La Comédiathèque

HAPPY HOUR

Jean-Pierre Martinez





comediatheque.net

The text of this play is to free download.
However, an authorisation is required from the author
for any public representation.
To get in touch with Jean-Pierre Martinez
and ask an authorisation to represent one of his works
https://comediatheque.net
https://jeanpierremartinez.net

Happy Hour

Jean-Pierre Martinez

In a late-night bar under police surveillance as officers hunt a dangerous psychopath, an unsettling bartender becomes the confidant of lonely customers waiting for mysterious dates they met online. Outrageous, filthy and blackly funny, with a touch of the absurd.

Characters:

The Bartender (or Barmaid)
The Inspector (female or male)
The Psychopath (male or female)
The Man
The Brunette
The Blonde

Flexible casting: 1M/5W, 2M/4W, 3M/3W or 4M/2W
The bartender and inspector may be played by actors of any gender; the psychopath may also be cast as a woman in an adapted version.

© La Comédiathèque

1 – The Bartender – The Brunette

Standing behind the counter, the bartender is wiping glasses. The role can be played by either a man or a woman, allowing for the character's gender ambiguity to be explored. The radio is playing a melancholy old French song. A toilet flush is heard. A rather ordinary, even slightly vulgar brunette exits the restroom and sits back at the bar in front of her drink. She's wearing a shapeless sweater in an indefinable colour. The bartender switches the station. A commentator enthusiastically narrates the end of a football match. The bartender turns off the radio. The brunette finishes her drink.

Bartender – Fancy another one?

The brunette shoots the bartender a weary glance, unsure what kind of offer that was.

Brunette – Sorry?

The bartender lazily points to a sign above the counter reading Happy Hour, a stark contrast to the morose atmosphere of the empty café.

Bartender – The house cocktail! The second one's free.

Brunette *(sighing)* – Happy hour... Yeah, right... I've been waiting for some guy for an hour, and he's still not here...

Bartender – A guy?

Brunette – Does it really surprise you that a man might want to meet me?

Bartender – A man, yes...

The brunette looks surprised.

Brunette – What's this bar called again?

Bartender – The Pink Flemings...

Brunette – I see... I thought you said Pink Flamingos... So it's... Belgian, then... *(Changing the subject)* This cocktail... it tastes a bit like banana, doesn't it?

Bartender – Did you know that humans share almost all their genes with apes?

Brunette – No...

Bartender – And apes share a good chunk of their genes with bananas... So, you could almost say humans are bananas with legs and a brain...

Brunette – Well, not all of them. For some, the brain's optional.

Bartender *(feeling targeted)* – Got someone in mind?

Brunette – The idiot who forgot we had a date tonight.

Bartender – Maybe he's waiting for the match to finish. Shouldn't be long now; they're in extra time... The Brazilian striker just slipped one past the Belgian keeper from behind...

Brunette – Are you sure you're talking about football? (The bartender says nothing.) What would you do if you were me?

Bartender – An hour late? If I were you... I'm not sure. But if I were him... If he shows up now, it's going to look like a desperate woman who'll do absolutely anything to avoid sleeping alone. Don't you think?

The brunette takes the hit.

Brunette – You think so?

Bartender – You know the saying: *Chase me and I'll run. Ignore me and I'll suck you off...*

Brunette *(devastated)* – I'll take that second free cocktail, after all...

The bartender ladles some house cocktail from a large bowl and refills her glass. She takes a long sip and swallows.

Brunette – You can really taste the ginger too...

Bartender – There's some in it.

Brunette *(looking around the empty room)* – Well... Jesus, this place is dead... On a Friday night! Is everyone watching the football?

Bartender – A Dalida retrospective on television. Wipes out our entire clientele every time. That's why we do Happy Hour...

Brunette – You should have called it *Gay Hour*. Would have cleared up the ambiguity... Why did he set up a date in a gay bar?

Bartender – To be the only straight guy in the place, I imagine... Being that afraid of competition usually isn't a great sign...

Brunette *(starting to doubt)* – Or maybe he's really gay and thought I was a guy. The photo I posted on the site was a bit blurry... *(Worried)* Could you mistake me for a guy, in a blurry photo?

Bartender – No... Not even in the dark...

The brunette still looks downcast.

Bartender – What's your name?

Brunette – Jane...

Bartender – Come on, Jane, your Tarzan could still show up...

Brunette – Mum named me Jane because she loved Tarzan. Trouble is, the men I date are a lot closer to the ape. When they show up at all...

Bartender – You know what they say: plenty more fish in the sea...

Brunette – Yeah? I think men are more like hair.

Bartender – Hair?

Brunette – It starts with losing one. Then another. And before you know it, you're bald—and you don't even know why. Believe me, I'm speaking from experience.

Bartender – You're losing your hair?

Brunette – No... I work in a hair salon... At this rate, hairdressers should start worrying.

Bartender – You're not exactly an optimist, are you?

Brunette – Optimist... I've got cobwebs under my skirt from all the times I've been stood up lately.

Bartender – I'm sure your prince will come one day... and probably get caught in that web. *(In a paternal tone)* But make sure you use protection, okay?

Brunette – You won't believe it, but I'm allergic to latex. Latex is terrible for vaginal flora, you know...

Bartender – Really? I didn't know... And what about the fauna?

Brunette – It gives me terrible itching... *(A pause)* Do you have a fork?

Bartender *(concerned)* – For...?

Brunette – There's something floating in my cocktail. *(Leaning in to look)* It looks like an eye. *(Lifting her head, perturbed)* And it seems to be staring at me...

The bartender looks irritated.

Bartender – Must not have blended it properly...

He discreetly removes the object with a fork. The brunette sighs, continuing her train of thought.

Brunette – I don't even have friends. I joined Facebook, and the only one who spontaneously offered me friendship was an Argentine man who makes a living farting on command. My social life is so empty... If I were to get married tomorrow, I don't think I could find a witness. Let alone a husband...

Bartender – Don't you have any family?

Brunette – They all died when I was three...

Bartender – No...

Brunette – Carbon monoxide poisoning doesn't mess around. We lived on benefits in public housing in Neuilly. My mum hadn't had the stove pipe cleaned since I was born...

The bartender stares at her, dumbfounded.

Brunette – I'm the only one in the family who survived. My dad used to lock me in the cellar at night. That's what saved me...

Bartender *(horrified)* – The cellar...?

Brunette – So he wouldn't hear me crying! I was hungry... My dad was an alcoholic. Whenever my mum gave him money for milk, he'd come back with red wine instead.

Bartender *(on the verge of tears)* – Oh, my God...!

Brunette – I'm kidding. Have you ever seen public housing in the wealthiest suburb of Paris?

The bartender pauses, clearly miffed at being duped.

