

La Comédiathèque

# The Castaways of New Year's Eve

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# **The Castaways of New Year's Eve**

**Jean-Pierre Martinez**

That little moment of panic on December 31st, when you realise you have no plans for the evening... You're ready to accept any invitation just to avoid ringing in the New Year alone. Even at the risk of having the worst New Year's Eve of your life.

**Characters:**

Sissi: the depressed loser  
Alex: the Parisian guest  
Pat: the provincial guest  
Ben: the Facebook invitee  
Jo: the prostitute (or the drag queen)

5 characters (gender-adaptable)

**Possible casts:**

5M, 1M/4F, 2M/3F, 3M/2F, 4M/1F, 5F

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*The living room of an empty flat, but prepared for a low-cost New Year's Eve party (kitschy decorations, sparse buffet). A few scattered boxes double as seats or tables. Against a partition wall, a panel displaying variously shaped pipes. At the back of the stage, a pop-up camping tent. The phone rings. The answering machine picks up.*

**Sissi** (*off*) – Hello, you've reached Sissi. I can't answer the phone right now. I've decided to kill myself. No point leaving a message either—I won't be calling you back.

**Guest 1** (*off*) – Very funny, your voicemail, well done. Listen, I'm calling to let you know... I'm really sorry, but I won't be able to make it to yours tonight for New Year's Eve. I completely forgot I already had another invitation. So... well, have a great evening, Happy New Year, and most importantly, stay healthy.

*The tent unzips, revealing Sissi, like a zombie emerging from a box. Sissi is a pale young man with an ambiguous sexuality. He gulps down an entire box of pills in one go before retreating back into the tent. The phone rings again.*

**Sissi** (*off*) – Hello, you've reached Sissi. I can't answer the phone right now. I've decided to kill myself. No point leaving a message either—I won't be calling you back.

**Guest 2** (*off*) – Hi Sissi, hope you're doing well. Just calling to say, well, tonight's not going to work out after all. I've got a friend who... Anyway, it's not happening. Have a good one, buddy, and maybe see you next year.

*Sissi re-emerges to gulp down the contents of a second box of pills, then disappears into the tent once more.*

**Blackout suggests a time lapse. Lights up.**

*The sound of a doorbell. No one comes to open the door. Alex, the Parisian, trendy yet casually dressed, enters carrying a bottle of sparkling wine. She glances around suspiciously before stepping further inside.*

**Alex** – Is anyone here?

*When no one responds, she glances curiously at the tent and then moves towards the buffet on the opposite side. While her back is turned, Pat, a slightly uptight provincial woman who has put effort into her rather questionable New Year's Eve outfit, enters holding a bottle of champagne. Alex, unaware of Pat's arrival, hesitates before grabbing a handful of peanuts. She turns around and jumps when she sees Pat.*

**Alex** – Oh, bloody hell, you scared me.

**Pat** – Sorry, the door was open, so I let myself in.

**Alex** – Right.

**Pat** – I'm... a friend of Chris. She's the one who invited me.

**Alex** – OK... Looks like, she's not here yet.

**Pat** – No... I hope you don't mind.

**Alex** – That Chris isn't here yet?

**Pat** – That she invited me.

**Alex** – Oh no, but... this isn't my place. I'm a friend of... Well, I've forgotten their name, but... Anyway, since I didn't have any New Year's plans, they suggested I come along.

**Pat** – Apparently, they're not here yet either.

**Alex** – No... I've never actually met them, but... If I see them, I'll probably recognise them. At least, I hope so...

**Pat** – Who?

**Alex** – Well... the person who invited me. The one whose name I've forgotten and who isn't here yet.

**Pat** – Oh yes... Though, you know, it's not always easy to recognise someone you've never met before, especially in a crowd...

**Alex** – A crowd...

**Pat** – Just kidding. Seeing as it's only the two of us so far...

**Alex** (*introducing herself*) – I'm Alex.

**Pat** – Pat.

*Silence. Alex looks around.*

**Alex** – I've no idea whose place this is, to be honest... I don't even know who invited me.

**Pat** – Same here. Well, I know who invited me, but...

**Alex** – New Year's Eve plans... always rubbish. Same story every year. You're terrified of ending up alone, like a complete idiot.

