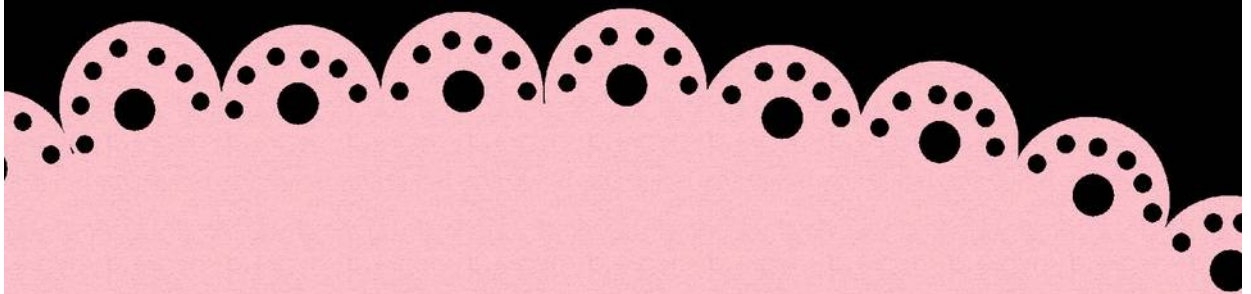


La Comédiathèque

The Worst Best Man Ever

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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The Worst Best Man Ever

Jean-Pierre Martinez

Fred and Clara are getting married in just a few hours, but Max and Zoe—on the brink of divorce—are about to turn this joyous occasion into an all-out brawl. When tying the knot, it's best to choose your witnesses wisely...

Characters:

Fred: the soon-to-be groom
Clara: the soon-to-be bride
Max: the soon-to-be divorced
Zoe: the soon-to-be divorced

Day 1

The living room of a bourgeois house. Clara enters, wearing a dressing gown and a towel wrapped around her hair, looking for something.

Clara – Where did I put my phone this time...? (*A mobile phone rings under a cushion*) Ah, there it is... (*She answers the call*) Yes, Mum... Yes, yes, everything's fine. And you? Is it sunny in Normandy? Raining? Yes, you're right, a rainy wedding is a lucky one... That's right, we'll meet tomorrow at the registry office as planned. Around 11 o'clock, perfect... No, I promise, we won't do anything silly... and we won't stay up too late either. Yes, I know, it's the big day. Have I thought it through properly? Mum, we're getting married tomorrow! I don't think this is the moment for second thoughts, do you? Look, I've got to go, Zoe will be here any minute, and I'm not ready yet. Love you too. Give Dad a kiss from me.

Fred enters, dressed very casually in a floral shirt and Bermuda shorts.

Fred – Your mum?

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

Fred – It's a stag night, not a job interview. And you? Are you going out like that?

Clara – As long as you don't wear that to the registry office... because then I'm not sure I'll say yes.

Fred – Even in a tuxedo, I'll still be afraid you'll say no until the very last second.

Clara hugs him tenderly.

Clara – I'm joking... You know I'd marry you without hesitation, even in Bermuda shorts and flip-flops.

Fred – I still don't know why.

Clara – Maybe because I love you, plain and simple.

Fred – An out-of-work actor...

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

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

Clara – That will change. I believe in you.

Fred – Thank you.

Clara – And you? Are you sure you want to spend the rest of your life with a pharmacist? Maybe you'd rather have stayed a vagabond, collecting mistresses like your friend Max.

Fred – Vagabond... You sound just like your mother.

Clara – I was being ironic...

Fred – It's true, though. A doctor is definitely more respectable than a vagabond... or even a real estate agent.

Clara – Pharmacists are closer to grocers than to doctors, you know.

Fred – It's a vocation, isn't it?

Clara – Yes, sort of... When I was little, I used to play shopkeeper. I'd sell buttons. Since my parents would never have let me run a haberdashery, I studied pharmacy, like them.

Fred – And now they're giving you the shop. With the apartment upstairs.

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

Fred – Our place... I'd say it's more 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, it's quite a comforting smell. Living above a pharmacy... It feels like it'll keep all the germs away. And that nothing bad could happen to me. *(He kisses her)* So, what did your mum want?

Clara – She just wanted to make sure my hen night doesn't end at the police station or the hospital.

Fred – Your parents are as cheerful as ever.

Clara – Listen, they've organised everything for the wedding too, so let's not hold it against them.

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

Clara – It's tradition: the bride's parents pay for the wedding. It's like a modern dowry...

Fred – Well... they didn't exactly break the bank. You could call it a wedding in *strictest privacy*.

Clara – That phrase is usually used for funerals. For weddings, I think it's called “with just two 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 have to put up with them every day. Now that they're retired, they live 100 kilometres 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 – And I need to stop by the travel agency to pick up our tickets for Venice. I didn't even know travel agencies still existed...