Brunette – But I'm not exactly on good terms with my parents. The last birthday gift I got from them was a registered letter from their lawyer. It informed me that when they die, they're leaving everything to cancer research. Honestly, that generosity surprises me—funding research for a disease they'll already be dead from... What about you? Are your parents still around?

Bartender – My mum passed away, and my dad's in an institution in Belgium...

Brunette *(impressed)* – Because grief drove him mad?

Bartender – No. Because he cut my mum's fucking head off with a chainsaw.

Brunette – Ah, right... Was he a lumberjack?

Bartender – More of a film buff. He'd just seen *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

The brunette processes this, takes a sip of her cocktail, and sighs, returning to her own problems.

Brunette – I'm not asking for much, you know. Just a little affection. Someone who'll be there every evening when I get home from work, ready to pounce on me.

Bartender – Get a German shepherd...

The brunette wonders if he's joking or not.

Brunette – What about you? Do you have someone?

Bartender – I just broke up with my fiancé. He worked in IT...

Brunette – Well, I suppose that's reason enough...

Bartender – Every time we fucked, he'd whisper, 'Open your USB port, baby. Time to plug in my joystick.'

The brunette sighs.

Bartender – Come on... There must be someone who cares about you, even just a little...

Brunette – Put it this way: today's my birthday, and the only people who remembered were the online shop I bought this sweater from...

The bartender picks up a sparkler, adds it to her cocktail, and lights it. Tiny fireworks fizzle to life.

Bartender – Happy Birthday...!

Brunette – Thanks...

They sit there miserably, watching the sparkler fizzle out and die.

Brunette – And you? Things can't be easy for you either. I mean... With your family. How did your coming out go?

Bartender – My dad caught me jerking off to gay porn.

Brunette *(distracted)* – Oh, right... *(She takes a mirror from her bag and checks her reflection.)* I don't know why I wore this sweater. It makes me look like a stuffed sausage, doesn't it? *(The bartender offers a polite smile.)* Buying stuff online... It's the same problem as dating sites. In the photo, you think it'll be fine, but when it arrives...

Bartender – It's not always the right size...

The brunette keeps examining herself in the mirror.

Brunette – And this colour doesn't suit me... It makes me look like I've got liver disease... *(Sighing)* Right, I'm going outside for a smoke... If I'm not back in five minutes, I've jumped into the Seine. And whatever you do, don't call an ambulance. I refuse to be resuscitated...

Bartender – No need. I was a volunteer firefighter. That's how I learned mouth-to-mouth... before I got kicked out for concealing a body. It was my dad who... Well, never mind...

The brunette pauses, then heads for the door.

Brunette – If he shows up while I'm gone, don't tell him I've already been here waiting for an hour, okay?

Bartender *(with a sinister smile)* – Don't worry. I'll do everything I can to keep him here.

Brunette – Not sure if that reassures me...

She exits. The bartender turns the radio back on. A sultry old love song begins to play.

2 – The Man – The Bartender

The bartender is polishing the beer tap while listening to the radio, which is broadcasting a news update.

Speaker *(off)* – There's still no news of the dangerous schizophrenic who escaped from the psychiatric hospital in Namur, where he was detained after decapitating his wife with a chainsaw... *(The bartender listens closely.)* Witnesses reportedly saw him at a DIY store in the city centre, and then at the train station, where he allegedly bought a ticket to Paris. Belgian and French police are working closely together to locate him as quickly as possible...

The bartender switches off the radio as a nervous-looking man enters. The man glances around the room. Whatever his appearance or attire, he's anything but a sex symbol.

Bartender – What'll it be?

Man – What's the strongest thing you've got?

Bartender – The house cocktail...

Man – I'll have that.

The bartender ladles out a drink. The man looks around the room.

Bartender – Waiting for someone?

Man – Is it that obvious? I'm running a bit late... Have you seen anyone?

Bartender – Depends... What do they look like? Ah, right... You're straight too. So, what does she look like?

Man – Not much... I met her on a dating site. She didn't post a picture.

Bartender – Being that modest isn't always a good sign...

Man – Well, I didn't post mine either... Funny thing is, ever since I took my photo down, I've been getting a lot more attention...

Bartender – Women must love a bit of mystery.

Man – Well, when I say attention... This is the first proper date I've managed in three bloody years. I've always had bad luck with women. Even in primary school, my geography teacher had it in for me. We had to identify different types of clouds, and I said *cunnilingus* instead of *cumulonimbus*...

Bartender – Ah, I see...

Man – To give you an idea of my love life, yesterday I was tidying up my wallet and realised my condoms had expired. That tells you how active my sex life is...

Bartender – If you keep them in your wallet...

Man – Yeah, next to my health insurance card... Anyway, the home side is supposed to provide the condoms, right? Like in football...

Bartender – Football...?

Man – Yeah. The home team supplies the balls...

Bartender – Right...?

Man – Forget it... *(Returning to his thought)* And those condoms were expensive. They had anaesthetic gel for delayed effect. Apparently, they can give women nasty allergic reactions, but still...

Bartender *(taken aback)* – Anaesthetic gel...?

Man – Yeah, the last woman I slept with... I thought she enjoyed it. I was about to fall asleep, feeling I'd done my duty... She kissed me on the cheek and said, "Don't worry. It happens to everyone..." And that was it. Nothing since. It's a desert... Last night, I was so bored I spent the evening playing a video game where you have to dock a spaceship with an orbital station... In five years, I've had three sexual encounters. And even then, the last one never even reached the docking stage. Do you think that one counts?

Bartender – If the spaceship still launched...

Man – Let's just say it exploded mid-flight... *(Pauses)* My dream? To have two women. One brunette and one blonde. Every night, I'd pick the one that matches my tie best, and take her for a ride in my convertible...

Bartender – And the other one?

Man – She'd stay in the kitchen and cook my fucking dinner!

Bartender – That's the steamiest version of a threesome I've ever heard...

Man – Last night, though, I had this terrible nightmare... I was Prince Charming, arriving on horseback, and I had to wake Sleeping Beauty by sticking my tongue down her throat...

Bartender – A nightmare?

Man – Can you imagine her breath after a hundred years? Camel breath... And she kissed like an octopus... What about you? What's your dream?

Bartender – To marry Prince Harry and become the Queen of England.

Man – Oh, I see... So that's why you're not into football...

Bartender – You know, you can be gay and still like football. But I prefer rugby... I love watching rugby players on TV, sprawled out on the sofa with a mate, sipping a few beers.

Man – I'm starting to wonder if I might be gay too...

Bartender – Last time, I dreamt the captain of the national rugby team planted a try right between my posts.

Man – No, I mean, I've got nothing against it, really. Actually, I work with a gay guy... Sometimes we eat together at McDonald's. Well, not at the same table...

