dead too.

**One** – That man was a disgrace to our profession.

**Two** – Really, there should be some kind of training.

**One** – With a diploma.

**Two** – And a Guild Council, to exclude the black sheep.

**One** – Well, at least he won't harm anyone else.

**Two** – No.

*Pause.*

**One** – He was kind, though.

**Two** – Kind but dim.

**One** – Yes...

*They finish their drinks.*

## 6. The Saviour

*A character sits casually at a table, with a carafe and a glass in front of him. He opens a newspaper. Another character enters, holding a gun and trying not to be seen, chewing gum. The first character doesn't notice him, as he's hidden behind his newspaper. The man with the gun aims but suddenly chokes on his gum and starts coughing. He struggles and gasps. The other character notices, puts down his newspaper, and rushes to help, patting him on the back.*

**One** – Are you alright?

*The man with the gun doesn't respond, continuing to choke. The other performs the Heimlich manoeuvre, standing behind him and applying pressure to his chest. The man finally spits out the gum and catches his breath.*

**One** – Feeling better?

**Two** – I swallowed my gum the wrong way.

**One** – Well, the important thing is that you're okay now.

**Two** – If you hadn't been here... (*He coughs a bit more.*) And hadn't known what to do.

**One** – It's called the Heimlich manoeuvre. Supposedly, that's what you do in these situations. I saw it on TV. First time I've ever tried it. Looks like it works.

**Two** – You saved my life.

**One** – Let's not overdo it.

**Two** – No, no...

**One** – Would you like something to drink, to help settle you?

**Two** – I'll try not to swallow it wrong...

*The other pours him a glass from the carafe. Still holding the gun in his right hand, he grabs the glass with his left and drinks thirstily.*

**Two** – That's better.

**One** – Good, good... (*Pause*) But, if I may ask... why are you holding a gun?

**Two** – Oh, the gun... I...

**One** – Were you planning to rob this café?

**Two** – Well...

**One** – A small neighbourhood café like this... I doubt there's much in the till... Risking jail time for such a small amount of money ...

**Two** – Of course...

**One** – If you're temporarily short on cash, I can help you out.

**Two** – You'd do that? I mean... No, I can't accept, but...

**One** – But what? It's no trouble, honestly...

*Pause.*

**Two** – Actually, I'm a hitman. I was here to kill you.

**One** – Really? And why's that?

**Two** – Nothing personal, I assure you... It's just my job, that's all.

**One** – I understand...

**Two** – Yes... But now that you've saved my life... It does present a bit of a dilemma, naturally...

**One** – I'm really sorry to be causing you problems... Maybe I shouldn't have...

**Two** – No, no, but... (*Pause*) You're a decent sort, aren't you?

**One** – I do what I can to help others...

**Two** – Why would anyone want to kill someone like you?

**One** – I was hoping you might be able to tell me.

**Two** – Our clients don't always tell us their motives. They're only interested in results... And for us, it's about getting paid. Sometimes it's better not to know, really.

**One** – Mustn't be an easy job.

**Two** – You're so nice... I understand how, over time, that might annoy some people... But to actually put a contract on you...

**One** – I don't want to be a bother. Do what you have to do...

**Two** (*annoyed*) – Well, yes, but now you've saved my life!

**One** – I'm sorry.

**Two** – Say “sorry” one more time, and I'll smack you.

**One** – Apologies, I just... So, what now?

**Two** – I don't know... I need to think... A contract is a contract...

*He puts his gun on the table and starts massaging his right arm.*

**One** – You alright?

**Two** – Yeah, but I don't know what's up... My arm's been feeling a bit off since this morning...

**One** – Off, how?

**Two** – Like... numb.

**One** – Do you have any issues with erectile function?

**Two** – Erectile function?

**One** – Sorry, I meant speech problems?

**Two** – No more than usual.

**One** – Vision issues?

**Two** – Now that you mention it, things have been a bit blurry lately...

**One** – That's not something to mess around with. You might be having a stroke.

**Two** – A stroke?

**One** – A cerebrovascular accident. The symptoms fit. I hope it's not that, but best not take chances. I'll call emergency services...