**Pat** – Yes...

**Alex** – I had plans, but... they fell through at the last minute. So this is Plan B...

**Pat** – I see...

**Alex** – And you?

**Pat** – Oh no, I... I didn't even have a Plan A. And so you... You've no idea whose place this is?

**Alex** – No... Well, I know where we are, but... I was just sent the address.

**Pat** – Yeah, same here... A colleague gave it to me...

**Alex** – Chris.

**Pat** – That's right... But are you really sure... I mean, are you really sure this is the place?

**Alex** – What address were you given?

*Pat hands her a scrap of paper. Alex looks at it.*

**Alex** – Looks like this is the right one.

**Pat** – Maybe we got the wrong floor.

**Alex** – Meh... There's a buffet, isn't there? Whether it's here or somewhere else...

**Pat** – Yeah...

**Alex** – Did they say it was a formal party?

**Pat** – I don't think so. No. Why?

**Alex** – Just, with how you're dressed, you know...

**Pat** – It's New Year's Eve, isn't it?

**Alex** – I just came as I am.

**Pat** – Right... Still, it's a bit odd.

**Alex** – What is?

**Pat** – There's no one here.

**Alex** – Yeah, I don't know...

**Pat** – Maybe they didn't hear us.

**Alex** – Didn't hear us? You mean...

**Pat** – The people who invited us... I mean, the ones who live here...

**Alex** – Or maybe they're next door... still getting ready.

**Pat** – Next door? It doesn't seem very big.

**Alex** – In the bathroom, maybe.

**Pat** – That's probably why they left the door open—so we could come in and wait.

**Alex** – Yeah.

*An awkward silence. Pat's gaze settles on the tent.*

**Pat** – That's strange... What's with the tent?

**Alex** – I don't know... Maybe it's the guest room.

**Pat** – Yeah... For anyone who'd rather stay over after the party.

*A pause.*

**Alex** – You brought champagne.

**Pat** – Yeah.

**Alex** – Nice.

**Pat** – I was told to bring a bottle. You too, I suppose...

**Alex** – Yeah. Though we're not opening champagne just yet...

**Pat** – No. Especially since it'd make a noise. You know, with the cork.

**Alex** – That might get them to come out. (*She moves toward the buffet*) There's sangria. Sangria's quiet. Want some?

**Pat** – Maybe we should wait until they show up. Don't you think?

**Alex** – Yeah, you're right...

**Pat** – Still, it's not exactly crowded.

**Alex** – And to think, the whole point was not to spend New Year's Eve alone.

**Pat** – Well, at least there are two of us... Still, it's strange. It's nearly eleven. Surely they're not in bed already.

**Alex** – Or maybe they're shagging.

*Pat looks at her, slightly shocked.*

**Alex** – We'll wait until they're done. They shouldn't take too long.

**Pat** – I don't know...

**Alex** – Do you have another plan for New Year's? I mean, a party you could invite me to?

**Pat** – No... Like I said, no Plan B...

**Alex** – What time is it?

**Pat** – Five minutes ago, it was eleven. (*Checking her watch*) It's five past eleven now.

**Alex** – In that case, we don't have much choice. If we don't want to end the year alone.

**Pat** – At least there are two of us.

**Alex** – We've already said that, haven't we?

**Pat** – Yeah, maybe...

*A pause.*

**Alex** – That little moment of panic on New Year's Eve, around 8 pm, when you've got no plans for the night. It's enough to make you want to kill yourself, isn't it?

**Pat** – Yeah... Actually, did you know there's a spike in suicides on New Year's Eve?

**Alex** – No, but that doesn't surprise me at all. How do you know that? Are you a mortician?



**Pat** – I'm a postman.

**Alex** – A postman?

**Pat** – Well, a postwoman. And I've noticed we deliver way more death notices in January.

**Alex** – You're not confusing them with Christmas cards, are you?

**Pat** – I'm from Brittany... That's where I took my postal exams.

**Alex** – There's an exam to become a postman?

**Pat** – Of course there is... Though I must not have done very well. I asked for Saint-Malo, but I ended up in the northern suburbs of Paris.

**Alex** – Got it... But tell me, don't postmen throw a ball for New Year's Eve?

**Pat** – Postmen? No, that's for the firefighters.

**Alex** – That's right... Firefighters...

**Pat** – I don't know anyone in Paris. So Chris told me that...

**Alex** – Oh, I understand...

**Pat** – And you?

**Alex** – Me? I was born in Paris. But don't worry, I don't know anyone either.

**Pat** – Oh, I see...

**Alex** – Otherwise, you can bet I wouldn't be here tonight, alone with someone I don't know, invited by someone I don't know, in the home of someone I don't know.

**Pat** – And what about you? What do you do? I mean, for a living...

**Alex** – I'm a binman.

**Pat** – Oh, right...

**Alex** – Well, a binwoman. But there's no exam for that, you know.

**Pat** – And I suppose binmen don't throw a ball for New Year's Eve either.

**Alex** – Shame, really. It could be quite a sight.

**Pat** – I didn't know there were female binmen.

**Alex** – It's a profession that's seeing a lot more women these days. Probably another milestone in the fight for gender equality.

**Pat** – Yeah, that's great... And... is it an interesting job? Sorry, that's a stupid question... Picking up other people's rubbish, obviously... It's already such a chore just dragging your own out to the kerb.

**Alex** – No, but it's... It's not that bad, actually.

**Pat** – Really?

**Alex** – At least you feel like you're doing something useful. I mean... more than a suburban teacher or a juvenile court judge.

**Pat** – Yeah... I think being a postman is an unfairly undervalued job too. Honestly, we're helping people as well. Our jobs aren't so different. And in a way, we're almost competitors. At this time of year.

**Alex** – Competitors?

**Pat** – For calendars!

**Alex** – Oh, right... No, but for me, being a binman is temporary. I'm just doing it to cover the fees for acting school.

**Pat** – Oh, I see... That's great... So you're an actress?

**Alex** – Yeah... Well, for now, I'm mostly a binman. But I'm working on a project to stage a play I've written.

**Pat** – No way!

**Alex** – *The Games of Chance and Love.*

**Pat** – Wow...

**Alex** – It's inspired by the famous play by Marivaux, you know?

**Pat** – Oh, I see...

**Alex** – It's a romantic comedy, but very contemporary at the same time.

**Pat** – And what's it about?

**Alex** – It's a bit complicated, but... Basically, it's the story of a young virgin who plays the lottery to afford a prostitute.

