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The Worst Best Man Ever

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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Fred and Clara are getting married in a few hours. But Max and Zoe, a married couple heading for divorce, are about to turn their happy occasion into a free-for-all. When you get married, choose your witnesses carefully...

Characters:
Fred: the groom-to-be
Clara: the bride-to-be
Max: Zoe's husband, and Fred's best man
Zoe: Max's wife, and Clara's maid of honour

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Day 1

A comfortable living room. Clara enters in a dressing gown, a towel wrapped around her hair, searching for something.

Clara – Where have I put my phone now...? *(A phone rings under a cushion.)* There it is... *(She answers.)* Hello, Mum... Yes, everything's fine. How are you two? Raining there, is it? Well, they say rain on your wedding day brings good luck... Yes, we'll see you at the ceremony tomorrow, as arranged. Eleven o'clock is perfect... No, I promise we won't do anything stupid tonight, and we won't be too late to bed. Yes, I know, tomorrow's the big day. Have I thought it through? Mum, I'm getting married tomorrow! It's a bit late for second thoughts, isn't it? I'd better go. Zoe will be here any minute and I'm not ready. Love you too. Give Dad a kiss for me.

Fred comes in wearing a loud floral shirt and shorts.

Fred – Your mum?

Clara – My mum... Are you going out dressed like that?

Fred – It's my last night as a bachelor, not a job interview. And are you going out dressed like that?

Clara – Just don't wear those clothes to the wedding. I might have trouble saying yes.

Fred – Even in a dinner jacket, I'll be afraid you'll say no right up to the last second.

Clara hugs him tenderly.

Clara – I'm joking... You know I'd marry you in shorts and flip-flops without a second thought.

Fred – I still don't know why.

Clara – Maybe because I love you. Has that occurred to you?

Fred – An out-of-work actor...

Clara – You're not out of work, you're an estate agent.

Fred – A freelance estate agent, with no clients at the moment.

Clara – That will change. I believe in you.

Fred – Thank you.

Clara – And you? Sure you want to spend the rest of your life with a pharmacist? Wouldn't you rather be a wandering actor, with a different girlfriend in every town, like Max?

Fred – A wandering actor... You sound like your mother.

Clara – I was being ironic...

Fred – It's true, though. Being a doctor sounds more respectable than being an actor... or an estate agent.

Clara – A pharmacy is closer to a grocery shop than a hospital, believe me.

Fred – It's a vocation, isn't it?

Clara – In a way... As a little girl, I loved playing shop. I used to sell buttons. My parents would never have let me open a little shop selling buttons, so I became a pharmacist. Just like them.

Fred – And now they've handed over the pharmacy. And the flat above it.

Clara – At least we don't have rent to pay. We've got our own place.

Fred – Our place... More like your place.

Clara – It'll be practical for me. I'll only need to go downstairs to work.

Fred – Right... Still, it's amazing. Even up here you can smell the pharmacy.

Clara – I've lived with it my whole life; I don't even notice it anymore. But if it bothers you, we can always move in a few years.

Fred – Actually, I find the smell quite reassuring. Living over a pharmacy makes me feel protected from every disease. As if nothing bad could happen here. *(He kisses her.)* Anyway, what did your mother want?

Clara – To make sure my last night as a single woman wouldn't end at the police station or the hospital.

Fred – Your parents are as cheerful as ever.

Clara – They've organised the entire wedding, so let's not complain.

Fred – Yes, and they've paid for everything.

Clara – Traditionally, the bride's parents pay for the wedding. A modern-day dowry, in a way...

Fred – Well, they certainly haven't bankrupted themselves. It's practically a private ceremony.

Clara – That's what people say about funerals. For weddings, I think it's called 'just the two of us and our witnesses'. But that's what we wanted, isn't it?

Fred – At least, that's what your parents wanted. They didn't even invite their own family. And since they're footing the bill, I didn't dare invite mine...

Clara – Oh, stop it. You're not even on speaking terms with your family. That's probably why you didn't invite them, isn't it?

Fred – Your parents don't seem to have much faith in this marriage.

Clara – At least you won't see them every day. Now they've retired, they live a good hour away.

Fred – You're right.

Clara – We can always visit them on weekends. It'll be like having a country house.

Fred – When you say weekends... You mean every weekend?

Clara – Let's say every other weekend. Right, I need to go get dressed.

Fred – I have to collect our honeymoon tickets from the travel agent. I didn't even know travel agents still existed...

Clara – The honeymoon is their gift, too. And my parents aren't exactly comfortable booking things online.

They leave.

Max and Zoe enter. Max is holding a gift-wrapped package.

Max – They're not here?

Zoe – Clara left me a message. She's still getting ready.

Max sets the package down.

Max – And Fred?

Zoe – I don't know... She told me to wait for them here.

Max – And you've got the keys to their place?

Zoe – She asked me to water the plants while they're on their honeymoon.

Max – Well, at least we can do them a favour. Our wedding present isn't exactly generous. A portable heater! And we're supposed to be their closest friends...

Zoe – Yes, but we can't afford more at the moment...

Max – How much?

Zoe – Twenty euros.

Max – Twenty euros?

Zoe – It was the display model. Half-price.

Max – In the middle of summer? I'm not surprised they wanted to get rid of it...

Zoe – The only thing cheaper was a lottery ticket.

Max – You're joking, but Fred and I used to play the lottery together when we were at drama school.

Zoe – You must not have had much faith in your acting careers...

Max – We always said that if we won, we'd buy a theatre and do whatever we wanted...

Zoe – But you never hit the jackpot...

Max – We always played the same numbers. Our birthdays.

Zoe – Do you still play?

Max – Now that he's with Clara, we don't see each other much... Maybe he still plays on his own.

Zoe – It's not too late to get him a ticket.

Max – Then again, you know the saying: lucky at games, unlucky in love.

Zoe – Oh, yes, people say that... Though nobody under sixty, normally.

Max – Giving a lottery ticket as a wedding gift... I'm not sure that's appropriate.

Zoe – Why not? They're almost certain to lose. Unlucky at games, lucky in love.

Max – Oh, right, it works the other way around too...

Zoe – What would you rather have? Luck with money or luck in love?

Max – I don't know... They say money doesn't buy happiness, but...

Zoe – Have you got many more worn-out sayings like that?

Max – Honestly... I just think they're not a good match.

Zoe – Who?

Max – They're an odd match, aren't they? He was an actor, she's a pharmacist.

Zoe – I thought he was in real estate now.

Max – It's a shame. He was a good actor. An estate agent... What a waste.

Zoe – There's no shame in honest work... Oh, brilliant, now you've infected me. I'm talking in clichés too.

Max – Come on... Do you really think anyone becomes an estate agent out of passion?

Zoe – Why not?