**Two** – Are you sure?

**One** – Strokes are one of the leading causes of death in France. The first few hours are crucial. If it's caught early, you can avoid lasting damage. (*He dials.*) On hold... You alright?

**Two** – Fine... I came here to kill you, and in the last five minutes, you've saved my life twice...

**One** – Ah... (*He notices something under the table.*) Third time's the charm... Don't move...

*He kicks something under the table, bends down, and retrieves a snake, holding it up in front of the other man.*

**Two** – What's that?

**One** – A viper. Quite rare in the city. But it could've killed you...

*The other man is utterly stunned.*

**Two** – I don't even know what to say...

**One** – No need to thank me. It's only natural.

**Two** – I don't want to thank you at all... On the contrary, I'm starting to feel a real urge to kill you...

*The other finally gets someone on the line.*

**One** – Excuse me a moment... Hello, emergency services?

## 7. Duel

*A table and two chairs. One character enters stage left, on high alert. Another character enters stage right, also wary. They're both wearing face masks.*

**One** – You're Mr Martin, right?

**Two** – Err... Yes.

*The first character draws a gun.*

**One** – I'm a hitman, and I've been hired to eliminate you. Sorry...

*The other character also draws a gun.*

**Two** – Battle. I'm a hitman too, and I've got a contract on your head.

*The first character, surprised, takes off his mask.*

**One** – Mike?

**Two** (*also taking off his mask*) – Jim?

**One** – I thought I recognised your voice.

*They lower their weapons and exchange a friendly kiss on the cheek.*

**Two** – So, how's it going?

**One** – Not bad. I moved down South. But I still take the odd job in the capital.

**Two** – Right... That explains why we haven't seen you much around here. Business good in the South?

**One** – Yes, there's plenty of work. But a lot of amateurs too. People tend to handle things with family or friends. It's rare they call in a true professional.

**Two** – And half the time, they end up in prison.

**One** – Exactly... And you?

**Two** – Not bad. It's a bit slow at the moment, but...

**One** – People are relying on this epidemic to do the job for them, free of charge.

**Two** – It's true, the retirement home and life annuity market is practically dead.

**One** – Indeed... It's a crisis for our profession as well.

**Two** – And we don't get any help from the government.

**One** – Anyway, all well and good, but what do we do now?

**Two** – If we start shooting each other, where will it end?

**One** – True, but a contract is a contract.

**Two** – You're right.

*They each raise their guns, pointing them at each other.*

**One** – Nice seeing you one last time, mate.

**Two** – You too...

*They pull the trigger at the same time, and we hear two muffled gunshots. They collapse together.*

## 8. Bad Luck

*A character sits at a table with one full glass and one empty one. Next to him is a bucket with a bottle of champagne. Another character arrives.*

**One** – You know how to whistle, don't you?

**Two** – You just put your lips together and blow

**One** – A password for film buffs...

**Two** – *To Have and Have Not*, a classic. I'll pour you some.

**One** – Gladly.

*The other pours him a glass. They toast.*

**Two** – To our contract.

**One** – I haven't agreed to anything yet. What's the job exactly?

**Two** – To kill someone.

**One** – I'm a hitman. That's usually why I'm hired. But who do you want to get rid of?

**Two** – Myself.

**One** – Sorry?

**Two** – Yes, I know, it's probably unusual, but after all, what difference does it make to you?

**One** – None, I suppose.

**Two** – It actually has advantages. The victim's willing, no one will complain, and you're guaranteed no trouble.

**One** – In our line of work, you're never guaranteed anything, you know. The question is... why don't you do it yourself?

**Two** – Because I don't have the courage, plain and simple.

**One** – I understand. Killing someone else is one thing. Killing yourself is another. If I ever wanted to end it, I think I'd call in a colleague.

**Two** – Plus, I don't want to hurt my loved ones, you understand. Suicide is always such a burden for those left behind. “Why didn't I see it coming?” “If only I'd known, could I have stopped it?”

**One** – Of course.

**Two** – An accident, or even a murder, is much easier for them to handle.

**One** – I have to admit, we're getting more and more requests like yours. At first, it was hard for me, but... When you can be of service...