**Pat** – Oh, that's... It sounds interesting. But I imagine staging a play like that must be expensive.

**Alex** – I did a crowdfunding campaign. But just to be safe, I also bought a ticket for the New Year's Eve Superdraw.

*Alex shows the ticket. Pat looks at it, sceptical.*

**Pat** (*checking her watch*) – We'll wait. We don't really have a choice, do we? The other guests will surely arrive.

**Alex** – Yeah...

**Pat** – What's with all these boxes? Looks like someone's moving out...

**Alex** – The good thing is, if we get drunk, we won't break anything. And if we're too far gone to go home, we can always crash in the tent.

**Pat** – I don't know where we could chill the champagne if we're not drinking it straight away. Champagne's better when it's cold. Is yours cold?



**Alex** – It's a bottle of budget bubbly. I couldn't spring for Veuve Clicquot, not with my bank account. But it's ice cold—I left it in the freezer.

*Pat looks at the bottle.*

**Pat** – Oh wow, it's completely frozen...

**Alex** – Yeah... A giant ice cube with bubbles inside.

**Pat** – You'd better not put it in the fridge, then.

**Alex** – You're right... We'll let it thaw a bit...

*An awkward silence.*

**Pat** – This is what they call waiting for things to thaw...

**Alex** – Yeah.

**Pat** – How much is the New Year's Eve Superdraw jackpot?

**Alex** – Twenty million. If I win, you won't need to wish me a Happy New Year.

**Pat** – Twenty million... I can't even imagine... What would you do with twenty million?

**Alex** – I don't know... I guess you'd start by buying yourself some friends to spend New Year's Eve with. I mean... friends who are at least halfway decent. Not like us, you know.

*Ben enters, goth look. Acne on her face, holding a bottle of cider.*

**Alex** (*lowering her voice*) – And definitely not like her.

**Ben** – Hi...

**Alex** – Hi.

**Ben** – Uh... Is this the right place?

**Alex** – Yeah, but you're too late. Halloween was two months ago, and we're out of sweets. (*Ben doesn't get the joke*) Sorry, just messing around...

**Ben** – I'm Ben.

**Pat** – Pat.

**Alex** – Alex.

**Ben** – Thanks for inviting me, by the way...

**Alex** – Oh no, we didn't invite you.

**Ben** – Oh?

**Pat** – No, it's just that... We were invited too... I mean, this isn't our place either...

**Ben** – Oh, right... I'm a friend of Jeff. Well, a Facebook friend.

**Alex** – Jeff...?

**Ben** – He's the one who invited me.

**Pat** – Apparently, he's not here yet.

**Alex** – No... Looks like all the people who invited us to this party decided not to show up.

**Ben** – I've never actually met Jeff in real life. He's just a Facebook friend.

**Pat** – Oh, I see...

**Ben** – To be honest, I don't usually meet many people. I don't get out much.

**Pat** – Oh, really...

**Ben** – But my parents kicked me out. Well, out of their house.

**Pat** – On New Year's Eve? That's awful...

**Ben** – They're throwing their own party tonight too, but I wasn't invited... So I didn't really know where to go. That's kind of why I'm here.

**Alex** – Cool...

**Ben** – Are there going to be many of us?

**Alex** – No idea... So far, it's just the three of us.

**Ben** – But whose place is this, anyway?

**Alex** – Good question...

**Pat** – We were just given the address...

**Ben** – Oh, I see. Are you sure it's the right address?

**Alex** – No... Did you bring a bottle?

**Ben** – Cider.

**Alex** – Champagne, budget bubbly, cider... We're going downhill fast. Just wait—next guest will probably show up with a bottle of sparkling water. As long as it's fizzy, I guess...

*Ben notices the other two staring at her.*

**Ben** – What? What is it?

**Pat** – Oh, nothing, it's just that...

**Alex** – What's that on your face? It's not contagious, is it?

**Ben** – Oh, the spots... No, I'm doing trials for a pharmaceutical lab. It's a new medication. These are just side effects.

**Alex** – Well... I hope it pays well.

**Ben** – That's actually why my parents kicked me out. They didn't want me scaring their New Year's Eve guests.

**Alex** – Lovely.

**Pat** – So, is that your job?

**Ben** – Guinea pig? Oh no, it's just a way to make some extra cash. I have a regular job too.

**Alex** – And what do you do otherwise?

**Ben** – I work for a horse meat butcher.

**Pat** – A horse meat butcher? That's awful... I mean, sorry, but I didn't even know those still existed.

**Ben** – I manage their website.

**Alex** – You're a social media manager for a horse butcher?

**Ben** – Not exactly... It's actually a chain of them.

**Pat** – Oh, I see...

*An awkward silence.*

**Alex** – So, you don't know the guy whose place this is either?

**Ben** – No. I found this party through a Facebook event.

**Alex** – God, you've got to be really desperate to turn your New Year's Eve into a Facebook event.

**Pat** – And even more desperate to accept the invitation.

**Ben** – Yeah... Apparently, I was the only one who did.

*The phone rings.*

**Alex** – What do we do? Should we answer it?

**Pat** – That feels a bit awkward... It's not our place...

*The answering machine picks up.*

**Sissi (off)** – Hello, you've reached Sissi. I can't answer the phone right now. I've decided to kill myself. No point leaving a message either—I won't be calling you back.

*The three exchange perplexed glances.*

**Mother (off)** – Yes, it's Mum. I hope you're doing well. I'm feeling a bit down at the moment. I was counting on my son to cheer me up, but as usual, you're no help at all. Well... call me back if you're not dead yet. That was your mother.