Clara – The honeymoon's a gift from my parents too... And they're not exactly tech-savvy.

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 – Anything to help them out... Because as for the wedding present, we really didn't make much effort. A toaster... We're the witnesses, for crying out loud!

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. They gave me 50% off.

Max – I get that... Toasters probably don't sell very well...

Zoe – The only thing cheaper was a lottery ticket.

Max – You're joking, but Fred and I used to play the lottery when we were at our theater 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 played the same number every week. Our birth dates.

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 what they say: lucky in gambling, unlucky in love.

Zoe – Oh yes, that's true. People do say that... Well, not usually our generation.

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

Zoe – Why not? Since they're almost guaranteed to lose... unlucky in gambling, lucky in love.

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

Zoe – And you? Would you rather be lucky in gambling or lucky in love?

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

Zoe – Do you have many more of these rubbish proverbs?

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

Zoe – Who?

Max – It's a strange couple, don't you think? Him, an actor; her, a pharmacist.

Zoe – I thought he was in real estate now.

Max – It's a shame. He was a good actor. Real estate agent...

Zoe – No job is beneath anyone... Oh, great, now you've got me doing it. I'm speaking in clichés too...

Max – Come on... Do you really think anyone becomes a real 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 – Right... Just a reminder: we're their witnesses, you know...

Max – Exactly! If we think they're making a mistake, it's our job to stop them, isn't it?

Zoe – I don't think you quite understand the role of a witness at a wedding... Right, I'm going to check on Clara... But please, don't say anything like this in front of them, okay?

She exits. Max looks at his phone.

Fred enters.

Fred – Hi, Max.

Max – Hi, Fred.

They exchange a quick cheek kiss.

Fred – So? You haven't planned an ambush for me, have you? I do need to be somewhat functional for 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, wait. It was last year. We spent New Year's together, remember? Clara's parents let us use their house in Normandy.

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 real estate 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 – A mistake? Now that you mention it, you're right... I should have chosen a different witness.

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 just did a casting for a lead role. Waiting for the results.

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 see... I'm heading to the tobacconist's. Want to come?

Max – You smoke now?

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

Zoe – Are you sure you want to go clubbing dressed like that? You're going to cause 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 as a bachelor. I'm not going to stop him from having a bit of fun...

Zoe – Well, after this, he won't have much to laugh about... with a girl like you. Remember our holiday in Corsica, right after we finished school?

They laugh.

Clara – You know, a best friend is like a lawyer or a priest. You're bound to confidentiality...

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

Clara – Cheating only counts when you're married, right? Before that doesn't matter.

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 (*referring to 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 – Yeah, but... he had to stop by the travel agency. He said it'd take 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 catch up with her at home later. No rush. And 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 – Before the wedding, it doesn't count, right?

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 throw themselves at each other.

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

He kisses her.

Clara – But you're married.

Max – Don't worry, I'll take the blame.

They kiss again, passionately.

Clara – But this is the last time, agreed?

Max – Of course...

They collapse onto the sofa together.

The lights go out.

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 whole point of a stag night. To make sure you have nothing to regret. But we can always 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 – Yeah... We met at the theater school. We dreamed of becoming 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 won't tell you I dreamed of being a real estate agent, but... the extras, the bit parts, the ads... they don't really inspire me anymore either.

Max – There's always the theatre...

Fred – Travelling across France by train to perform in Alsace, then doing it all over again the next day in Brittany. Sharing a cramped, non-air-conditioned studio at the Avignon Festival with four other people... I'm too old for that now.

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 are giving us their house, I need to step up. Acting isn't a job 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 to live off Clara. Or her parents... With no qualifications, real estate was all that was left. At least I'm my own boss, and I can use my acting skills to sweet-talk 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 – Sorry, Max, but we're not kids anymore. I don't know if I'm making the right choice, but I can't imagine you in ten or twenty years, still scrambling for acting gigs, landing third-rate roles in TV series no one watches, performing dumb children's shows, or doing gigs 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 – Me too... But you can't say I didn't warn you... *(Fred gives him a dark look)* Then again, the pharmacy's just downstairs. At least you'll never run out of antidepressants. And if you ever feel like ending 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 handsome Italian, you'd be in his bed by now.

Clara – Don't exaggerate...

Zoe – Admit it, he wasn't bad, was he? The perfect Latin lover... He even offered to drive us back in his Ferrari.

Clara – His Ferrari, are you sure? I didn't hear that...

Zoe – Cars aren't my thing... It was something with an "i"... or maybe an "o," I don't remember.

Clara – It was probably a Fiat Uno.