Bartender *(with a look of pity)* – Shall I pour you your second cocktail? It's Happy Hour...

Man – I'd better finish this one first. *(Takes a sip)* You can really taste the 90-percent alcohol, can't you?

Bartender – There's banana liqueur too. Gives it that suave touch...

Man – Funny... It's a bit crunchy. *(Leaning over the punch bowl)* What's that brown thing floating on top...? Looks like it's moving...

The bartender leans over to take a look.

Bartender – Must be a cockroach... No, no, it's not part of the recipe. Must've fallen from the ceiling... Don't move, I'm a firefighter... *(He fishes out the cockroach with the ladle and inspects it.)* Alcohol poisoning... We're too late... Still, at least it looks like it enjoyed my cocktail.

The man stares at him, dumbfounded.

Man – First time I had sex, I was completely shitfaced too.

Bartender – A bit too much to drink at a teenage party?

Man – No... I was 27... It was in a hospital...

Bartender – A nurse?

Man – No, no... A patient... *(The bartender looks shocked.)* But not terminally ill, okay? She was a friend who'd just had her tonsils removed. Well, not really a friend... She was the caretaker's daughter. She was from Portugal. I brought her a bottle of rum punch. But since she couldn't drink it because of her surgery, I ended up downing it myself... I mean the bottle, not her... Since she couldn't talk either, we communicated through gestures. And one thing led to another...

He takes a sip of his cocktail.

Man – Come to think of it, I'm not even sure she'd completely woken up from the anaesthetic. Anyway, she never brought it up again... What about you? Where was your first time?

Bartender – In a bathtub...

Man – No, I mean... with someone else.

Bartender – A big bathtub.

Man – Oh, right... I've always wondered what it's like to do it in water...

Bartender – Can't really say.

Man – Sorry?

Bartender – We didn't think to fill it up.

The man processes this, then checks his watch.

Man – I'll bet you my boxers she's not coming... I might as well go home, lie down, and turn on the gas. I mean... turn on the gas and *then* lie down. That way, I won't have to get back up... A few months from now, my Portuguese concierge will find my decomposed body on the bed. They'll have to cut the mattress around me to carry me out... *(Takes another sip)* Can I give you some constructive criticism? Your cocktail is absolutely vile. Where'd you even get the recipe?

Bartender *(offended)* – It's my own creation. No one's ever complained about it before.

Man – Maybe because no one's ever survived. Not sure if it's your cocktail making my stomach hurt or just the nerves. About this date, I mean. What if she's a supermodel? I'd better go take a massive shit before she arrives. Just to be safe. Where's the bathroom?

Bartender – Down the hall, on the right... *(The man heads off towards the toilets.)* Such poetry. Such romance...

The bartender switches the radio back on. It's playing another melancholy French pop song.

3 – The Bartender – The Blonde

The bartender is engrossed in an issue of a science magazine as the radio broadcasts a news update. Intrigued, he listens.

***Speaker** (off)* – Concern is growing in the Marais district of Paris, where witnesses saw a woman fall from a bridge into the Seine just an hour ago. Suicide or homicide? The mystery remains unsolved. Firefighters are searching the riverbed for the body...

Bartender – She was hoping to get picked up. Now they're dredging for her...

***Speaker** (off)* – Police are investigating whether the Chainsaw Killer of Namur, as he's been dubbed, might be involved in this troubling incident. The psychopath was also spotted in the area, where he is believed to have family...

A blonde woman enters, exuding the haughty and aloof demeanour of a high-fashion model. With the jittery air of a socialite in withdrawal, she scans the empty room nervously before approaching the bar. The bartender switches off the radio, puts down his magazine, and stops the music.

Bartender – What can I get you?

Blonde – I'll wait a bit. I'm meeting someone...

Bartender – A man? *(The blonde shoots him a death glare.)* Sorry...

The blonde takes a mirror out of her bag and checks her makeup. The bartender picks up a science magazine and resumes reading.

Bartender – Huh, that's funny... Did you know that a cat always lands on its feet? Well, some Italian scientists strapped two cats back-to-back and dropped them from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa to see which side they'd land on. What do you think happened? *(The blonde gives him an offended look.)* Oh, you're a barrel of laughs, aren't you? What do you do for a living? Do you run the entertainment programme in a home for the clinically depressed?

Blonde *(with disdain)* – I'm a beautician... at a beauty salon for blondes.

Bartender – Oh, I didn't know blonde-only salons were a thing... If I were you, though, I'd be a bit worried about the future... *(The blonde looks vaguely puzzled.)* Didn't you know blondes are an endangered species? *(The blonde chooses to ignore him.)* I read an article about it in my magazine. You see, to be blonde, you need both parents to pass on the gene. But since blondes are already a minority globally... and they reproduce less than brunettes... With all this population mixing, there probably won't be any blondes left on Earth by 2200. Should we mourn that? And let me tell you, climate change isn't helping either... Since blondes come from colder countries, the hotter it gets, the fewer blondes there'll be. Unless we put the remaining ones in reserves in Antarctica. But can they reproduce in captivity? In igloos...

The blonde sniffs disdainfully at the punch bowl, looking disgusted.

Blonde – Your cocktail smells like the sea. What did you put in it? Seafood?

Bartender – That too... My dad used to say crustaceans are the insects of the sea. And when you think about it... Still not tempted?

Blonde – I think I'll just go sit down after all...

The blonde moves to a table and sits down.

Bartender – Blonde attitude. Makes my fucking hair stand on end.

The bartender turns the radio back on. A sad love song is playing.

4 – The Bartender – The Inspector

The bartender is wiping glasses when the inspector enters, wearing a rumpled trench coat and hat in the style of an old television detective. The role can be played by a man or a woman, highlighting the character's gender ambiguity.

Bartender – Let me guess, you're not gay either...?

Inspector – Are you with the police?

Bartender – No.

Inspector *(showing their badge)* – I am.

Bartender – Oh...

Inspector – So, I'll be asking the questions here, all right? I'm investigating the disappearance of the woman who fell into the Seine an hour ago. Witnesses saw her leaving your establishment. Short, round, not exactly a supermodel. Do you know if she was with anyone?

Bartender – I think she was meeting someone, but the guy stood her up. Unless she ran into him on the way out...

The inspector takes out a small notebook and starts jotting notes.

Inspector – Had she been drinking heavily?

Bartender – She had a drink or two. When she left, she seemed steady on her feet and was walking straight...

Inspector – Did she seem depressed? Suicidal?

Bartender – Not particularly... She did say that if they found her drowned, she didn't want to be resuscitated. I took it as a joke...

Inspector – Looks like you were wrong. Did you notice anything else suspicious?