Max – It's the only job you can do without any qualifications, that's why!

Zoe – Yeah... Acting too, when you think about it.

Max – No... He's obviously marrying her for her money.

Zoe – And why do you think she's marrying him?

Max – Because he's good-looking. Like me. But give him a few more years...

Zoe – May I remind you we're supposed to be helping with their wedding?

Max – Exactly. If we think they're making a terrible mistake, surely we have a duty to stop them?

Zoe – I don't think that's what being a wedding witness means. I'll go and see what Clara's doing. Please don't say any of that to their faces, all right?

She exits. Max looks at his phone.

Fred enters.

Fred – Hi, Max.

Max – Hi, Fred.

They greet each other with a friendly hug.

Fred – So? You haven't planned some terrible prank for tonight, have you? I do need to be able to stand up at my wedding tomorrow.

Max – Don't worry. We'll just meet up with some mates and have a few drinks...

Fred – I'm glad you're here.

Max – We don't see each other much anymore, do we?

Fred – Yeah... When was the last time?

Max – I can't really remember...

Fred – Oh, I remember. Last New Year's Eve, at Clara's parents' holiday house. We all spent the evening together.

Max – Oh, maybe.

Fred – We all drank quite a lot...

Max – Yeah.

Fred – So I have to get married just so we can grab a drink together...?

Max – Ever since you stopped acting and started wearing a suit...

Fred – Not tonight, as you probably noticed.

Max – So, how's the estate agency business?

Fred – Quiet so far. I'm just starting out. I need to build up a client base.

Max – If you're going to be unemployed, you might as well stay an actor...

Fred – Thanks for the encouragement...

Max – Are you sure you're not making a mistake?

Fred – Now you mention it, I should probably have chosen a different best man.

Max – Yeah... That's exactly what Zoe was saying.

Fred – And you? Working on anything interesting at the moment?

Max – Are we still talking about work here?

Fred – Obviously. You're married now...

Max – I've just auditioned for a leading role. I'm waiting to hear back.

Fred – What's it for?

Max – I'd rather not talk about it until it's confirmed. Don't want to jinx it.

Fred – Still superstitious... I'm going to the tobacco shop. Want to come?

Max – Since when do you smoke?

They exit. Zoe returns with Clara. Clara is now dressed to go out, wearing a rather sexy outfit.

Zoe – Are you sure you're going out dancing dressed like that? There'll be a riot.

Clara – I'm getting married, not joining a convent.

Zoe – Fine, I'll be your bodyguard then.

Clara – I just hope our men will be as sensible as we are...

Zoe – Yes, me too... Well, I'm mostly talking about Max...

Clara – Should I be worried?

Zoe – I don't know... Men, you know... Do you completely trust Fred?

Clara – It's his last night of freedom. I'm not going to stop him enjoying himself a little.

Zoe – After tomorrow, he won't have much fun with a woman like you... Remember that holiday we took after we left school?

They laugh.

Clara – A best friend is like a lawyer or a priest. What you hear in confidence stays in confidence...

Zoe – And you? Have you ever cheated on Fred?

Clara – Surely it only counts as cheating after you're married? Before that, it doesn't count.

Zoe – So you did cheat on him!

Clara – I didn't say that...

Zoe – Of course not.

Clara – And you?

Zoe – Not since we got married...

Clara – I see...

Zoe – Besides, it depends on how you define cheating.

They laugh again.

Clara *(noticing the package)* – What's that?

Zoe – Oh, just a little gift...

Clara – You didn't have to. I know things aren't easy for you at the moment...

Zoe – Don't worry, we didn't break the bank...

Clara *(indicating her outfit)* – Do you really think it's too much?

Zoe – No, but since you've set the bar so high, I'm going to pop home and change. Pick me up later?

Clara – OK... I still have a few things to sort out for tomorrow...

Zoe – See you later...

Zoe exits. Clara reapplies her lipstick. Max enters.

Max – Hi...

Clara looks surprised and a little awkward.

Clara – Hi, Max... Didn't you run into Zoe? She just left...

Max – I must have missed her.

Clara – I thought you were with Fred...

Max – Yes, but Fred needed to collect the honeymoon tickets. He said he'd be about an hour.

He glances around the room.

Clara – Did you forget something?

Max – Yeah... My phone... *(His phone rings in his pocket)* Oh, silly me. It was in my pocket.

Clara – Aren't you going to answer?

Max – It's probably Zoe.

Clara – So, you're not answering...

Max – I'll see her at home later. No rush. What about you?

Clara – Me?

Max – Are you in a rush?

Clara – I'm getting married tomorrow, so... no, I've got all the time in the world.

He undresses her with his eyes.

Max – You look stunning...

Clara – Thank you...

An awkward silence.

Max – Listen, about what happened between us on New Year's Eve...

Clara – If you don't mind, I'd rather not talk about it. Now's really not the time.

Max – Of course...

Clara – You haven't told him, have you?

Max – No, obviously not.

Clara – We're not married yet. It doesn't count, does it?

Max – Of course.

Clara – That's exactly what Zoe was saying.

Max – She said that...?

Clara – No, well... not like that. She was speaking generally...

Max – No, no, but she's right. As long as you haven't vowed fidelity...

Clara – Exactly...

Max – Then again...

Clara – What?

Max – You're not getting married until tomorrow.

Clara – That's true...

They fall into each other's arms.

Max – Before the wedding, it's not really cheating.

He kisses her.

Clara – But you're married.

Max – Don't worry. I'll carry that burden for both of us.

They kiss again, passionately.

Clara – But this is the last time, agreed?

Max – Of course...

They collapse onto the sofa together.

Blackout.

Max and Fred return.

Max – See, we behaved ourselves...

Fred – Yeah... I'm almost disappointed.

Max – We can always go back, if you want.

Fred – No, I'm kidding. We need to be up early tomorrow...

Max – Looks like they're not back yet...

Fred – No.

Max – Where did they go?

Fred – Clubbing, I think.

Max – Clubbing... And you're not worried? Not even a little?

Fred – I trust her... Don't you trust Zoe?

Max – Yeah, of course I do, but... you know, a little slip-up can happen, right?

Fred – Maybe after ten years of marriage... But we're getting married tomorrow! Can you imagine a woman cheating on her fiancé the night before their wedding?

Max – No, obviously not... Am I imagining it, or does it smell like medicine in here? Like an old folks' home, you know? My grandmother's place smells like this...

Fred – The pharmacy is just downstairs.

Max – Oh yeah, hard to forget. Doesn't it bother you?

Fred – I'll have to get used to it.

Max – At the same time, that pharmacy smell... it's the smell of money, isn't it?

Fred – You're really annoying, Max...

Max – Sorry. I must be a little drunk after all.