**Pat** – That message was a bit worrying, wasn't it?

**Alex** – You think?

**Ben** – Maybe we should check the flat to make sure there's no corpse hiding in a cupboard.

**Alex** – Great idea... You two go ahead, I'll stay here and greet any other Facebook guests who might turn up.

*Pat and Ben leave. Alex looks around the room, stopping in front of the tent.*

**Alex** – A tent...

*She goes to the buffet, pours herself a glass of sangria, and then stands in front of the panel with the pipes.*

**Alex** – And a collection of pipes... Bloody hell, this place is weird...

*Pat and Ben return.*

**Ben** – We didn't see anything.

**Pat** – There's just a tiny kitchen and a bathroom.

*Pat notices Alex has a glass in hand.*

**Pat** – You know what? You're right. Let's not let this get us down—let's have a drink. It's New Year's Eve, after all.

*She pours herself a glass too, while Ben looks around the room.*

**Ben** – What's all this? Looks like someone's moving out.

**Alex** – If you find the box with the plates, it might make the buffet a bit easier to manage...

*Ben checks what's written on various boxes.*

**Ben** – Who knows... There's nothing written on them.

*Pat moves towards the tent.*

**Pat** – That tent is really odd, isn't it? Just sitting here in the middle of the room...

**Alex** – If you ask me, that's not the only weird thing here.

**Pat** – What's the point of pitching a tent in your living room?

**Ben** – Open it and find out...

**Pat** – You think? I'm not sure if... Oh, whatever...

*Pat opens the tent flap and screams.*

**Pat** – Oh my God!

**Alex** – What?

**Pat** – There's someone in there...

**Ben** – What do you mean, someone?

*Alex and Ben come closer.*

**Alex** – Oh yeah, there is.

**Ben** – Looks like he's sleeping.

**Pat** – That's crazy. *(To Alex)* Was he here when you arrived?

**Alex** – I don't know... I didn't see anyone...

**Ben** – Who is this guy?

**Alex** – Probably the one who invited us... Or, well... the one whose place we were invited to.

**Ben** – Is he already drunk?

**Pat** – Drunk? It's not even midnight yet.

**Ben** – Do you think we should wake him up?

**Pat** – He seems to be sleeping really deeply. It's a bit awkward...

**Alex** – Or maybe he's Frankenstein. He only comes out of his box after midnight...

**Pat** – So, nobody knows who he is?

**Ben** – No...

**Alex** – He kind of looks like a homeless guy.

**Ben** – Locked up in his own home, in a pop-up tent.

**Pat** – Looks like tonight's not the night we're finding a man...

**Ben** – Might as well get smashed too—just to forget we're ending the year the same way we started it: alone.

**Alex** – You're right. We're here to party, aren't we?

*They pour themselves drinks and down them in one gulp.*

**Ben** – This sangria tastes funny. Don't you think?

**Pat** – Yeah... It tastes like...

**Alex** – Well, it definitely doesn't taste like sangria.

*They pour another glass.*

**Pat** – I'll put on some music. Maybe that'll wake him up... *(Pat moves to the music player.)* Looks like he made us a playlist...

*She starts the music—very loud and very strange. They begin dancing to the absurd music in a comical choreography. The doorbell faintly rings in the background.*

**Pat** – Turn the music down. I think I heard something.

*Alex lowers the volume. The doorbell rings again.*

**Alex** – See? Never lose hope. More Facebook guests have arrived!

**Pat** – Maybe someone should go answer the door.

**Ben** – Isn't it already open?

*Jo enters—a prostitute (possibly a drag queen).*

**Jo** – What the hell is going on here?

*Alex turns off the music.*

**Alex** – What? What's the matter?

**Jo** – What's the matter? The matter is I'd like to get some sleep!

**Pat** – Sleep? But it's not even midnight yet! Come on, it's New Year's Eve!

**Ben** – And who are you, anyway?

**Jo** – I'm the neighbour from downstairs. But I should be the one asking who *you* lot are. Huh? Who are you, first of all?