**Two** – You'll be doing me a great favour, truly.

**One** – If I may ask... Why?

**Two** – Just weariness, really... The sense that what I was meant to do on this earth is behind me.

**One** – And if you change your mind?

**Two** – Unfortunately, every day I feel more certain about it.

**One** – Well, if you do change your mind, just send me a text.

**Two** – Alright.

*He takes an envelope from his pocket and slides it across the table.*

**Two** – Here you go, as agreed.

**One** – Very well.

**Two** – Aren't you going to count it?

**One** – Where you're going, what would you do with a few euros you hadn't given me?

**Two** – True.

**One** – You seem like a nice chap. I'll be a bit sad to...

**Two** – You seem rather nice yourself. And all things considered, I'm glad it's you handling it...

**One** – As I mentioned, I give myself a month to complete the contract. So it could be tomorrow or next month. You won't know the day, the hour, or the place...

**Two** – And what if something happens to you in the meantime?

**One** – Happens?

**Two** – If you die before I do.

**One** – That's unlikely, but in that case, I'm afraid you'd have to keep living a bit longer.

**Two** – Then take good care of yourself.

*The other stands up, makes a farewell gesture, and leaves. The one who remains finishes his drink. We hear the screech of tyres followed by a crash.*

**Two** – Oh, damn. That's the third one this week...

## 9. April Fool's Day

*Two chairs and a table with a carafe and a glass. One character enters wearing a face mask. Another arrives, also wearing a mask. After a moment's hesitation, the second character addresses the first with a conspiratorial look.*

**One** – Fools, they dare anything...

**Two** – That's how you recognise them.

**One** – What a stupid password.

**Two** – Indeed.

**One** – Right. As I said, payment is upfront.

*The other hands him an envelope.*

**Two** – Here you go.

**One** – What's the name of the target?

**Two** – John Smith.

**One** – Well, that's odd.

**Two** – What is?

**One** – Oh, nothing... Actually, no, I probably shouldn't say this because you're not supposed to know my name, but... It's a namesake.

**Two** – A namesake?

**One** – My name's John Smith too. I mean, it's a pretty common name...

**Two** – It's not a namesake.

**One** – I'm telling you, my name's John Smith too.

**Two** – Yes. And you're the one to be eliminated.

**One** – Me?

**Two** – Yes, you.

**One** – You're hiring me to kill myself?

**Two** – Precisely.

**One** – But why?

**Two** – A contract is a contract, isn't it? And I've paid you...

**One** – Right.

**Two** – Here, I even brought the poison.

*He hands him a packet.*

**One** – What's this?

**Two** – Ant poison.

**One** – Right.

**Two** – I can count on you, can't I?

**One** – Of course...

*He walks off. The other pauses, bewildered. He sits down, thinks for a moment, then pours the packet's contents into a glass, adds water, stirs, and prepares to drink. The other character returns, laughing, mask off.*

**One** – April Fool!

*The one sitting snaps out of his stupor and recognises him.*

**Two** – You're such an idiot, Bob.

## 10. Memoirs

*He is sitting at a table, a notebook in front of him. He looks thoughtful. She enters.*