Fred – We were right not to stay too long. That party was seriously depressing.

Max – That's the purpose of a bachelor's last night out: to make the married life ahead seem attractive by comparison. We could have one last drink here.

Fred – For me, it'll be a herbal tea. I need to be in good shape tomorrow.

Max – You're right. Me too.

Fred – Verbena? Chamomile?

Max – On second thought, I'll pass. Unless you have some arsenic.

Fred – There might be some downstairs. Want me to check?

Max – Don't bother.

Silence.

Fred – Even you seemed a bit off tonight. You used to go after anything that moved.

Max – What can I say? I'm a married man now...

Fred – You didn't always talk like that.

Max – Maybe I'm getting too old for it. We're not getting any younger.

Fred – Yes... We met at drama school. We thought we'd become stars.

Max – I haven't given up yet... At least I'm doing the job I always dreamed of. I know why I get up in the morning. And you?

Fred – I never dreamed of being an estate agent, either. But playing extras, tiny parts and advertisements isn't much of a dream anymore.

Max – There's always the theatre...

Fred – One night you're travelling across the country for a single performance, the next you're doing it again in the opposite direction. Then you're sharing a tiny room with four other actors during a festival, with no air conditioning... I'm getting too old for all that.

Max – There are good sides too. You're with your mates.

Fred – And with the girls...

Max – You don't miss even that?

Fred – I'm getting married, Max. Even if Clara's parents have given us somewhere to live, I have to earn a living. Acting isn't a very practical career for a married man.

Max – Is that aimed at me?

Fred – I don't know... What does Zoe think?

Max – She's a teacher, so... at first, having an actor for a husband was fun for her. But since I can't always contribute to the rent, she's starting to get fed up... Yeah, because, believe it or not, we do have to pay rent.

Fred – Exactly. I don't want Clara or her parents supporting me. With no other qualifications, estate agency seemed the only option. At least I'm my own boss, and I can use my acting skills to persuade clients.

Max – It's a shame we don't see each other anymore. We used to be inseparable, didn't we?

Fred – What can I say...? Our lives are different now.

Max – Yeah...

Fred – We can still do a barbecue on the weekends, now and then.

Max – Are you sure you're not making a mistake?

Fred – That's the second time you've asked me that today. I might start taking it the wrong way...

Max – Sorry.

Fred – I'm getting married in a few hours. It's a bit late for that kind of question.

Max – You're not marrying her for her money, are you?

Fred – For God's sake, Max, I love her! Can't you understand that? If she has money, great... And yes, I'm tired of struggling.

Max – So, you're marrying her for her money.

Fred – I'm marrying her for some stability. To start a family.

Max – Right... *(Silence)* Let's play a little game. Imagine you win the lottery, right now. Do you still marry her?

Fred – That's a stupid question...

Max – You've got ten or twenty million in the bank. You can do whatever you want with your life. Buy anything. Do you still marry her? Yes or no?

Fred – Of course I do!

Max – I don't believe you.

Fred – Look, Max, we're not kids anymore. I don't know if I'm making the right choice, but I can't picture you in ten or twenty years, still scrambling for acting jobs, appearing in television shows nobody watches, doing dreadful children's entertainment or performing in retirement homes...

Max – Yeah... Maybe you're the one who's right...

Fred – So let me give you a bit of advice you're free to ignore. You've got a wife who loves you. Try to hold on to her.

Max – Okay.

Fred – On that note, I'm off to bed.

Max – Same here... But don't say I didn't warn you... *(Fred gives him a furious look.)* Look on the bright side. You'll never run out of antidepressants. And if one day you want to end it all...

Fred – Thanks for the encouragement, Max.

Max – Always happy to help.

Fred – If I ever get married again, remind me not to pick the same best man.

They exit.

Zoe and Clara enter.

Zoe – At least we got back after them...

Clara – Yeah, that would've been embarrassing.

Zoe – If I hadn't dragged you away from that gorgeous stranger, you'd be in his bed by now.

Clara – Don't exaggerate...

Zoe – Admit it, he was rather attractive. The classic charmer. He even offered to drive us home in his sports car.

Clara – Sports car? Are you sure? I didn't hear him say that.

Zoe – Something expensive-looking, anyway. I'm hopeless with cars.

Clara – The little old car outside? That was his.

Zoe – Typical. A man promises you a ride in a luxury car, and you end up lying across the back seat of a wreck.

Clara – That's all behind me now.

Zoe – Are you sure you won't regret it?

Clara – I think I've seen enough of the types of guys you find in nightclubs. I want to build something. Start a family.

Zoe – And you're sure he's the one?

Clara – You weren't sure Max was the right one when you married him, were you?

Zoe – Oh, I was… At the time, I was certain.

Clara – And now?

Zoe – Let's say… there are ups… and quite a few downs.

Clara – That makes sense.

Zoe – I don't think he ever understood the idea of a bachelor party. He's just as interested in women now as before we got married.

Clara – Do you think he's cheating on you?

Zoe – I have no proof. But with his job, he's often away. The opportunities are there. Marriage isn't exactly smooth sailing, you know. But you're getting married tomorrow, so I don't want to discourage you.

Clara – Fred won't be like that. He really wants something different...

Zoe – At least he seems to have settled down.

Clara – Yes… I just hope he won't hold it against me someday...

Zoe – Come on, we'd better sleep. Tomorrow's the big day.

Blackout.

Day 2

Max enters, tapping something on his phone. Zoe follows shortly after. He stops, caught off guard.

Zoe – Go on, you can carry on. I'm used to it...

Max – No, it was just an actress I know. She wanted me to rehearse some lines with her for an audition. I said I couldn't today.

Zoe – Of course... And how's Fred? You didn't get him too drunk, I hope?

Max puts down his phone.

Max – We were as good as gold. In fact, we got back before you did...

Zoe – We were bored stiff, too, believe me. What an absurd custom, those last nights out before a wedding.

Max – And you lot? No mischief?

Zoe – A handsome stranger was flirting with me. He offered to drive us home in his sports car.

Max – Oh really?

Zoe – Surprised? I can still turn a few heads too, you know.

Max – Oh, I'm sure of it.

Beat.

Zoe – I tell you a handsome man was flirting with me, and that's all you can say?

Max – I don't know... Are you sure it was a sports car?

Zoe – Pathetic.

Max – I'll see whether Fred has an aspirin. I've still got a headache.

Zoe – It would be shocking if you couldn't find an aspirin in a pharmacist's house.

Max – You know what they say: the shoemaker's children go barefoot.

Zoe gives him a disapproving look. Max exits, forgetting his phone. She hesitates, grabs the phone, types a code, and checks the messages. Whatever she sees doesn't please her.

Clara enters, wearing her wedding dress. Zoe hides Max's phone in her hand.