**Alex** – Us? Well... We're...

**Pat** – The guests.

**Jo** – The guests? And where's Sissi?

**Ben** – Sissi?

**Jo** – You don't know Sissi?

**Alex** – No. Who's Sissi?

**Jo** – Who's Sissi?

**Pat** – Yeah, who's Sissi?

**Jo** – You're at Sissi's place, and you don't know who Sissi is?

**Alex** – Uh... yes, yes, well...

**Ben** – Oh, right. His name's Sissi.

**Jo** – What the hell are you doing here, then?

**Pat** – I was invited by Chris...

**Alex** – And I was invited by...

**Jo** – And where's Sissi?

**Alex** – Well, he's over there... Sleeping.

**Jo** – It's New Year's Eve, he's sleeping over there, and he's left you his flat to party without him?

**Pat** – Yeah, it's... Well, put like that, it does sound a bit odd, but... Yeah, that's about right...

**Jo** – This isn't adding up... Maybe I should just call the police... Honestly, I'd like to get some sleep.

**Ben** – It's New Year's Eve; you can't go to bed before midnight!

**Alex** – Are you spending New Year's alone?

**Jo** – Well... yeah.

**Pat** – Come have a drink with us. Really, you can't be alone on a night like this.

*Jo hesitates, then softens a little.*

**Jo** – Fine. Just a quick one, though.

**Alex** – What can I get you?

**Jo** – Oh, whatever's going.

**Alex** – Got it.

*Ben pours Jo a glass of sangria.*

**Pat** – What's your name?

**Jo** – Jo. (*She takes a sip*) What is this awful stuff?

**Pat** – Sangria, I think.

**Jo** – Doesn't taste much like sangria.

**Alex** – Honestly, none of this feels much like a New Year's Eve party.

**Jo** – True, it's pretty quiet tonight... I mean, business-wise.

**Pat** – Oh? What do you do?

**Jo** – Let's just say I'm self-employed in personal services.

**Pat** – Oh... So, do you... work from home?

**Jo** – Yeah, you could say that. I have consultation hours, but I also do home visits for people who can't come to me.

**Pat** – Right... And so... New Year's is a quiet night?

**Jo** – Yeah... No idea why. My clients are usually the depressive type. But the end of the year... The worst is Christmas Eve. Except for a few pervs who show up dressed as Santa.

**Alex** – Do you know the guy who lives here well?

**Jo** – Not really... But him? He's as depressive as they come.

**Pat** – That bad?

**Jo** – The kind of guy you half-expect to find one day hanging from his shower curtain.

**Alex** – I see...

**Jo** – I have to say, I'm surprised he even has enough friends to throw a party. But where is he, anyway?



**Ben** – Over there... He's sleeping in the tent.

**Jo** – Oh yeah, right...

**Alex** – You don't seem surprised. Usually, when someone sleeps in a tent, it's outside, isn't it?

**Jo** – Maybe he's practising for when he ends up on the streets.

**Pat** – Do you have any reason to think he'll become homeless?

**Jo** – Didn't you see the eviction notice on the door?

**Ben** – No...

**Alex** – So the boxes... That's what they're for. Moving out.

**Jo** – Exactly... Except after he moves out, he'll be moving into his boxes.

*A pause.*

**Ben** – Is he one of your clients?

**Jo** – No. At first, he never had the money to pay. And after a while, once you get to know people, it's hard to ask them for money...

**Alex** – Makes sense...

**Jo** – He did try to hit on me, though. And he's the pushy type. But I'm not desperate enough yet to sleep with a guy like that for free.

**Ben** – Got it...

*Silence. Pat checks her watch.*

**Pat** – Oh, it's almost midnight...

**Alex** – Yeah...

**Ben** – Strange he didn't wake up from the loud music earlier, isn't it?

**Pat** – Do you really think we should let him sleep? We can't celebrate the New Year without him...

**Alex** – You're right, try waking him up.

**Pat (to Ben)** – Why don't you try?

**Ben** – OK...

*She opens the tent and gently shakes him.*

**Ben** – This is weird.

**Alex** – What?

**Ben** – He looks dead.

**Pat** – Dead?

*They move closer to look.*

**Alex** – Oh crap...

**Pat** – That can't be possible!

**Jo** – He's already stiff as a board.

**Ben** – What do we do?

**Pat** – Maybe we should call the police.

*A moment of hesitation.*

**Alex** – Or we could just leave?

**Ben** – It's not even midnight, and there's still sangria. We can't just leave now.

**Alex** – You're right. If he's dead, it can wait until next year...

**Jo** – Yeah, well, I'm out of here. I don't want to get mixed up in this. (*She checks her phone*) Anyway, I've got a client in ten minutes.

**Ben** – I thought it was quiet tonight?

**Jo** – Business seems to be picking up. Either way, just so you know, I never saw you, and I don't know anything about this.

*Jo leaves.*

**Pat** – So, what do we do?

*The crackling of fireworks is heard, almost like gunshots.*

**Ben** – What's that?

**Alex** – The SWAT team already?

**Ben** – Fireworks!

**Pat** – Oh yeah, let's head to the balcony. We'll get a better view!

*All three step out onto the balcony to watch the fireworks. Sissi emerges from the tent like a zombie... The atmosphere is straight out of a horror movie. He sees no one. Moving like a sleepwalker, he steps out briefly (to vomit and close the door), then returns and picks up the phone.*

**Sissi** – Yeah, Mum, it's me, Sissi. I messed it up this time, but next time I'll get it right, you'll see.

*He leaves. Alex, Pat, and Ben return.*

**Pat** – Well... That was a great fireworks display.

**Alex** – What?

**Ben** – The dead guy! He's not in the tent anymore!

*Pat hangs up.*

**Pat** – Then where is he?

**Alex** – Oh crap...

*General consternation.*

**Pat** – How does this horror movie end?

**Ben** – Badly. Very badly...

**Alex** – Horror movies have happy endings.

**Pat** – We've got no choice. We need to check if he's somewhere else in the flat.

**Ben** – And we'd better arm ourselves...

*They each grab the bottle they brought, holding it by the neck, and head off to search the apartment. They return a moment later.*

**Pat** – Nothing.

**Ben** – I'm not sure if that's comforting or not.

**Pat** – Do you think this zombie could have supernatural powers?

**Ben** – What do you think? How else could a corpse leave a flat through a locked reinforced door?

**Alex** – I don't know... Maybe by having the key? But you're right, we need to stay on guard.

**Pat** – I think I need a little pick-me-up.

**Ben** – Let's steer clear of the sangria for now.

**Alex** – This is the perfect moment to pop the champagne. It might be the last time we get to drink any.

*Alex pops the cork and fills their glasses. They toast.*

**Ben** – Cheers, Happy New Year!

**Alex** – Yeah... Happy New Year to you too...

*Ben stops in front of the panel displaying the pipes.*

**Ben** – What's this?

**Alex** – Looks like a pipe collection.

**Pat** – You've got to be pretty disturbed to collect pipes...

*While they're all standing in front of the panel, Sissi reappears behind them, his face slightly bloody. They turn around.*