Bartender – No... Well, actually, yes. One of my customers went to the bathroom a good fifteen minutes ago and hasn't come back. Do you think I should've called the police...?

Inspector *(putting away the notebook)* – All right, all right... But that's not the only reason I'm here. As you probably know, the Chainsaw Killer of Namur—your father—is on the run. He hasn't tried to contact you, has he?

Bartender – No...

Inspector – Okay... I'll check back if I have more questions.

Bartender – Can I get you a drink, Inspector?

Inspector – Well...

Bartender – You'll see, it's very light. Goes down easy.

Inspector – A little indulgence in this cruel world...

The inspector relaxes and removes their hat. The bartender pours a cocktail. The inspector eyes it with some apprehension.

Inspector – Are you joining me?

Bartender *(nervously)* – At the station...?

Inspector – To toast!

Bartender – Oh! Uh... never while on duty.

The inspector takes a sip of the cocktail.

Inspector – Is that beef stock in there?

Bartender – Bingo. And...?

Inspector – Blood oranges?

Bartender – Impressive... You don't become an inspector for nothing.

The inspector finishes the drink.

Inspector – It's a bit surprising at first, but it grows on you...

The inspector gestures for a refill, and the bartender obliges.

Bartender – You'll find it's very restorative.

The inspector downs the drink in one go.

Inspector – Right... If you remember anything, or if your father gets in touch, let me know, okay? *(Handing over a card)* Here's my number.

Bartender *(reading the card) – The Pussy Palace, lesbian bar...* Got it.

The inspector snatches the card back and hands over another.

Inspector – Sorry, wrong one... Well, duty calls.

The slightly tipsy inspector exits. A phone starts ringing. The bartender picks it up.

Bartender – Hello...? Who's this? God? *(To himself)* I doubt God would ring me on my phone... Do I know Sodom and Gomorrah...? Listen, Dad... Okay, Jesus, if you prefer... I know it's you, so drop the act, all right? No, you can't stay here! Not even for one night. You'd better go straight back to Namur. You know how it ended last time...

The inspector reappears. The bartender hastily hangs up.

Inspector – Sorry, I forgot my hat.

The bartender gives a strained smile. The inspector puts the hat back on and leaves. The bartender sighs...

5 – The Man – The Bartender

The bartender is reading a science magazine as the man returns from the restroom. The bartender turns off the music.

Man – Ah, I feel so much lighter now...

Bartender – Took your time, didn't you?

Man – I must've fallen asleep. I don't even notice it anymore... I've got sleep apnea. It's terrible, you know. I can fall asleep anywhere—during job interviews, while making love... Even at the theatre sometimes... But the most dangerous is while driving. You can't imagine how much I've cost my insurance company.

Bartender *(returning to his magazine)* – Speaking of cars, listen to this: *(reading) "If a car managed to exceed the speed of light, its headlights would illuminate the road behind it instead of in front..."*

Man – That sounds like a great way to cause an accident.

Bartender – And the driver would arrive at their destination before they even left...

Man – That's not going to happen to me anytime soon. Especially on my way to work... I always go there backwards.

Bartender – Funny you mention that! At the speed of light, to get to work on time in the morning, you'd have to leave the night before... in reverse.

Man *(confused)* – In reverse...?

Bartender – So the headlights shine in the right direction!

As the man glances around the room, he suddenly spots the stunning blonde sitting at a table. His smile freezes.

Man – Fuck me!

Bartender – Not while I'm working, darling.

Man – Tell me that's not her...

Bartender – Who?

Man – Gwendolyn! The girl from the internet! Holy shit! Have you seen her? She was right not to post her photo online. I'd never have shown up...

Bartender – She's not bad... if you like blonde bombshells with built-in airbags...

Man – Not that bad? Are you kidding? Even in my dreams, I've never seen a girl like her! Let alone in real life... Do you think I've got a chance?

Bartender – Well, it was smart not to post your photo either. Otherwise, she wouldn't have shown up.

Man – Yeah, okay, but just because I'm ugly doesn't mean I have to go out with bloody monsters. Look at all the drop-dead gorgeous girls you see with guys who are horrendously... rich.

Bartender – What do you do for a living?

Man – Right now, I'm operations manager at McDonald's... But it's temporary...

Bartender – And you didn't tell her, of course. Though she might've guessed—I could smell the fries on you from across the street.

Man – I told her my name was Mac Donald, and that I was the boss's nephew...

Bartender – A nephew of Mac Donald...? Huey, Dewey, Louie?

Man – Ronald...

Bartender *(increasingly impressed)* – Ronald?

Man – It was the first name that came to mind.

Bartender – I once took a theatre workshop: *Discover your inner clown...* You didn't have to look very hard, did you?

Man – Right, I've got to take the plunge. Otherwise, I'll regret it for the rest of my life. But how do I start?

Bartender – You could say... I don't know... I found an old box of condoms that expire at the end of the month, and I hate wasting things. Or try the truth: 'Look, I'm horny as fuck. But after screwing all night like rabbits, we might discover we've actually got something in common.'

Man – All night... I wouldn't want to oversell myself.

Bartender – Well, Mr. Mac Donald...

Man *(looking at the blonde again)* – Wow... She's fucking gorgeous, isn't she?

Bartender – Sorry?

Man – Honestly, what do you think of her?

Bartender – Honestly? She's as warm as a walk-in freezer in the Arctic. But hey, asking me is like asking a vegetarian if they prefer their steak well done or rare.

The man starts to approach the blonde but hesitates before speaking to her.

6 – The Bartender – The Inspector

The inspector returns, looking even more tipsy, and approaches the bartender, who is wiping down the counter.

Inspector – I've got news...

Bartender – Oh, really?

Inspector – We went through the mobile phone they found on the bridge. The victim's phone... And guess what?

Bartender – What?

Inspector – The guy she was meeting... She met him on a website. A site I know very well, actually...

Bartender – No...?

Inspector – He set up the date here at your bar.

Bartender – And what's your conclusion, Inspector?

Inspector – It's clearly him who threw her in the Seine after trying to rape her. This dangerous psycho uses multiple aliases to lure his victims. He even called himself Gertrude...

Bartender – That does sound pretty unhinged...

Inspector – Don't worry, we'll catch him eventually. In the meantime, if you see this guy... Strangely, he sets up all his dates at your bar...

Bartender – Unfortunately, from what I've heard, he mostly stands them up.

The inspector seems to consider this.

Inspector – I knew it... It's a red herring to throw off the police. Who'd be stupid enough to set up all their dates at the same bar?

The inspector's phone rings, and they answer.

Inspector – Yeah...? Yeah... Yeah... Okay...

The inspector pockets the phone.

Inspector – They just found the victim's handbag in the Seine... in Le Havre. With all her ID inside.