Clara – I made a small adjustment. The neckline was gaping a bit. What do you think?

Zoe – It's stunning… And so are you! So, it's the big day...

Clara – Yes... The big day... Everyone's been saying that since yesterday. I feel like I'm about to undergo some kind of life-saving operation. A heart transplant or something.

Zoe – Oh, really… That bad?

Clara – I'm a bit on edge, naturally. And I feel like this dress doesn't suit me at all...

Zoe – Are you joking? It fits you like a glove.

Clara – You think so?

Zoe – Absolutely!

Clara – Were you this nervous on your wedding day?

Zoe – I shouldn't tell you this, but I nearly ran away just before the ceremony. I'd even called a taxi.

Clara – No way!

Zoe – Of course not! Besides, I wouldn't have got far in a taxi. They'd have found me in no time...

Clara – Listening to you, one might think it was an arranged marriage.

Zoe – No, of course not. But, to be honest, I'm not sure why Max and I got married in the first place. I think it was mostly to have a party with our friends.

Clara – And the party's over...

Zoe – I don't know why I'm telling you this… on your wedding day… It's awful...

Clara – Don't worry. We all had a bit too much to drink last night. We're all talking nonsense.

Zoe – You're right. You and Fred will be very happy together. You make such a beautiful couple.

Clara – Do you really think so?

Zoe – That's what Max was saying earlier...

Clara – He said that...?

Fred enters with Max and sees the dress.

Fred – Wow… A real princess.

Max – Yes… But technically, the groom's not supposed to see the dress before the wedding...

Fred – Oh, really?

Max – That's what they say. Otherwise, it's bad luck.

Zoe – You can trust him; he's an expert in old wives' tales.

Clara – Where does that superstition come from?

Max – It dates back to the time of arranged marriages. The groom wasn't allowed to see either the dress or the bride before the wedding—just in case he changed his mind after seeing her.

Fred – Good thing we get to see the bride now. Up close, even.

Max – Yes... No chance of being sold something you haven't seen.

Zoe – Unfortunately, after the wedding you often discover you had no idea what you were getting.

Max – Exactly, love is blind...

Zoe – And marriage is an eye-opener.

Fred – Right, we'll leave you to it. Come on, Max, I'll show you my suit. You can tell me if it looks good on me...

Max – I wouldn't miss that for the world.

Fred and Max exit.

Clara – Things seem rather tense between you and Max, don't they?

Zoe – 'A bit tense'? That's putting it mildly. And don't start using your mother's old-fashioned expressions.

Clara – Oh dear… Is it that bad?

Zoe – I looked at his phone. Now I know for sure he's cheating on me.

Clara – Are you really sure?

Zoe shows Clara Max's phone in her hand.

Zoe – Read it: 'One last time, and what fireworks! The grand finale. I'm going to miss you...'

Clara – You go through his phone?

Zoe – Well, yes, obviously.

Clara – Doesn't he have a passcode?

Zoe – It's his birth date.

Clara – Oh, right...

Zoe – You'll experience it. After a few months of marriage, you'll be checking his phone too.

Clara – At least the message suggests it's over. He calls it the grand finale...

Zoe – Yeah... And that's supposed to make me feel better?

Clara – What are you going to do? Are you going to divorce him?

Zoe – What would you do in my place?

Clara – I don't know... I'm getting married today. I'm not exactly an expert on divorce yet.

Zoe – You're right. I shouldn't be talking about this today...

Clara – Maybe it's just a slip-up...

Zoe – Yes, but he's never talked about fireworks with me...

Clara *(distracted)* – I'll just fix this neckline a bit more...

Clara exits.

Max returns, seemingly looking for something.

Zoe *(holding out the phone)* – Is this what you're looking for?

Max *(taking the phone, embarrassed)* – Yes, thanks... *(awkward silence)* Did you give them the gift...?

Zoe – I know everything, Max.

Max – Everything...?

Zoe – About the fireworks. You know? The grand finale...

Max – You went through my phone?

Zoe – That's all you have to say?

Max – I'm sorry, I...

Zoe – We can talk about this after the wedding. We can't let them down today. We'll pretend we're still a happy couple for another day or two.

Max – If that's what you want.

Zoe – So you're not even denying it...

Max – I am, of course...

Zoe – Fireworks...?

Max – It's just an expression, you know me.

Zoe – Yes, unfortunately...

Max – And apparently, you know my passcode too?

Zoe – Your birthday. The same numbers you use for the lottery. You could at least choose a password that's harder to guess!

Max – I don't know what to say...

Zoe – Do I know her?

Max – Who?

Zoe – Don't play dumb with me.

Max – No, you don't know her...

Zoe – I suppose if I did, you wouldn't tell me.

Max – No, probably not. But I swear you don't know her.

Zoe – Of course.

Max – Zoe, listen... It was Fred.

Zoe – Fred?

Max – Fred.

Zoe – You're sleeping with Fred?

Max – No! Of course not! I meant our last night out together.

Zoe – You're taking the piss...

Max – Not at all.

Zoe *(quoting from memory)* – 'One last time, and what fireworks! The grand finale. I'm going to miss you...' And you want me to believe you sent that to Fred?

Max – Why not?

Zoe – That sounds like a love letter!

Max – You know, men can have very close friendships too. You girls... you don't have a monopoly on feelings...

Zoe – Let me see your phone.

Max – What for?

Zoe – I want to check the number. To make sure it really was Fred you sent that to.

He fiddles nervously with his phone.

Max – Sorry, I... I accidentally deleted the message.

Zoe – Right... You really think I'm that stupid.

Max – Not at all...

He keeps staring at the screen of his phone.

Zoe – You could at least wait until I've left before you reply to her. *(He is absorbed in his phone.)* I'm talking to you!

Max – It's not what you think, I swear.

Zoe – Oh really?

Max – It's... It's about the numbers Fred and I used to play together.

Zoe – What numbers?

Max – Our birth dates! You know…

Zoe – And?

Max – I just wanted to check again, to be sure... *(He looks at the screen.)* The numbers came up last night!

Zoe – That's the best excuse you can come up with to change the subject? That's pathetic…

Max shows her the screen on his phone.

Max – Look! The jackpot results. Those are our birthdays!

Zoe looks.

Zoe – Are you sure?

Max – I checked. All the numbers, including the bonus number...

Zoe – That's crazy...

Max – It's unbelievable.

Zoe – You're not joking?

Max – Why would I make something like this up?

Zoe – How much?

Max – Ten million.

Zoe – No way. Ten million?

He hands her the phone again.

Max – Look, it says so right here!

Zoe – Yeah... *(Pause)* But you didn't play, did you?

Max – No, unfortunately. But maybe he did...

Zoe – Who knows... *(Thoughtful)* Ten million...