**Sissi** – Hey girls! Fancy a little puff?

*Panic ensues. Pat grabs a bottle and, with surprising violence, smashes it over Sissi's head. He collapses.*

**Pat** – This time, I think he's really dead...

**Alex** – Did you kill him?

**Pat** – But he was already dead, wasn't he? He's a zombie! You can't kill a zombie!

**Ben** – That's going to be hard to explain to the police.

*They rush to Sissi's side, trying everything to wake him up. Sissi regains consciousness. His eyes fall first on Ben, the goth.*

**Sissi** – So, this is it. I'm in hell?

**Alex** – No, no, don't worry. You're still at home.

*He looks around, surprised to see so many people in his flat.*

**Sissi** – What happened to me?

**Alex** – I don't know... Apparently, you had a bit of a fainting spell.

**Sissi** – What are you all doing here? I don't know any of you...

**Pat** – I'm a friend of Chris... She's the one who invited me. Hope that's OK.....

**Sissi** – Chris?

**Alex** – I'm a friend of... Well, you probably don't know her either...

**Ben** – And me, I'm... the Facebook guest!

**Sissi** – Ah, Ben! I can't believe you made it!

**Alex** – You sure you're alright?

**Sissi** – I organised a party, but everyone cancelled.

**Alex** – Oh, damn...

**Pat** – But we're here!

**Sissi** – Luckily, because I'd planned on everyone chipping in.

**Alex** – Oh, crap...

**Sissi** – If no one had come, I'd have been in trouble...

**Pat** – Yeah, that's right...

**Alex** – So, how much is the...

**Sissi** – I haven't done the math yet... I spent my last three hundred euros from my savings account. We'll divide it by the number of people here...

**Ben** – Three hundred euros? Divided by...

**Sissi** – Three.

**Alex** – Oh wow, that's a lot...

**Sissi** – That's partly why I took the pills. When I realised no one was coming.

**Pat** – What kind of pills?

**Sissi** – Whatever I had in my medicine cabinet. Just aspirin and painkillers...

**Alex** – Well, no wonder it didn't do the trick...

**Sissi** – No, that's why I jumped out of the window.

**Ben** – But since it's only the first floor, that didn't work either.

**Sissi** – I landed on a hedge. Then I bounced off an old mattress.

**Ben** – Man, you can't catch a break...

**Sissi** – I still hit the pavement, though. That's how I scraped my face a bit. The good thing about the painkillers is, I don't feel a thing.

**Ben** – Yeah, that's lucky, I suppose.

**Sissi** – And you... What's that thing on your face?

**Ben** – I'm doing trials for a pharmaceutical lab.

**Sissi** – Wait, you get paid to take meds?

**Ben** – I'll give you the address if you want. Especially if they're looking to test suicide meds.

*Sissi starts crying.*

**Pat** – What? What's wrong?

**Ben** – Don't worry, we're here now.

**Sissi** – Exactly... You came... It means a lot to me that you're here.

**Alex** – Yeah, well...

**Sissi** – You could've been anywhere for New Year's Eve, but you chose to be here with me.

**Pat** – That's right...

**Sissi** – So, how about a little puff?

**Pat** – Excuse me?

**Sissi** – I've got a whole collection of pipes over there. Bought them on Gumtree. Fancy trying one?

**Alex** – Gumtree? So they're second-hand pipes, then...

**Pat** – Pre-loved, as they like to say.

**Alex** – Second-mouth pipes... Charming, but no thanks.

**Ben** – How about another drink instead?

**Pat** – After all, we're here to party, right?

**Alex** – It's New Year's Eve!

*They pour champagne and all drink together.*

**Ben** – Let's put some music on, yeah?

**Sissi** – OK...

*Ben turns on the music and dances with Sissi. Alex and Pat step aside a little.*

**Alex** – This music really makes you feel like killing yourself, doesn't it?

**Pat** – I'm starting to wonder if it was a good idea to accept this invitation...

**Alex** – If you can even call it an invitation...

**Ben** – I've got a feeling he's going to drop dead before the night's over.

*Sissi collapses onto the floor. Ben stops the music. Pat and Alex pick him up and sit him down.*

**Pat** – Are you OK?

**Sissi** – Must be the pills... mixed with the punch.

**Pat** – Oh, that was punch? No wonder the sangria tasted so... unique.

**Sissi** – I just mixed all the leftover bottles I had in my cupboard. I'm not sure what to call it...

**Alex** – A potpourri, or maybe a science experiment.

**Sissi** – I'm not in a good place right now. I just got fired. I'm broke, and I've been served an eviction notice.

**Alex** – That's rough...

**Pat** – But you'll surely find another place to stay.

**Alex** – Though, without a job...

**Ben** – What kind of work were you doing?

**Sissi** – I was picking grapes.

**Alex** – Well, that's a pretty seasonal job.

**Pat** – Couldn't you stay with your mum for a while?

**Sissi** – My mum? She's on her fourth suicide attempt too.

**Alex** – Keeping up the family tradition, I see.

**Ben** – Well, if you end up on the streets, at least you've got a tent.

**Sissi** – Even my girlfriend didn't come tonight.

**Ben** – Oh, you have a girlfriend?

**Sissi** – Well, she's not really my girlfriend yet. She's the neighbour from downstairs.

**Pat** – Jo?

**Sissi** – You know her? I invited her tonight, actually, but... She didn't come either...  
*(He starts crying)* Sorry, I've completely run out of tissues.