Zoe – That's usually how it is with men. You picture yourself sitting next to them in a Ferrari, and more often than not, you end up lying on the backseat of a Fiat Uno.

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 concept of a stag do. He still acts with women exactly as he did before.

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, off to bed. 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, no, it was... just a friend. She wanted me to read some lines with her for an audition. I told her today wasn't possible.

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 – Just so you know, we were bored out of our minds too. What a stupid tradition, these stag and hen dos...

Max – And you lot? No mischief?

Zoe – I got chatted up by an Italian. He drove us back in his Ferrari.

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 I got chatted up by an Italian, and that's all you've got to say?

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

Zoe – Pathetic.

Max – I'll ask if Fred's got an aspirin. I've still got a bit of 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: it's always the cobbler who has the worst shoes.

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 probably shouldn't tell you this, but I nearly ran away right before the ceremony. I even ordered an Uber.

Clara – No way!

Zoe – Of course not! And anyway, I wouldn't have got far in an Uber. 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 – Yeah... No risk of being sold a pig in a poke...

Zoe – Unfortunately, it's often after the wedding that you discover your partner's true colours.

Max – Exactly, love is blind...

Zoe – And marriage opens its eyes.

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 – It feels like there's trouble in paradise with Max, am I right...?

Zoe – Trouble in paradise? Don't start with those outdated clichés.

Clara – Oh dear... Is it that bad?

Zoe – I just checked his phone. This time, I'm sure. He's cheating on me.

Clara – Are you really sure?

Zoe shows Clara Max's phone in her hand.

Zoe – Read it yourself: *For one last time, it was fireworks. The grand finale. I'll 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 – The good news is, based on that message, it sounds like he's just broken it off. He talks about *a 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 – Yeah... But with me, he's never talked about fireworks...

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'll talk about this after the wedding. We can't let them down now. We can play along 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 – It's your birth date! Like for lottery tickets. You could at least try to be a bit imaginative!

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 – Listen, Zoe... It's Fred, okay.

Zoe – Fred?

Max – Fred.

Zoe – You're sleeping with Fred?

Max – No! What are you talking about? I was referring to... our last night out together.

Zoe – You're taking the piss...

Max – Not at all.

Zoe (*reciting from memory*) – *For one last time, it was fireworks. The grand finale. I'll miss you...* That's what you sent to Fred?

Max – Why not?

Zoe – Are you serious? That's a love declaration.

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'm not here before replying to her. (*He seems captivated by what he's seeing on his phone screen.*) Hey, 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 Super Jackpot results. It's our birth dates...

Zoe looks.

Zoe – Are you sure?

Max – I've checked. Five numbers and the bonus ball...

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...

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 euros, he deserves 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? Winning ten million euros?

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 – Yesterday, he went to the tobacconist, and he doesn't smoke. Maybe it was to play the lottery.

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 toaster, I'll give you that.

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 – Kind of like me, huh? We're just going to Venice, but still...

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 – Damn. Lucky I didn't get a colonoscopy before my honeymoon, or you'd be scaring the hell out of me.

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 more on Zoe's side here. If the guy can keep a bit of blissful ignorance for another month and enjoy his trip properly...

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 pulls a lottery ticket out of his pocket.

Fred – But yes, I managed to squeeze in a quick entry. 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 – Of course... Excuse me, duty calls...

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 have a mistress! Did you think I'd swallow your story? You say the message was for Fred, then you "accidentally" delete it? You must 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 are going to tell him...

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'll have to split 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 – Maybe he's planning to marry you too, 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 – Do you remember that number 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 – Those the numbers you played last night?

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 – Then 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 agreed that if we hit 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 – Wait, I don't know... It depends... If it's just a few hundred euros. 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 need to go, or we'll be late. (*Noticing their expressions.*) 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 – That's absolutely insane... (*Recovering herself.*) You're joking, right? This is a joke. You think this is the time for this?

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't even wrap my head around this... (*Her phone rings and she answers.*) Yes, Mum. Oh, you're already at the town hall? Yes, yes, we're on our way... (*She puts her phone away.*) Right, we'll talk about this later. My parents are waiting and so is the mayor. Shall we go?

Fred – The mayor...?

Clara – Uh... yes, the mayor. Just because we've won the lottery doesn't mean you've forgotten we're getting married, right?

Fred – No, of course not, but...

Clara – But...?

Fred – I've just won ten million, Clara! I mean, *we've* just won ten million. We can't just pretend nothing's happened.

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

Fred – Look, Clara... I'm sorry, but I'm overwhelmed right now. I'm not really in the right headspace for this.

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 – That's not it at all! It's just that... honestly, with ten million, couldn't we afford a better wedding?

Clara – You don't like this wedding?