Bartender – In Le Havre?

Inspector – With the current... A handbag can travel quite a distance in an hour. As for the body, it's probably in England by now. We'll likely never find it. *(Checking their watch)* Nearly midnight. Christ, I'm ready to collapse... Well, take care of yourself.

Bartender – Goodnight, Inspector...

The inspector leaves.

7 – The Man – The Blonde

The man, who had been hesitating, finally approaches the blonde timidly.

Man – Hello... *(Introducing himself)* Ronald.

Blonde *(surprised)* – Sorry?

Man – Mac Donald!

The blonde sizes him up for a moment before replying.

Blonde – Sorry, but I didn't order anything...

Man *(flustered)* – We spoke on a dating site: straight-to-the-point.com! My username's Ronaldo. You're not Gwendolyn?

Blonde – No... My name is Gwyneth.

Man – Gwyneth...? *(Trying to joke)* Well, it's almost the same, isn't it?

She gives him a frosty look, putting him in his place.

Man – Sorry, I'll leave you alone...

The man starts to walk away but stops himself.

Man – Could I invite you to dinner sometime?

Blonde – Let's see... Today's Friday... I think I'm free on February 29, 2052. It's a leap year.

The man doesn't falter.

Man – How about a drink right now, then...?

Blonde *(sarcastic)* – While you wait for Gwendolyn?

Man – No, actually... She's just someone I was supposed to interview for a job...

Blonde – You recruit employees on dating sites?

Man – I prefer single ones—they can stay late and work evenings. And at least on dating sites, I know they're single... Come on, let me buy you a drink. It's my pleasure.

Blonde – For your information, I'm waiting for someone too... *(Sniffing the air with a disgusted look)* Is it just me, or does it smell like fries in here? *(Curious, as if wanting to make sure she's not missing something)* And what do you do for a living?

Man – I work with my uncle... in the food business.

Blonde – Your uncle...?

Man – Mac Donald! My name's Ronald. That's why I used Ronaldo as my username on *straight-to-the-point.com*. My friends call me Ronny...

Blonde *(astonished)* – And you're really the nephew of...

Man – Uncle Scrooge... That's what I call him, just teasing, you know. He's a bit tight with money, but hey... I'm his only heir. I'm not going to complain about him looking after his fortune.

Blonde *(suspicious)* – Funny, you don't have an American accent...

Man – Oh, no, I was born here! It's... the French branch of the McDonald family. I do visit the States sometimes to see my uncle at headquarters, to discuss global strategy... But mostly, I focus on developing the network in the northern suburbs of Paris. You should come eat at one of our places sometime—you'll be my guest.

Blonde *(dubious)* – Why not...

Man – What'll you have to drink?

Blonde – I don't know... Something not too strong, I guess...

Man – Trust me?

She gives him a cold smile. The man heads to the bar.

8 – The Man – The Bartender

The man approaches the bar. The bartender is once again absorbed in his science magazine.

Man – It's not her...

Bartender *(looking up, confused)* – Who?

Man – Gwyneth, the girl from the... No, Gwendolyn! The one from the dating site! But hey, I might as well take my shot, right? The other one isn't coming now anyway. And she was probably a complete nightmare.

The man glances toward the blonde.

Man – Have you seen her? I can picture her, naked in the bath, lathering her legs with a soapy sponge...

Bartender – Imagine her in a dressing gown, standing in the kitchen, peeling onions with rubber gloves on...

Man – That excites me even more...

Bartender *(rolling his eyes)* – Right, what can I get you?

Man – I'll have my second free cocktail now...

Bartender – And for the lady?

Man – My free second cocktail. For her.

The bartender sighs and pours the second cocktail.

Man – You're right. When you've got a difficult look, you have to rely on humour. I'll try to make her laugh... *(Pauses to think)* Do you happen to know any good jokes?

The bartender places the drink in front of him and gives him a pointed look.

Man – Okay, I'll manage...

The man takes his drink and starts toward the blonde's table. He pauses and turns back to the bartender one last time.

Man – You did make sure to remove everything floating on the surface, right?

The bartender nods, looking weary. The man continues on and sits at the blonde's table.

9 – The Bartender – The Psychopath

An ominous-looking man enters, dressed like a lumberjack. He carries a travel bag with a chainsaw blade sticking out of it. It's the Chainsaw Killer of Namur, and incidentally, the bartender's father.

Bartender – Dad...? What are you doing here?

Psychopath – I couldn't pass through Paris without giving my darling boy a kiss!

Bartender – I told you, you can't stay here!

Psychopath – Just for a day or two...

Bartender – The police have been here... They're looking for you...

Psychopath – You wouldn't rat out your own father, would you? Judas!

Bartender – If they find you here, I'll be in trouble too!

The psychopath notices the punch bowl.

Psychopath – At least pour me a drink... I'm parched...

Reluctantly, the bartender serves him a glass of the cocktail.

10 – The Man – The Blonde

The man is sitting at the table across from the blonde.

Man – You'll see, it's very invigorating.

Blonde – It tastes a bit strange... What is it?

Man – The house cocktail...

Blonde – Smells a bit like crab, doesn't it?

Man – Who knows... The bartender has guarded the recipe for generations. But, you know, taste is subjective... The Mexicans eat grilled grasshoppers as snacks with their drinks. Did you know that in some parts of the world, people even eat the placenta after childbirth? My ex used to eat earthworms. She said they were packed with protein...

Blonde – I can see why you broke up with her...

Man – Actually, she dumped me, but...

Blonde – Oh, really...?

Man – One day, she said to me: "You're the funniest man I know. Shame you're also the stupidest..."

Blonde – Look, it's not that I'm bored, but my friend should be here any minute... *(Checking her watch)* Actually, he should already be here...

Man – If I had a date at a café in the evening with someone like you, I'd be there at opening time in the morning to make sure I didn't miss it.

Blonde – And yet, with a name like Mac Donald, you must be in high demand, no?

Man – You wouldn't believe how isolating wealth can be. Contrary to what people think, even women are intimidated. They're so afraid of being seen as gold-diggers...

Blonde – Believe me, I understand. It's the same for the most beautiful women, you know... No man dares approach them. They're so afraid of being seen as someone who only cares about a woman's looks...

Man – That's probably why the richest men end up marrying the most beautiful women...

Blonde *(philosophical)* – The meeting of two lonely souls...

An awkward silence follows.

Man – Do you know why blondes love water-skiing?

The bartender shoots the man a disapproving look.

Blonde – No...

Man – They get wet, spread their legs, and let some rich bastard tow them around. It's basically their dream date... What? You've never heard that one?

The blonde forces a smile.

Blonde – Can't imagine why nobody's told me that one before... But I wouldn't want to interfere with... Gwendolyn.