*He leaves.*

**Pat** – Poor guy...

**Alex** – Yeah, but what can we do about it?

**Ben** – She lives just downstairs. Maybe we could help?

**Alex** – Help how? You want us to pitch in for another pipe for his collection?

**Pat** – He seems so clueless. I'm not even sure he realises what kind of “personal services” she offers...

**Ben** – So, what do we do?

**Alex** – Okay, fine. Guess I'll go and sort this out.

*Alex leaves.*

**Pat** – I don't like this...

**Ben** – What?

**Pat** – All of this! This awful evening... Worst New Year's Eve ever. Isn't it for you too?

**Ben** – Let me think... No, I don't think so.

**Pat** – No way... There's a worse New Year's Eve than this? Tell me!

**Ben** – I must've been about ten. My parents and I were invited to my uncle's place. He's a mortician near Creil. It's not far from Paris—you've heard of Creil?

**Pat** – No...

**Ben** – Actually, I'm not even sure he's really my uncle, but whatever... So, we get there, and my uncle says to me: “Do you want to see where I work?” I was a bit wary because my parents had told me he'd just got out of prison for some murky case involving minors. At the time, I thought 'minors' meant coal miners.. Anyway, I agreed to follow him to the morgue, and then...

**Pat** – Sorry, but I really don't need to hear this right now...

*Jo, the neighbour, returns with Alex.*

**Jo** – Oh, come on... He does this suicide routine at least once a week. He's completely nuts. There's no way I'm giving in to his emotional blackmail.

**Alex** – But where is Sissi?

**Pat** – Oh no, crap.

*She rushes out, then comes back just as quickly.*



**Pat** – He was in the bathtub, trying to drown himself!

**Alex** – He's really determined to ruin our evening.

**Pat** – What do we do? Should we call an ambulance?

**Jo** – Wait, is he actually dead this time?

*They rush to the bathroom and drag him back.*

**Pat** – He's looking pretty dead, don't you think?

**Alex** – Not totally, though...

**Ben** – Someone should give him mouth-to-mouth...

**Alex** – I don't know how to do that... Who's going to do it?

*All eyes turn to Jo.*

**Jo** – What, you think my job requires a first aid certificate?

**Ben** – I'll give it a try.

**Alex** – OK.

*Ben performs mouth-to-mouth on Sissi.*

**Jo** – Think he did all this just to get that?

*Sissi regains consciousness and sees Ben's spot-covered face leaning over him.*

**Sissi** – This is it. I've made it to hell... A succubus was sucking the life out of me!

**Jo** – Right, I don't have time for this! So, kids! Do you have money to pay me or not?

**Alex** – Do you take cheques?

**Jo** – Oh, sure. And how about some meal vouchers while you're at it? Right, I'm off. Believe it or not, I've got actual work waiting for me...

*Jo leaves. Sissi comes back to his senses.*

**Pat** – He's failed again.

**Alex** – Honestly, it's just pitiful now.

**Pat** – Yeah...

**Ben** – Maybe we should help him.

**Pat** – You mean help him kill himself? That's called murder, isn't it?

**Ben** – No, I mean help him... find someone.

**Pat** – Then again, aren't we here tonight because we're just as desperate as he is?

**Alex** – Maybe we could let him believe, just for tonight, that he's got a shot...

**Pat** – With who?

**Alex** – You're right, it'd never work.

*The phone rings. Sissi doesn't answer. Pat picks it up.*

**Pat** – Hello? Oh, hello, ma'am. No, I'm not his fiancée. No, I'm not a prostitute, either. Yes, I'll put him on. *(To Sissi)* It's your mum...

**Sissi** *(taking the receiver)* – Yes... No, I'm not dead... Yes, I know, I've failed at everything—even my suicide... Yes, don't worry, I got your gift, thank you. I wish you a Happy New Year too. Bye, Mum...

*He hangs up.*

**Alex** – Everything OK?

**Sissi** – I was born on December 31st. And my mum couldn't think of anything better than to name me Sylvester.

**Pat** – Which explains the ridiculous nickname.

**Alex** – Sissi...

**Sissi** – So December 31st is both my birthday and my name day. And since it's only a week after Christmas...

**Ben** – Oof, that's some bad luck...

**Sissi** – Every year since I was born, between Christmas and New Year's, my mum gives me a lottery ticket, with my birthdate as the numbers... That's both my Christmas and birthday present.

**Ben** – Life really is a lottery, isn't it?

*He shows a lottery ticket and places it on a box.*

**Alex** – I played too. The New Year's Eve Superdraw. But unfortunately...

**Pat** – In that case, maybe you've got a chance, Sissi... Unlucky in love, lucky in the game...

**Alex** – Have you checked if you won?

**Sissi** – Not even. At first, every year, I'd wait eagerly for the results... Like a kid checking under the tree, hoping Santa came... But now, I don't even look. I've realised Santa doesn't come... And when it comes to love...

**Ben** – What?

**Sissi** – Well... I've realised that when it comes to the draw, Mrs Claus seems to skip me too.

**Pat** – No? You're saying..

**Sissi** – Yes, I know, it's hard to believe, but I've never experienced love... Statistically, at my age, it's supposed to be pretty rare.