**Her** – You alright? You look a bit... strange.

**Him** – I was thinking.

**Her** – Oh... That must be it... (*Pause*) So, what were you thinking about?

**Him** – I was wondering if... I should write my memoirs.

**Her** – Sorry?

**Him** – My memoirs...

**Her** – Your memoirs?

**Him** – Yeah, my memoirs. The story of my life.

**Her** – Are you feeling alright?

**Him** – Yes, perfectly fine. Why?

**Her** – I don't know... since you're talking about writing your memoirs.

**Him** – I didn't say I wanted to write my will, I said I wanted to write my memoirs.

**Her** – Alright...

**Him** – One can want to write their memoirs without being on their deathbed. Even their will, for that matter.

**Her** – Well, still... Isn't it a bit early for memoirs?

**Him** – When should I write my memoirs? When I'm dead? Or when I have Alzheimer's?

**Her** – Are you worried you have memory problems?

**Him** – I didn't say I have memory problems! I said I wanted to write my memoirs!

**Her** – It's just that you mentioned Alzheimer's...

**Him** – All I'm saying is that to write one's memoirs, one needs memory.

**Her** – Well, you also need to have interesting stories to tell.

**Him** – And you think I don't?

**Her** – Let's say you do... But do you think anyone would be interested?

**Him** – Thanks for the encouragement...

**Her** – I just mean, you're not Churchill. You didn't save the world from the Nazis.

**Him** – Fine, I didn't save the world, but I've had a few experiences, all the same.

**Her** – Oh, really? When?

**Him** – I don't know... Maybe before I met you.

**Her** – Right.

**Him** – Of course, it depends on how it's told. Even if they're just anecdotes, if they're well-told...

*Pause.*

**Her** – And... will you talk about me?

**Him** – I don't know... Not necessarily.

**Her** – You're going to write your memoirs and not mention me?

**Him** – Of course, I'll mention you.

**Her** – So, you will talk about me.

**Him** – Yes.

**Her** – And what are you going to say about me?

**Him** – I don't know yet.

**Her** – Well, I'd like to know, if you don't mind.

**Him** – I haven't even started writing, and you're already censoring me?

**Her** – It's my life, isn't it? And what if I don't like what you write about me?

**Him** – Then you could write your own memoirs! That way, people could compare, and form their own opinions.

**Her** – Oh, so you don't think I could write my memoirs, is that it?

**Him** – I didn't say that.

**Her** – But that's what you're implying. And you're also implying that my life isn't as interesting as yours.

**Him** – Your life? But we've been living together for years!

**Her** – Yes, but you're saying the most interesting things happened to you before we met.

**Him** – Yeah, maybe so.

**Her** – I've had interesting experiences before meeting you too, you know?

**Him** – Oh really? Like what?

**Her** – I can't think of any right now, but I'm sure if I gave it some thought...

**Him** – Right, sure...

**Her** – You're the one writing your memoirs; you've had time to think about it. I haven't.

**Him** – Fine... Think about it. And if anything comes to you, let me know. Meanwhile, I'm going to go write my memoirs somewhere else, since I clearly can't concentrate here.

*He stands up.*

**Her** – Concentrate. Oh, please... (*She looks at the paper he left on the table and reads.*) “Memoirs of a Hitman”... What's that supposed to mean?

**Him** – It's the title.

**Her** – But you're not a hitman.

**Him** – Yes, I am.

**Her** – All these years we've been together, you were a hitman?

**Him** – Yep.

**Her** – I thought you were a plumber.

**Him** – That was my cover...

**Her** – Are there other things you haven't told me?

**Him** – You'll just have to read my memoirs...

**Her** – Fine... And you can read mine!

*He leaves. She sits in his place, takes out a sheet of paper and a pen, and starts thinking.*

**Her** – Now, where should I begin... Oh, yes, that's good. “Memoirs of a Call Girl”...

*She begins to write.*

## 11. Bella

*A character is sitting at a table. Another character arrives, wearing dark sunglasses, and addresses him.*