Max – We should ask him.

Zoe *(snapping back to reality)* – Yeah... But now's not exactly the time, is it?

Max – Oh no? And when will be the right time?

Zoe – I don't know... After the wedding, perhaps.

Fred enters. They both fall silent, freezing in place.

Fred – You both look like you've seen a ghost. Is everything okay?

Max – Fine. You?

Fred – You'll laugh, but I can't seem to find the rings...

Zoe *(distracted)* – No...?

Fred – A little red box with... You haven't found it, have you?

Max – No...

Fred – They were in my pocket when we went out last night. I hope no one stole them...

Zoe – Yeah...

Fred – Oh no, wait, I remember. They're in my bedside drawer. *(Noticing their tense expressions.)* It's not that big a deal, really... I mean... Are you sure you're both okay?

Zoe – Totally fine...

Fred – Well, I'll just go grab them then...

Fred exits.

Max – We have to tell him. If he's won ten million, he has a right to know.

Zoe – If he really has won, he'll figure it out on his own... A couple of hours won't make a difference, right? We'll tell him after the wedding.

Max – Why after?

Zoe – Because it'll be a shock! It'll ruin everything.

Max – Ruin everything? Ten million?

Zoe – A wedding is a once-in-a-lifetime moment. It's about love, not money.

Max – If I'd won ten million, I'd want to know straight away.

Zoe – You're not even sure he played a ticket! Let alone with those numbers!

Max – He went to the tobacco shop yesterday, and he doesn't smoke. Maybe he went to buy a lottery ticket.

Zoe – The day before his wedding?

Max – Why not?

Zoe – Let's assume he did. We'll tell him after. It'll be his wedding gift.

Max – Better than a portable heater, at least.

Zoe – Why do you think it's so urgent to tell him now?

Max – Because it changes everything!

Zoe – Everything?

Max – He's the one who played, not Clara. He's the one who won ten million.

Zoe – Are you saying Fred might decide not to get married?

Max – That's up to him. But it could make him think, right?

Zoe – Oh really? Think about what?

Max – I don't know.

Zoe – So if you'd won the lottery before our wedding, you wouldn't have married me?

Max – I didn't say that...

Zoe – Honestly, Max, you're a real disappointment. A huge disappointment...

Fred returns.

Fred – Found the rings!

Max – Great...

Fred senses the lingering tension.

Fred – I'm telling you, you're acting weird. It's a wedding, not a funeral...

Zoe – No, no, everything's fine, really.

Fred – Let me guess, you've been arguing again?

Max – Let's just say... we don't quite agree on something.

Fred – OK... Want to talk about it?

Zoe – Now's really not the time, Max.

Max – It's about a mate of ours who's about to leave on the trip of a lifetime.

Fred – Just like me, then... Except our honeymoon is only a short trip. Nothing spectacular.

Max – And... right before, he had a colonoscopy.

Fred – A colonoscopy...?

Zoe looks just as stunned.

Max – His wife opened the envelope with the results, and... the results weren't good.

Fred – I see...

Max – So basically, there's nothing to be done. The guy has, at best, a year to live.

Fred – That's awful. Good thing I didn't have a colonoscopy before my honeymoon, or you'd be scaring me to death.

Max – Yeah, sorry about that...

Fred – So what's the disagreement between you and Zoe?

Max – Well... She thinks his wife should hide the results from him until he's back from the trip. So he can really enjoy it, you know?

Fred – Uh, yeah... And you?

Max – I think he deserves to know the truth straight away. What do you think?

Fred – I'm inclined to agree with Zoe. If the man can enjoy another month without worrying, why spoil it?

Max – On the other hand, if he knows it's his last trip, maybe he'd enjoy it even more...

Fred – Enjoy it more? Knowing he's going to die right after?

Max – Exactly! Maybe he wouldn't hold back on spending—he could stay in luxury hotels or extend the trip for a few weeks.

Fred – Yeah... I guess.

Max – I don't know. Imagine if the guy had played the lottery and won. Would you tell him or not?

Fred – Knowing he's going to die of cancer in a few months?

Max – Forget it.

Zoe – Yeah, this story is getting a bit muddled, isn't it?

Max – Speaking of which, remember when we used to play the lottery together?

Fred – Yeah...

Max – Do you still play?

Fred – Sometimes.

Max – And this week, did you play?

Fred – This week... I've had a lot on my mind, honestly.

Max – Oh, damn...

Fred takes a lottery ticket from his pocket.

Fred – Actually, yes, I did find time to put on a ticket. Why?

Max – Oh, nothing, just curious... Did you use the same numbers?

Fred – The same numbers?

Max – Our birth dates!

Clara calls Fred from offstage.

Clara – Fred, can you help me, please?

Fred – Certainly... Excuse me, married life is already calling.

Fred exits. Zoe turns to Max.

Zoe – A colonoscopy?

Max – I improvised...

Zoe – Right after the wedding, I'm filing for divorce.

Max – Because of the lottery?

Zoe – Because you've got a mistress! Did you think I'd swallow that story? You say the message was for Fred, then you 'accidentally' deleted it. Do you think I'm an idiot?

Max – I'm really sorry, I...

Zoe – Don't even try to tell me it was a one-time thing. I know there have been plenty of others before her.

Max – Zoe, I swear...

Zoe – And this lottery thing? It says it all about you. You're incapable of love, Max. How could you even think like that? It's monstrous! When you love someone, you don't just leave them because you've won the lottery.

Max – Are you really so sure about that?

Zoe – Fred is a decent guy. He'd never do that to Clara.

Max – Then what's the harm in telling him before they get married? You said he won't change his mind anyway.

Zoe – So you're going to tell him, then...

Max – I already know he played. I just don't know if he used those numbers. The ticket is in his jacket pocket...

Zoe – And you're planning to go through his pockets?

Max – Not if I can ask him first.

Zoe – This is ridiculous. Let's say he does win. If the money goes to his head, he can always divorce later...

Max – Yes, but then he'd have to share the ten million with her...

Zoe – Rather than with you, is that it?

Max – Those are our birth dates!

Zoe – But he bought the ticket!

Max – It's our number! We've played it hundreds of times before!

Zoe – And you think he'd share it with you, not Clara?

Max – It's the number we always played. We even talked about buying a theatre together if we hit the jackpot!

Zoe – Perhaps he'll marry you, then!

Max – Don't be ridiculous...

Zoe – Listen to yourself, Max. You're delusional. You need help. Actually, you're just jealous, aren't you? I'm starting to believe that message really was for Fred. You think Clara's taking him away from you and you'd do anything to sabotage this wedding.

Max – I'm just saying, when he finds out he's rich, he might not want to get married. That's all...

Zoe – You're pathetic. I can't believe I married someone like you...