Fred – You mean the wedding your parents arranged? With just a couple of witnesses, like a funeral... and a honeymoon in a two-star hotel in Venice...

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 can't get married with just two witnesses and then head off for a weekend in Venice!

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 10 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've had to share.

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'm discovering the real you now, Fred. You haven't even gotten the money yet, and you've already lost your best friend and your fiancée. Just goes to show the old saying is true: money doesn't buy happiness.

Fred – With 10 million, I'll try to be happy without you... It'll be tough, but I promise I'll try.

Fred storms out. Zoe returns.

Zoe – How's she doing?

Max – What do you think? *(Pause)* And Fred? Already gone to claim his cheque?

Zoe – I wouldn't know.

Max – No kidding... So, your best mate doesn't want to share with you? Not even for the sake of your "old friendship"?

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 got it, Max, give it back. I don't want anything to do with this guy anymore.

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, or I swear I'll lose it.

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 stunned.

Zoe – You just swallowed 10 million...

Fred – Are you insane?!

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

Zoe – Poor's right. No ticket, no jackpot.

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 – Oh, and by the way, Fred. Guess what? I slept with someone 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 – Now pack your bags and get out. In case you've forgotten, this is *my* house. 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 your lottery ticket? You'll have a hard time selling that as 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 check on her... I'm worried she might do something reckless.

Fred – She just swallowed 10 million—hasn't she done enough already?

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, you know... now that I've seen your true colours.

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, feeling better now?

Clara – No, actually. You'd be surprised how heavy 10 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 – You didn't orchestrate all this to ruin the wedding and have another chance with me, did you?

Max – I swear, I don't have the power to rig lottery results...

Clara, on the verge of tears.

Clara – I was about to get married... I could've 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 – Oh really?

Max – So, I'll soon be back on the market. And since I'm losing my place—it's Zoe's apartment, by the way—maybe you could crash with me for a bit...?

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've got nothing to regret, I promise. He didn't deserve you. It's better to find out now than later

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 toaster? Seriously? You've got to be kidding me!

Zoe – That's how you see it?

Clara – I don't know what possessed me to swallow that ticket. Ten million... Can you believe it? Maybe he would've 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 even matter...? And about the ticket—do you really think there's 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's the only thing that's going to make me feel 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 – Oh yeah? I'd love to see his face when I tell him... his daughter slept with my best man 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 – On top of the toaster, you mean...

Zoe pulls an envelope out of her pocket.

Zoe – A little envelope, with a lottery ticket. *(Pause)* A winning one.

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 was feeling a little guilty about that lousy toaster we got you—it was only twenty euros.

Clara – Twenty euros?

Zoe – I figured this would be a nice little extra. I even prepared a speech about male friendships, with proverbs like 'money doesn't buy happiness,' just in case it wasn't a winning ticket.

Fred – But the numbers actually came up.

Zoe – Yep. And since Clara ate your ticket... there's only one winner left. The jackpot will be doubled.

Clara – Twenty million?!

Fred – Hand it over!

Zoe – Oh no, it was a wedding gift. And now there's no 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 – Still, we're married under community property law, you know.

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 – And then, when you said that if you'd won the lottery, you wouldn't have married me, I decided to keep 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've called this a "funeral for married life."

Zoe – Oh, come on. Money... But don't you think the divorce has something to do with your mistress? Who, by the way, 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 think I'd 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 – Alright, I need to confess something... and it's not going to be easy.

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 – That number—our birth dates—it never came up.

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

Zoe – And me too!

Max – I faked the image on my phone. It wasn't hard to do, but I never expected it to work this well.

Dead silence.

Clara – The good news is, I didn't swallow 10 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 money wasn't a factor.

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 – Yeah, you could say this is the grand finale.

Max – The grand finale indeed...

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 – In hindsight, thank God our witnesses were here to stop us from making such a huge 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 our witnesses! You could have warned us!

A pause.

Fred – What if we still threw the party?

Clara – What party?

Max – Our "funeral for married life"!

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

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

Max – You're not getting married, and we're getting divorced. In the end, it's a fresh start... 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 exchange hesitant glances. Blackout. Wedding march music begins but gradually falls apart.

The End

About the author

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

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

Other plays by the same author translated in English

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity
A simple business dinner
An innocent little murder
Cheaters
Crash Zone
Fragile, Handle with care
Friday the 13th
Ménage à trois
One small step for a woman,
one giant leap backward for
Mankind
The Way 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
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
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The Fishbowl
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
Of Vegetables and Books
Offside
Open Hearts
Reality Show
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The House of Our Dreams
The Jackpot
The Performance is not
cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Enough is Enough
Ethan and Eve
For real and for fun
Him and Her
Killer Sketches
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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