Man – Don't worry. She didn't have the qualifications for the position anyway. She probably realised that herself and decided not to come...

At that moment, the brunette reappears, looking like she's just been dragged out of a dumpster, her outfit and hair in complete chaos.

Blonde – Oh... Looks like she did.

Man – Sorry?

The blonde gestures toward the brunette.

Blonde – Isn't that your date? The job interview...?

The man notices the brunette and grimaces.

Blonde – Well, I'll leave you to it then.

Man *(disappointed)* – Will I see you later? It won't take long. Just enough time to explain she's not the right fit...

Blonde – I'll use the time to powder my nose. *(Her jittery demeanour makes one wonder if she means makeup or a line of coke.)* If we don't meet again, I will call you...

Man – But you don't have my number...!

Blonde – I'll look you up in the Yellow Pages... under Mac Donald.

The blonde heads to the restroom.

Man – And I'll get the bill, of course.

The man exhales in relief after the tense interaction, then turns his gaze toward the brunette, who stumbles toward the bar like a zombie.

Man – Ah, yes... Now that's much more believable...

He still takes a moment to fix his hair and think about how to approach her.

11 – The Psychopath – The Brunette

The bartender stays in the background behind the bar. The psychopath leans on the counter, holding a glass of the house cocktail.

Psychopath – This is fantastic... You'll have to give me the recipe.

The brunette enters, her disheveled appearance and unkempt state catching the psychopath's attention.

Psychopath – What happened to you? Did you get run over by a fucking garbage truck?

Brunette – I stopped on a bridge to get some air and have a cigarette. I sat on the edge to make a phone call, and somehow... I dropped my bag. I must've slipped trying to catch the bloody thing before it fell into the water... and I went over the railing.

Psychopath – You fell into the Seine? But you're not even wet...

Brunette – I got lucky. There was a barge full of sand passing underneath at that exact moment. I landed on it, which cushioned the fall. They dropped me off a little further down. Unfortunately, my handbag got carried away by the current. And now I can't find my phone...

Psychopath – Fancy going to the cinema? *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is playing just next door.

The bartender shoots the psychopath a dark look.

12 – The Man – The Brunette

The man approaches the brunette.

Man – Excuse me... Are you Gwendolyn?

Brunette *(hesitant, slightly surprised)* – Uh... That depends...

Man – Ah, I see. A pseudonym, perhaps? I'm Ronaldo. The one you were meeting.

The brunette looks even more surprised.

Brunette – Oh, right...

Man – Shall we sit down for a bit?

Brunette – Sure, why not...

They sit down, under the bartender's curious gaze and the psychopath's intrigued expression. An awkward silence follows.

Man – I recognised you right away.

Brunette – Did you?

Man – I don't know... It's just the name... Gwendolyn. You picture someone, you know?

Brunette – So, you pictured a short, slightly chubby brunette who looks like she's been dragged through a dump...?

Man *(smiling)* – And you...? Not too horrified to see me in person?

Brunette – A little... but, you know, not in a bad way. I might even say I'm pleasantly surprised.

Man – Like my uncle says, love is like a burger: it may be cheap meat, but when you're starving, you don't complain. (*Pausing, then sympathetically*) Speaking of ground meat, I'm terribly sorry about your mother...

Brunette *(cautiously)* – Thank you...

Man – My dad always used to say, 'Your mother — only thing she's never been under is a train.' Better that than having a train on top of her, I suppose.

The brunette looks puzzled. The bartender approaches their table to take the order.

Man – Would you like something?

Brunette *(hesitant)* – I'm not sure... Maybe...

Man *(cutting in, to the bartender)* – Coffee and a glass of water. I'll have the water.

The bartender rolls his eyes and heads back to the bar.

Man – So, you're an embalmer?

The brunette looks startled but doesn't deny it.

Man – That must be... fascinating. But what does it actually involve?

The brunette hesitates, looking a little flustered.

Brunette – Well... How can I explain... It's a bit like...

The man suddenly slumps forward onto the table and starts snoring.

Brunette – I'll go get the order myself. I really need a good coffee...

The brunette signals to the bartender, who was already heading over with the coffee and water, to not bother.

13 – The Brunette – The Psychopath

The psychopath is still leaning on the counter. The bartender whispers something in his ear before disappearing into the cellar. The brunette approaches.

Brunette – Who's that guy?

Psychopath – Isn't he the one you were waiting for?

Brunette – I had a date with a guy called Charles I met on a website. His photo was just as blurry as mine, but he didn't look anything like that...

Psychopath – Even so, I'd say stick with it. Might be your one chance to avoid dying single.

Brunette – Thanks for the pep talk... Though he doesn't seem too invested in our conversation right now.

The brunette grabs the coffee and glass of water. She's about to return to the man's table but hesitates.

Brunette – Do you know what an embalmer is...?

Psychopath – I do.

Brunette – And...?

Psychopath – Ever watched *Six Feet Under*?

Brunette – No...

Psychopath *(surprised)* – Don't you have a TV?

Brunette – I do, but I bought it second-hand. It only picks up one foreign channel, in black and white. And it's dubbed into German. Needless to say, I don't watch it much.

Psychopath – Well, it's about two brothers who run a funeral home. One of them is gay... and an embalmer.

Brunette – You can be gay and an embalmer...?

The psychopath stares at her, baffled.

Brunette – Never mind, I'll figure it out...

She walks back to the table.

14 – The Brunette – The Man

The brunette returns to the man's table and sets the coffee and glass of water down.

Brunette – Excuse me... Here's your water...

The man wakes up suddenly, as if he had never fallen asleep.

Brunette – Are you sure you wouldn't prefer the coffee...?

Man – No, thanks. If I drink coffee, I can't sleep at night...

Brunette – Ah...

They exchange an awkward look. To regain composure, she downs her coffee in one gulp.

Brunette – That wakes you up.

Man – You take it without sugar?

Brunette – That surprises you?

Man – Not really. I just think of those people who order a giant burger, extra fries, a massive dessert... and a diet cola. So, been on that dating site long?

Brunette – Uh... not really. A friend suggested I sign up... right before he dumped me.

Man – And... what's your type?

Brunette – Looks, you know... They're not the most important thing for me.

Man – That's a relief...

Brunette – No... I'm looking for a man who can see a woman's inner beauty.

Man *(with a lecherous grin)* – I see. Not the type to ask about your taste in books while imagining you naked in a thong...

Silence.

Man – So, what are you reading right now?

Brunette – Oh... I'm nearly finished with this big book a friend lent me. I can't remember the title, but it's about a woman who...

The man suddenly slumps onto the table again and starts snoring. The brunette, initially surprised, pulls out a small Harlequin-style paperback from her pocket and starts reading while waiting for him to wake up.