**One** – “The long sobs of the violins of autumn...”

**Two** – “... soothe my heart with a monotonous languor.”

**One** – That'll do. But it's not "soothe"; it's "wound."

**Two** – Pardon?

**One** – “Wound my heart with a monotonous languor.”

**Two** – Oh, right...

**One** – Take a seat.

*The other sits down.*

**Two** – It's a bit daft as a password, if you ask me.

**One** – And why's that?

**Two** – Everyone knows the second line.

**One** – Not you, apparently...

**Two** – Sorry, I didn't realise hitmen were so particular about Baudelaire's poetry.

**One** – It's Verlaine.

**Two** – Right...

**One** – I'm listening.

**Two** – I want someone... removed.

**One** – Yes, that's usually why I get called... What's this person's name?

**Two** – Bella.

**One** – Bella?

**Two** – She's a dog.

**One** – Look, that's none of my business. But I'd prefer we avoid sexist remarks. I can't stand them.

**Two** – No, I mean... she's really a dog.

**One** – A dog? You mean an animal?

**Two** – Yes. A dog. A female one.

*The other character stands, ready to leave.*

**One** – Sorry, but we do have a certain code in our profession. We never harm animals.

**Two** – Wait... I'll pay double.

*Intrigued, the other character sits back down.*

**One** – Why do you want this poor creature dead?

**Two** – If you knew her, you wouldn't say “poor creature,” believe me.

**One** – Tell me about it...

**Two** – She was my wife's dog.

**One** – Was?

**Two** – My wife's dead.

**One** – The dog?

**Two** – My wife!

**One** – Sorry.

**Two** – No need to apologise... I'm the one who killed her.

**One** – And... why, if I may ask?

**Two** – Actually... it was more of an accident.

**One** – An involuntary manslaughter, then?

**Two** – Let's just say... an unconscious slip.

**One** – I see.

**Two** – The three of us were out walking along a cliff...

**One** – The three of you?

**Two** – With Bella.

**One** – Ah, yes...

**Two** – I gave her a slight accidental nudge, she slipped, and fell to the bottom.

**One** – And the police didn't question you?

**Two** – Not the police, no. But Bella saw everything. And since then...

**One** – What?

**Two** – She stares at me.

**One** – She stares at you?

**Two** – With an accusing look.

**One** – I see.



**Two** – You know that Bible story. “The eye was in the grave and watched Cain.”

**One** – That rings a vague bell. Although in my line of work, you know, the Bible isn't exactly my bedtime reading.

**Two** – Well, Bella is my Cain. All day long, she fixes me with her gaze. It's become unbearable.

**One** – I understand.

**Two** – I'm not sure you do. If this keeps up, I might do something drastic.

**One** – You could take care of it yourself. You did kill your wife.

**Two** – Yes, but I'm scared.

**One** – Scared?

**Two** – There's something supernatural about it, I swear. She's not just a dog. She's...

**One** – What?

**Two** – That look... Bella's eyes... It's my wife's stare.

*A pause.*

**One** – You've managed to give me the creeps too. And in my job, I've seen it all, believe me...

**Two** – Please, get rid of Bella for me, I'm begging you.

**One** – I'm really sorry, but... I don't do reincarnations.

**Two** – But what am I going to do?

**One** – I don't know... Become a dog?

*He stands and leaves. The other character sits quietly for a moment.*

**Two** – A dog... Woof... Woof, woof...

## 12. Signatures

*A man and a woman sit at a table facing the audience, each with a stack of books, like at a signing event. The man's book is titled Memoirs of a Hitman, and the woman's is titled Memoirs of a Call Girl.*

**Him** – You could've at least come up with a different title...

**Her** – Why me?

**Him** – Because I actually was a hitman!

**Her** – How do you know I wasn't a call girl too...?

**Him** – Right.

**Her** – And how do I know you really were a hitman?

**Him** – Either way, I was the one who thought of writing my memoirs first.

**Her** – We'll see whose book sells better.

*A pause.*

**Him** – Not many people here so far.

*Silence.*

**Her** – Have you even read it?

**Him** – Read what?

**Her** – My book!

**Him** – No. I'm not about to buy it, am I?

*A pause.*

**Her** – Here, I'll give you a copy.

**Him** – Some gift. It's not selling anyway.

**Her** – Fine, I'll even sign it for you.

*She writes a few words on the title page and signs it. He takes the book and reads the dedication.*

**Him** – That's sweet...

**Her** – It's what I think. And you?

**Him** – What about me?

**Her** – Aren't you going to sign yours for me?

*He takes a book from his stack and writes a dedication. He hands her the book, and she opens it.*

**Her** – That's sweet too...

**Him** – I didn't mean it... (*She scowls.*) Oh, come on, don't be silly!

*They each start reading the other's book.*

**Her** – Funny. After all these years together, I feel like we haven't lived the same life.

**Him** – Yes, I feel exactly the same...

**Her** – Yours sounds thrilling.

**Him** – Less so than yours.

**Her** – So, we've lived an exciting life together... just not the same one.

**Him** – At least we'll have something to talk about till the end of our days.

**Her** – Yes...

*Music.*

**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  
Hom 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  
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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Avignon – November 2024  
ISBN 978-2-38602-274-6  
<https://comediatheque.net/>  
Play available for free download