Zoe storms out. Fred re-enters, seeing her leave in a huff.

Fred – You're going to have to tell me what's going on, Max. Another fight with Zoe?

Max – It's not about Zoe... Well, yes, but... Actually, it's about you... Well, us...

Fred – You're scaring me now...

Max – No, no, don't worry. It's actually something good...

Fred – You're not about to start talking about colonoscopies again, are you?

A pause.

Max – Remember the numbers we used to play in the lottery?

Fred – What number?

Max – You know! Our lucky number!

Fred – Oh really?

Max – Our birth dates, remember? Both of ours.

Fred – Yeah, maybe.

Max – Maybe?

Fred – I used to play those numbers... but I forgot they were our birth dates.

Max – Were those the numbers you played yesterday?

Fred – Yes.

Max – No way...

Fred – Yes, I'm serious... Why wouldn't it be true?

A pause.

Max – Our numbers finally came up, Fred!

Fred – No way!

Max shoves his phone in Fred's face.

Max – Look, is this the number you played?

Fred looks at the screen.

Fred – Yes.

Fred pulls a ticket out of his pocket and compares the numbers.

Max – Well?

Fred – Yes, it matches...

Max – We've won!

Fred – This... is crazy...

Max – I know...

Fred – But when you say “we”...

Max – Come on, it's my birth date too!

Fred – Yeah... but I'm the one who actually bought the ticket.

Max – We said if we won the jackpot we'd buy a theatre together.

Fred – Oh, really...?

Max – Yeah!

Fred – But I've stopped doing theatre.

Max – Oh, so that's how you're playing it...

Fred – Look, I'm sorry, but...

Max – Fine... I'm disappointed, but...

Fred – Hang on. If it's only a few hundred, that's one thing. How much are we talking about?

Max – Ten million.

Fred – Wow, that's a lot...

Max – Even split in half, that's five million.

Fred – But if I split it with Clara, that leaves me with just 2.5 million...

Clara enters with Zoe.

Clara – We have to leave now or we'll be late. *(She notices their faces.)* What's going on?

Zoe – You told him...?

Max – Yes.

Clara – Told him what?

A pause.

Fred – You won't believe this, but... looks like I've just won ten million in the lottery.

Clara – What?

Fred – Max just told me.

Clara – What is this about?

Max holds his phone up to her face.

Max – Our lucky number. It came up.

Clara *(to Fred)* – And you played it?

Fred shows the ticket.

Fred – I've checked it three times. It's the winning number!

Clara – This is unbelievable... *(She pulls herself together.)* You're joking. It has to be a joke. You think this is the moment?

Fred – It's not a joke, Clara. Max just showed you the lottery results... and here's my winning ticket. The numbers match!

Clara – So... we're rich?

Fred – Ten million...

Clara *(to Zoe)* – You knew, didn't you?

Zoe – I swear I didn't... Well, yes, but...

Fred – It's crazy, isn't it?

Clara – Ten million...? I can hardly take it in... *(Her phone rings. She answers.)* Yes, Mum. You're already at the wedding venue? All right, we're coming... *(She puts her phone away.)* We can talk about this later. My parents are waiting, and so is the person who's supposed to marry us. Shall we go?

Fred – The wedding...?

Clara – Yes, the wedding. You haven't forgotten that we're getting married, even if you've won the lottery?

Fred – No, of course not, but...

Clara – But...?

Fred – I've just won ten million, Clara! I mean, we've won ten million. We can't act as though nothing has happened.

Clara – We're getting married! Isn't this the perfect occasion to celebrate?

Fred – Look, Clara... I'm sorry, but I'm still in shock. I can't think straight.

Clara – What? You're not in the headspace for this...?

Awkward pause.

Zoe – I think what he's trying to say is that now he's rich, he's not sure he wants to get married anymore...

Fred – Of course I still want to marry you! It's just... With ten million, don't you think we could have a different kind of wedding?

Clara – You don't like this wedding?

Fred – The wedding your parents organised? With hardly any guests, as if it were a funeral? And then a honeymoon in a cheap hotel?

Clara – My parents are paying for that trip! Until now, it didn't bother you enough to back out of marrying me.

Fred – No, but imagine the wedding we could have... with ten million!

Clara – We can throw a big party later. For now, my parents are waiting! What should I tell them? That we're not getting married because Fred won the lottery?

Max – Fred's right. You could afford a wonderful wedding now, not just a tiny ceremony and a cheap weekend away!

Clara – You stay out of this! *(To Fred.)* So, you don't want to get married anymore?

Zoe – So, you don't want to marry her anymore just because you've won ten million.

Clara – A bigger wedding, a fancier honeymoon... and a better-looking woman, is that it?

Fred – Not at all... it's just that...

Clara storms out, in tears.

Zoe *(to Fred)* – You really are a piece of work... *(to Max)* And you're just as bad! You two are perfect together!

She leaves to console Clara.

Max – Just so you know, I'm the one who insisted on telling you before the wedding.

Fred – Thanks, but I would have figured it out afterwards.

Max – Yeah, but then you would've had to share it with your wife.

Fred – Legally, I'm not sure how it works. I bought the ticket before the wedding, but I'm cashing in afterwards...

Max – Either way, you would have shared the winnings.

Fred – So what?

Max – I just saved you 5 million.

Fred – You've ruined my wedding. That's what you've done.

Max – Hey! You're the one who doesn't want to get married!

Fred – I didn't say never... just not right now.

Max – Yeah, we all know what that means...

Fred – Go to hell, Max.

Max – I see a different side of you, Fred. You haven't even received the money, and you've already lost your best friend and your future wife. The old saying is right: money doesn't buy happiness.

Fred – With ten million, I'll try my very best to be happy without either of you. It may be difficult, but I promise to try.

Fred storms out. Zoe returns.

Max – How is she?

Zoe – How do you think? *(A pause.)* And Fred? Has he already gone to claim his prize?

Max – I don't know.

Zoe – Oh, really... So your best friend wouldn't share the money with you? Not even for old times' sake?

Max – No...

Zoe – See? You should've kept quiet.

Max – Doesn't change the fact that I was right. He doesn't want to marry Clara anymore.

Zoe – All it proves is that he's just as much of a jerk as you are.

Max – Maybe, but I was still right.

Zoe – A jerk who's right is still a jerk.

Max – And you were wrong.

Zoe – Are you going to keep repeating that?

Fred re-enters, looking worried and searching for something.

Max – What's wrong?

Zoe – Lost the rings again?

Fred – I can't find the wallet with my winning ticket in it.

Zoe – You think someone stole it?

Fred – I had it five minutes ago. And there's no one else here except you two.

Max – You've got to be kidding me... You think we stole it?

Fred gives them a suspicious look.