15 – The Bartender – The Psychopath – The Blonde

The bartender returns and addresses his psychopathic father.

Bartender – All right, you can sleep in the cellar tonight. I've set up a camp bed for you. But I don't want to see you here tomorrow, understood?

The psychopath grins broadly and wanders off to explore the premises. The blonde reappears from the restroom, sniffing the last traces of cocaine. She stops at the bar and points toward the man talking to the brunette.

Blonde – Do you know that guy?

Bartender – Depends. What do you want to know?

Blonde – Like, if he's a schizophrenic on day release, for example.

Bartender *(glancing toward his father)* – Does he think he's the son of God, too?

Blonde – Worse... He thinks he's the heir to the McDonald's empire.

Bartender – Wouldn't surprise me if he's got some Scottish blood. His wallet's got barbed wire round it. Right next to his expired condoms and a credit card that's probably on life support...

Blonde *(looking at the man)* – Ugh, forget it. Even if he's really rich... His ex was right: he's an idiot. And anyway, I'm not Gwendolyn.

Bartender – Yeah, I know...

Blonde *(surprised)* – Oh, you do?

Bartender – It's me.

Blonde – Excuse me?

Bartender – Gwendolyn. It's my pseudonym for chatting on dating sites... I also go by Charles, Karl... or Gertrude.

The blonde is stunned.

Blonde – Oh, I see... So everyone was supposed to meet you? I could've waited till the fucking end of time for my Karl...

Bartender – At first, I only used female names. Registration is free for women on dating sites. Then I figured I'd cast a wider net.

Blonde – Cast a wider net...?

Bartender *(gesturing toward the empty room)* – It's the recession. Even gay bars are struggling to make ends meet... So I trawl dating sites for desperate singles. Men, women, gay, straight... I can't afford to be picky anymore. Not with my overheads. And I schedule their dates here during Happy Hour...

Blonde – But Gwendolyn or Karl never show up... That's cruel.

Bartender – Sometimes, between no-shows, people actually hit it off.

Blonde – And your real name is...?

Bartender – Alfred.

Blonde – Oh, that's... That's unique.

Bartender – My dad loves Hitchcock. Ever seen *Psycho*?

Blonde – Isn't that the one about the blonde who goes to a bar where some creepy guy keeps his dead mother stuffed in the cellar?

Bartender – Kind of...

Blonde – Well, I never would've guessed Gwendolyn was you.

Bartender – Appearances can be deceiving. One time, at a costume party, I kissed a guy who was dressed as a firefighter.

Blonde – And?

Bartender – He really was a firefighter... Even at gay parties, we take health and safety very seriously.

Blonde – Did he punch you?

Bartender – Not even.

Blonde – Was he gay?

Bartender – No. But I was dressed as a nurse...

The bartender notices the inspector returning. He grabs the empty punch bowl and discreetly signals his father to follow him. The psychopath picks up his bag, the chainsaw blade still sticking out, and trails behind.

Bartender – No more house cocktail. I'll head to the cellar to whip up another batch of this fine elixir... away from prying eyes.

The blonde is left alone at the bar.

16 – The Blonde – The Inspector

The inspector stumbles into the bar, visibly drunk, and approaches the blonde leaning against the counter.

Inspector – Is the owner around?

A chainsaw noise is heard in the distance. The inspector looks intrigued.

Blonde – He stepped out for a moment...

Inspector – I'll wait.

The inspector glances around the bar.

Inspector – Do you come here often?

Blonde – Just so you know, I'm not a lesbian.

Inspector – My mistake... So, I suppose your name isn't Gertrude?

Blonde – Do I look like a Gertrude to you?

The inspector eyes the blonde suspiciously.

Inspector – Well, with all that shit you're shoving up your nose, I'd keep a low profile if I were you, okay?

The inspector shows her a card.

Blonde *(reading)* – City swimming pool... Ten-entry pass?

The inspector realises her mistake.

Inspector – Sorry, wrong one.

She hands over her police badge instead.

Inspector – Should I ask you to open your bag...?

Blonde *(meekly)* – Sorry...

Inspector – All right, then. Better cooperate. Let me ask again. Do you come here often?

Blonde – No... I live in the suburbs.

Inspector – It's not very safe for a woman to be wandering around here alone, you know... You could end up in the Seine tomorrow morning... in two pieces...

Blonde – Thanks... I'll be careful on my way home.

Inspector – Want me to walk you to the nearest taxi stand?

Blonde – I'm meeting someone.

Inspector – Someone...?

Blonde – A man... I met him on a dating site.

The inspector shakes her head disapprovingly.

Blonde – I figured meeting in a bar was safe. Especially a gay bar...

Inspector – Your friend's gay?

Blonde – I... I don't think so. At least, I didn't when I agreed to this date...

Inspector – Not very clear, is it... *(Hands her a card.)* Here, if you have any trouble, call me.

Blonde – Emergency Plumbers... Great, thanks.

Inspector – Oops, wrong one again. *(Hands her a different card.)* Right, I'll keep patrolling. I mean, investigating... Let the owner know I stopped by, will you? It reassures people to see the police out and about, you know.

The inspector starts to leave.

Blonde – You were looking for someone named Gertrude...?

Inspector *(cryptically)* – I've been known to trawl dating sites myself...

The inspector exits.

17 – The Man – The Brunette

The man wakes up and awkwardly resumes his conversation with the brunette.

Man – Gwyneth... That's a beautiful name...

Brunette – Yes... *(Hesitating)* But my name's Gwendolyn, isn't it...?

Man *(unfazed)* – That's a Celtic name, right? Are you of Scottish descent?

Brunette – Uh... No, not that I know of...

Man – All the better, all the better... With my surname, it's not hard to guess my heritage. I was born in Edinburgh...

Brunette – Funny, you have more of a Mediterranean look...

Man – Oh, no, I'm not really Scottish... It's my uncle's side of the family, and... *(Awkward silence)* Do you know why Scots only use one spur when riding horses?

The brunette feigns curiosity.

Brunette – No...

Man – When you can make half the horse gallop, the other half follows automatically.

Brunette *(forcing a smile)* – Right... Of course it does...

Man – That's a lovely sweater you're wearing.

Brunette – You really think so?

Man – It's not exactly flattering, but it must be warm in winter. And hey, there's room for two in there. If we go camping, we could always pitch it as a tent...

Brunette – Excuse me for a moment. I just spotted a friend...

The brunette gets up and heads toward the bar.

18 – The Blonde – The Brunette

The brunette approaches the blonde at the bar.

Brunette – Are you Gwendolyn?

Blonde – Depends... How much will you pay me not to be?

Brunette *(holding out a bill)* – Ten euros, good enough?

Blonde – Twenty?

Brunette *(adding another bill)* – Deal.

Blonde *(pocketing the money)* – So, do you actually like him, or are you just hoping for free burgers?

Brunette – I don't know... *(Casting a tender glance at the man, who gives her a goofy wave)* He kind of makes me pity him. Maybe he triggers my maternal instinct. That's probably how those hideous rock stars end up with supermodels...

Blonde – Rock stars have money. And let's be fair, you're not exactly a supermodel yourself.

Brunette – Thanks... Then again, you could always try your luck with the lumberjack. I think he's interested in you.

The blonde turns toward the psychopath, who reappears alone, his shirt stained with blood, as he takes the bartender's place behind the counter. He sets a punch bowl full of cocktail on the bar.

Blonde *(vaguely intrigued)* – Did he say that?

Brunette *(playfully conspiratorial)* – It's obvious... Have you seen the way he looks at you? Word is, he runs a big lumber business in Canada.

The psychopath flashes the blonde a sinister smile.

Blonde *(hesitant)* – Oh, really...?

Brunette *(mischievously)* – Good luck. *(She heads back toward the man but stops mid-step.)* I'd better get this fucking cocktail out of my system, or I'll puke all over him. That wouldn't make the best first impression...

The brunette heads to the restroom. The blonde hesitates for a moment before leaving the bar.

19 – The Psychopath – The Man

The man approaches the counter and addresses the psychopath.

Man – Just my luck. Two years without getting laid and now two fucking bombshells in the same hour...

Psychopath – It's Happy Hour... Go on, this one's on me.

The psychopath pours him a third glass of the house cocktail.

Man – Her jeans are so tight, I'm worried the buttons might pop off and hit me in the face while I'm talking to her...

Psychopath – Which one are we talking about now?

Man – What do you think of the brunette? She's no great beauty, but... She doesn't look like she only sucks lollipops. And my last girlfriend told me my dick looked like one. So what do you reckon? With my skiing skills, should I try the brunette beginner slope or the blonde black run?

The psychopath gives him a disheartened look.

Psychopath – Personally, I prefer going off-piste.

The brunette returns and sits down.

Man *(to the brunette)* – Be right back... *(To the psychopath)* When Daisy Duck finds out I'm not Scrooge McDuck's nephew, I'll look like Mickey Mouse, but hey...

The man downs his glass in one gulp.

Man – Doesn't matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mouse...

Psychopath – Walt Disney?

Man – Deng Xiaoping. I think I need to be realistic. No point in chasing shadows when I've already got the prey...

The man heads back to the brunette.

20 – The Man – The Brunette

The man returns to the brunette but remains standing.

Man – Fancy a film? *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is showing next door.

Brunette *(standing up, feigning enthusiasm)* – Fantastic... And after that, shall we grab some McDonald's?

Man – Burgers? Not really my thing, you know... Too much like work. As my uncle says: *"You'll never find a urologist at a nudist camp..."*

The brunette, caught off guard, forces a polite smile.

Man – No, I prefer my meat rare... You driving?

Brunette – I'm more of a public transport person. And you?

Man – Up until now, I've been more into solo commuting. But now that I've met you...

They leave together. As they walk off, the brunette discreetly signals to the psychopath that everything's under control.

Man – Embalmer... That's like a chiropractor, only for dead people, right?

Brunette *(embarrassed)* – Kind of...

They exit.

21 – The Psychopath – The Blonde

The psychopath is alone behind the counter, reading a magazine titled Undertaker Monthly *while listening to a melancholy French song about dying onstage. The blonde returns, visibly more pleasant and determined to charm him. The psychopath switches off the music.*

Psychopath – I should've warned you—this cocktail can be addictive.

Blonde *(flirtatiously)* – A love potion, then... Is that your secret for keeping customers loyal?

Psychopath – Anyone who survives it comes crawling back... *(Surprised by her sudden charm offensive)* Fancy one last drink? It's freshly made!

The psychopath pours her another cocktail. They toast. The blonde gazes at him with a languid expression.

Blonde – You're a Dalida fan?

Psychopath – I've got all her records...

Blonde – I dream of becoming famous too.

Psychopath – Got any particular talent?

Blonde – Oh, no, I don't want to be famous for talent. I want to be famous for being famous. Like Paris Hilton...

Psychopath – Well... Then pick a stage name. How about... London Marriott?

The blonde smiles, though it's unclear if she gets the joke.

Psychopath – Hard to believe a beautiful woman like you struggles to find a date.

Blonde – Men are like jockeys. They're always looking for a fresh mount.

Psychopath *(philosophical)* – Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free...

Blonde *(sighing)* – Men... Most are so frustrated that, honestly, I'm not sure they'd notice the difference between me and a corpse...

Psychopath – Trust me, there's a difference...

Blonde – Bunch of jerks... My best friend's husband kicked her out when she was pregnant.

Psychopath – Kicked her out? What was she, a football?

Blonde *(sighing)* – I swear, I'm careful. The kind of guys you meet in clubs... They say they're airline pilots but can't even buy you a drink. You, though—you look like a refined man...

She glances at his Death Care magazine.

Blonde – Are you an embalmer too?

Psychopath – Just an amateur.

Blonde – And what does it involve, exactly?

Psychopath – What do you do?

Blonde – I'm a beautician.

Psychopath *(matter-of-factly)* – Embalming is a bit like what you do... except the blondes are dead.

The blonde seems to process this information.

Blonde – Oh, I see...

Psychopath – It's a fascinating profession, don't you think?

Blonde – Sure... And how did you get into it?

Psychopath – At my wife's funeral. They did wonders reattaching her head...

Blonde *(swallowing nervously)* – Right... I see...

Psychopath – Well, closing time...

He lowers an ominous-sounding metal shutter off-screen.

Psychopath – I can walk you home if it's on my way.

Blonde – Why not?

Psychopath – We'll go out the back door...

He gestures for her to head toward the exit.

Psychopath – Watch your step. Those stairs are a killer.

Blonde *(nervously laughing)* – So's your fucking cocktail. What the hell did you put in it?

Psychopath – Nothing but natural ingredients, don't worry... Practically organic.

She pulls out a pocket mirror and checks her reflection.

Blonde – This "natural look" isn't working for me. I look half-dead...

Psychopath – Don't worry, we'll give you a makeover...

He switches off the lights as an ominous instrumental theme plays. The lights come back on. The loud roar of a chainsaw fills the air. The lights go out again.

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 ...
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/

This text is protected under copyright laws.
Criminal copyright infringement will be investigated
and may result in a maximum penalty of up to 3 years in prison
and a EUR 300,000 fine.

Avignon – January 2025
https://comediatheque.net/
Play available for free download
ISBN : 978-2-38602-316-3