Zoe – So that's where we're at now? Fifteen minutes ago, we were your best friends, and you were marrying the love of your life. Now you're accusing us of being thieves.

Fred – I just want to know where the ticket went.

Zoe – If you've taken it, Max, give it back. I don't want anything more to do with Fred.

Max – I didn't touch the ticket.

Fred – Empty your pockets, Max.

Max – I told you, I don't have it.

Fred – Empty your pockets before I lose my temper.

Max – Oh yeah? What exactly are you going to do? Hit me? Go on, give it a shot...

They step towards each other, ready for a fight. Clara enters, holding the ticket.

Clara – Is this what you're looking for?

Fred – Give it to me.

She puts the ticket in her mouth, chews it and swallows. Everyone is horrified.

Zoe – You just swallowed ten million...

Fred – Are you insane?!

Clara – Yes, I'm insane. Insane with rage for almost marrying a scumbag like you.

Zoe – Poor is right. Without the ticket, there's no prize.

Max – And there's no way to contest it?

Clara – I checked online. A winning ticket is a bearer document. No, there's no recourse.

Fred – Tell me that's not true.

Clara – And that's not all, Fred. I slept with someone else last night.

Fred – No way...

Clara – I swear on my mother's life. And you know him, too. He's a very good friend of yours...

Fred – That's ridiculous.

Clara – Pack your things and get out. This is my home, in case you've forgotten. You've got fifteen minutes.

Clara exits. Fred is stunned.

Zoe – That's a lot to take in all at once.

Max – Yeah... I think things got out of hand. I didn't think it would go this far...

Zoe – What do you mean?

Max – Nothing.

Fred – I swear I'm going to strangle her.

Zoe – For swallowing a lottery ticket? You'll have trouble calling that a crime of passion.

Fred – And what about the guy she slept with? You were with her all night. You must know if it's true or not...

Zoe – I didn't leave her side for a second. I swear I didn't see anything.

Max – Maybe she just said it to get back at you.

Fred – She said it was someone I knew well...

Zoe – I'll go and see her. I'm afraid she'll do something stupid.

Fred – She's just swallowed ten million. Isn't that stupid enough?

Zoe exits.

Max – Well, I think it's safe to say things are over between you and Clara.

Fred – I'll just grab my stuff and get out of here.

Max – Oh, what's the rush? Five more minutes won't hurt.

Fred – Her parents will probably show up soon. I'd rather they didn't find me here... Can I crash at your place tonight?

Max – Zoe and I aren't exactly on good terms. We're getting divorced. I doubt she'd be thrilled if I brought a mate home. Especially not you. Not after what you just did to her best friend.

Fred – Right... Fair enough...

Max – And now I've seen what you're really like...

Fred – We're still friends, right?

Max – Oh, so now that you're not a multimillionaire anymore, we're friends again?

Fred – Sorry... It all went to my head. I'll check if I can patch things up with Clara.

Max – Oh, I see. Now that you're broke again, she's good enough to marry. And to think you swore you weren't marrying her for her money...

Fred exits. Clara re-enters.

Max – Fred was asking for you.

Clara – He can go straight to hell.

Max – So? Managed to digest it?

Clara – No, actually. You'd be surprised how heavy ten million feels on the stomach.

Max – About last night... maybe telling him wasn't the best idea.

Clara – Oh yeah? And why should I hold back?

Max – Everything's gone crazy since last night. Must be the full moon or something.

Clara – Don't tell me you set all this up to stop the wedding and get another chance to sleep with me.

Max – I assure you, I haven't yet learned how to rig a lottery draw...

Clara, on the verge of tears.

Clara – I was about to get married. I could have been rich. Now I've lost everything.

Max – So have I, actually.

Clara – Well, at least you still have Zoe.

Max – Not for much longer.

Clara – Really?

Max – So I'll soon be single again. And I won't have anywhere to live. It's Zoe's flat, you see... Do you think I could stay with you for a while?

Clara – Sorry, Max, but I've got a lot going on right now. My parents won't stop calling, and I can't even bring myself to answer...

Max – You're going to have to tell them something eventually.

Clara – The worst part is, I'm sure they'll be happy. They never trusted Fred...

Max – Yeah... and unfortunately, they were right.

Clara – Can you leave me alone for five minutes? I need to think.

Max – Just know I'll always be here for you... no matter what.

He exits. Zoe enters.

Zoe – You have nothing to regret, I promise. He didn't deserve you. Better to find out now than after the wedding.

Clara bursts into tears.

Clara – It's your fault, too. If you hadn't told him before the wedding, I'd be rich now!

Zoe – I swear, I didn't want to tell him. Max insisted, though...

Clara eyes the gift Zoe and Max brought.

Clara – What's this, your present?

Zoe – Well, now...

Clara – What? You're going to take it back?

Zoe – No, of course not...

Clara unwraps the gift.

Clara – A portable heater? Are you kidding?

Zoe – Well, that's one way of looking at it...

Clara – I don't know what came over me, swallowing that ticket. Ten million! Perhaps he would have married me anyway.

Zoe – We'll never know. But now that you've told him you slept with someone last night...

Clara – Yeah...

Zoe – I was with you the whole time and I brought you home. You told him that just to mess with him.

Clara – No, I didn't.

Zoe – Who was it?

Clara – Does it matter? And the ticket... Are you sure there's absolutely nothing we can do?

Zoe – Nope. With the ticket gone, it's over. Even if you threw up now...

Clara – I need to call my parents... Where's my phone?

She exits. Fred re-enters.

Fred – To think I almost married such a vile woman.

Zoe – What?

Fred – Here's Clara's phone...

Zoe – What am I supposed to do with it now?

Fred – She told me she slept with one of my friends last night.

Zoe – And?

Fred – She wasn't lying. I looked at her messages. It's all spelled out. The guy even talks about “fireworks.”

Zoe – Fireworks?

Fred – The grand finale, he says.

Zoe – Let me see...

She looks at the screen Fred shows her.

Fred – What...?

Zoe – It's Max's number.

Fred – Max? No way...

Zoe – Yes...

Fred – That bastard... And you didn't know?

Zoe – I knew he was cheating on me, but I didn't know it was with my best friend...

Max enters.

Max – Right, I need to confess something...

Zoe – I don't want to see you in my house tomorrow. Pack your things and leave.

Max – What? Why? What are you talking about?

Zoe – Why? Are you seriously asking why? After sleeping with Clara!

Max – That's a misunderstanding. You won't believe me, but...

Fred moves toward Max.

Fred – I'm going to smash your face in, Max... How could you do that to me? The night before my wedding!

Fred lunges, but Zoe steps in between them.

Zoe – Violence won't solve anything...

Fred – I know, but it would make me feel a lot better.

Clara re-enters.

Clara *(to Fred)* – You're still here? My dad will be here any minute. If I were you, I'd avoid him today...

Fred – I'd like to see his face when I tell him his daughter slept with my best man on the night before our wedding.

Zoe – And to think I considered you my best friend. You're such a... bitch, Clara. You deserve everything that's coming to you.

Clara – Wait a second...

Zoe – Don't you dare play innocent.

Fred – Don't bother denying it. We know... about the "grand finale". Here, take your phone back.

Clara – I'm really, really sorry...

Fred – And you were the one lecturing me about morals...

Zoe – You're a total piece of work. And you know, it's a shame you're not getting married anymore, because I had a little extra gift for you.

Clara – You mean, as well as the portable heater?

Zoe pulls an envelope out of her pocket.

Zoe – An envelope with a lottery ticket in it. *(A pause.)* A winning ticket.

Fred – What? Seriously?

Zoe – When Max told me about that cute tradition you two have, playing your birth dates, I thought it was adorable.

Max – Oh, really?

Zoe – I thought it'd make for a funny, cheap gift. So, I filled out a ticket for you. *(She holds up the envelope.)* Here it is!

Fred – You're kidding me.

Zoe – I felt a bit guilty about the dreadful present we'd bought you. It only cost twenty.

Clara – Twenty euros?

Zoe – I thought it would be a little extra gift. I'd even prepared a speech about lifelong friendship, full of clichés about how money can't buy happiness, for the likely event that the ticket didn't win.

Fred – But the numbers actually came up.

Zoe – Exactly. And since Clara swallowed Fred's ticket, I'm the only one left with a winning ticket. I can claim the jackpot all by myself.

Clara – Ten million!

Fred – Give me that!

Zoe – Oh no. It was a wedding present. And there isn't going to be a wedding.

Max – So, when I told you our number came up, you already knew we'd won as well!

Zoe – We?

Max – You bought that ticket with joint money. That means I've won too.

Zoe – Joint money? You've never contributed a cent to the household expenses...

Max – We're married. That ticket was bought with our joint money.

Zoe – We'll see what my lawyer has to say about that. The one I'm hiring for our divorce.

Max – But if you knew... why didn't you tell me sooner?

Zoe – At first, I didn't want to ruin Clara's wedding. We didn't even know if they'd won. And if Fred hadn't played, I'd have felt guilty...

Fred – Because obviously, if it was a winning ticket, you would've kept it for yourselves.

Max – And then...?

Zoe – After you said that if you'd won the lottery before our wedding, you might not have married me, I decided I was keeping the money for myself.

Silence.

Max – I won't fight you for a share of the money, Zoe. You can keep it. But I don't want to lose you.

Zoe – Oh, please...

Max – This day has taught me a lot about human nature. Money ruins everything. Look at us. We've fallen out with our best friends. They're not getting married, and we're on the brink of divorce...

Clara – We should have called this a farewell party for married life.

Zoe – Money isn't the only problem, is it? There's also your mistress. Who happens to be my best friend.

Max – I know... I don't deserve you, Zoe. But I promise, I'll change. I will.

Zoe – Cut the act. Now that I'm rich, you don't want a divorce anymore. But this time, I'm not falling for it.

Max – Not at all, I swear...

Zoe – You're pathetic, Max...

Pause.

Max – You disappoint me, Zoe. You judged Fred so harshly, and now you're just as bad. You want to keep all the money for yourself?

Zoe waves the envelope again.

Zoe – Ten million, Max! And you'd expect me to share it with a husband who cheats on me? Or with his mistress?

Heavy silence.

Fred – I think we've hit rock bottom.

Clara – Yep. Unless we dig, there's no going lower.

Zoe – Speak for yourselves... I'm a multimillionaire now!

Max – Unfortunately, Zoe... you won't be enjoying your fortune for very long...

Zoe – Oh, really?

Max – All right, there's something I have to confess.

Zoe – What new lie are you going to come up with to grab a share of the jackpot? I'm genuinely curious.

Max – I've been trying to tell you all along... ever since this whole mess started.

Clara – Now what?

Max – The numbers we used to play... They never came up.

Fred – What...? But... you showed me the lottery results on your phone!

Zoe – And me too!

Max – I made a fake screenshot of the results on my phone. It was easy. I just didn't expect it to work quite so well...

Dead silence.

Clara – The good news is, I didn't swallow ten million.

Zoe *(devastated)* – The bad news is... we're all just as broke as we were yesterday.

Fred – Why would you do this to us, Max?

Max – A stupid bet with Zoe. I wanted to see if Fred would still marry Clara if he didn't need her money.

They're all utterly deflated.

Fred – You're a real bastard, Max.

Max – Sorry, I didn't think it would spiral out of control like this.

Fred – Yes. You could say this was the grand finale.

Max – The very grand finale...

Another heavy silence.

Clara – So, what do we do now?

Max – How about we start over?

Clara – You mean, get married? Like nothing happened?

Fred – Oh, no way. You slept with Max, and that's not something I can just forget.

Zoe – Neither can I.

Fred – But you know what, Max? You were right all along... *(to Clara)* I was marrying you for your money. And you were already cheating on me... with my best friend.

Clara – So perhaps it's just as well our wedding witnesses were here to stop us making such a terrible mistake.

Max *(to Zoe)* – And as for us, it's clear we were never meant to be married.

Zoe – At least not to each other.

Max turns to Fred and Clara.

Max – You were the witnesses at our wedding. You could have warned us!

A pause.

Fred – What if we still threw the party?

Clara – What party?

Max – A farewell party for our married lives!

Zoe – At this point... why the hell not?

Clara – We can't let the food go to waste, and the champagne's already chilled...

Max – You two aren't getting married, and we're getting divorced. In a way, it's a new beginning for all four of us!

A doorbell rings.

Fred – Your parents?

Clara – My parents.

They all freeze in horror.

Zoe – Or... we turn off the lights and pretend we didn't hear it.

They look at one another, unsure what to do.

Blackout.

The wedding march begins, then gradually goes out of tune.

The End

About the author

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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

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

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

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

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

https://jeanpierremartinezmusic.com/

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air
Short Stories

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

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

Comedies for 5 to 6

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

Comedies for 7 or more

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

Collection of sketches

Apocalypse
Backstage Bits
Blackouts
Don't panic!
Dramedies
Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
Every Colour under the Sun
For real and for fun
Funny Stories
Him and Her
Killer Sketches
Lockdown Shorts
Lost time Chronicles
Memoirs of a Suitcase
No Sense Off Limits
Now and then
Of Animals and Men
Open Hearts
Open Letters
Park Bench Shorts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stage Briefs
Stories to die for

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays can be downloaded

free of charge from his websites:

https://jeanpierremartinez.net/

https://comediatheque.net/

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