**Ben** – I didn't even know there were statistics on that.

**Alex** – The Games of Love and Misfortune...

**Sissi** – You'll understand why, at this time of year, I get a bit down... I just need a moment...

**Pat** – You're not planning to hang yourself with the shower curtain, are you?

**Sissi** – Don't worry, this time I'm just going to throw up in the toilet.

*Sissi leaves.*

**Ben** – We really should do something for him.

**Pat** – Like what?

**Alex** – Are you volunteering?

**Pat** – Not me, but... Ben?

**Ben** – I do feel sorry for him, but I'm pretty sure I'm not his type.

*Pat gives her a sceptical look. Alex picks up the lottery ticket Sissi left behind. Sissi returns, and Alex quickly puts the ticket back.*

**Alex** – Is the toilet that way?

**Sissi** – At the end of the hallway.

**Alex** – I think I'm going to throw up too.

*Alex leaves.*

**Sissi** – Go ahead and help yourselves to a drink, alright?

**Ben** – Sure...

**Sissi** – Still, it's nice of you to have come.

**Ben** – To be honest, it was this or spending New Year's alone.

**Sissi** – It's still kind of you. I'm sure some of the people I invited chose to spend New Year's alone instead.

**Pat** – Yeah... I think I'm starting to understand why.

*Alex returns.*

**Alex** – I already checked the lottery results—I set up an alert. I lost, but hey, you never know—maybe your birthdate came up.

**Sissi** – I don't know... I've stopped believing... In anything...

**Alex** – Here, let me check for you. Here, take a look...

*Sissi stares at the screen, her expression turning incredulous.*

**Sissi** – Those aren't my numbers.

**Alex** – Oh yeah, right... Wait, hang on, look! You've still got four numbers!

**Sissi** – So what?

**Alex** – That's still a decent chunk of change.

**Sissi** – How much?

**Alex** – Wait a sec... Four numbers... That's fifty grand!

*Sissi is stunned at first.*

**Sissi** – This can't be real. Are you sure?

**Alex** – For sure. See? It's written right there!

**Pat** – That's crazy...

*Sissi starts to believe it.*

**Sissi** – So, I've won?

**Alex** – Yep.

**Sissi** – I've never won a cent on the New Year's Eve Superdraw, not once in my life. I thought God had forgotten me, but now... it's all because of you! It's a miracle! You're my Three Wise Men!

**Alex** – Okay, let's not go that far...

**Sissi** – We're all going to share it.

**Alex** – That's just the meds talking. Trust me, you'll regret it in the morning.

**Sissi** – We were going to share the cost of the party, so it's only fair! With friends, we share everything—good or bad.

**Ben** – Well, when you put it that way...

**Alex** – No, you need to keep that money for yourself, Sissi. You need it more than we do.

**Pat** – Well said, Alex. I've got to admit, I misjudged you. I agree, this is a sign from above. This money is his chance for a fresh start in life...

**Sissi** – Well... At the very least, I'm not asking you to chip in for this party.

**Alex** – That's good, Sissi... That's very generous of you. Thank you.

**Sissi** – I'm going to tell Jo. Hang on for me, will you?

*He leaves.*

**Pat** – It's incredible. He was at the end of his rope, and then suddenly...

**Alex** – You're right—it really is a miracle.

**Pat** – God really does exist... I think I've found my faith again.

**Alex** – Just goes to show—you should never lose hope.

**Ben** – I could really use a little boost myself...

**Pat** – Why not try your luck too?

**Alex** – Maybe the Devil will cut you a deal...

*Sissi returns with Jo, dressed as Mrs Claus.*

**Jo** – So it's true? He won?

**Alex** – Fifty thousand euros.

**Ben** – They called you a loser, but I always knew you had the face of a winner.

**Sissi** – Really?

**Jo** – Wait a second, witchy—I was here first.

**Ben** – Weren't you calling him a depressive creep earlier? Well, I can make him happy, right, Sissi?

**Alex** – Sorry, Ben, but what gets him going is Mrs Claus. Isn't that right, Sissi?

**Jo** – Yeah, well... Mrs Claus doesn't do freebies. Got any money?

**Alex** – The corner shop is closed right now, but he'll have the money tomorrow morning, guaranteed!

**Sissi** – And now that I'm a billionaire, women are going to flock to me like bees to honey.

**Pat** – Don't get ahead of yourself, Sissi. It's only fifty thousand euros. If I were you, I'd just enjoy the good things as they come.

**Alex** – She's right. As the poet said: *Gather ye rosebuds while ye may*. I mean, the choices here aren't great, but still...

**Pat** – Like my grandmother used to say: If you can't have partridge, settle for blackbird.

**Alex** – I'm sure Ben has everything it takes to make a man happy. At least she doesn't ask for payment upfront.

**Sissi** – She's not, like, contagious or anything, right?

**Alex** – Ben?

*But Ben collapses like a sack of potatoes.*

**Alex** – Must be the meds kicking in...

**Pat** – Plus the sangria. I'm feeling a bit dizzy too...

**Alex** – Come on, Jo—it's New Year's. Show a little generosity.

**Jo** – Fine... But I want my money tomorrow, OK?

**Alex** – Promise. Tomorrow, first thing, when the lottery office opens.

**Jo** – Okay, sweetheart, let Mummy take care of you...

*Jo leads Sissi away.*

**Pat** (*touched*) – Seems like couples are pairing off.

**Alex** – Yep... Well, I guess we're the last ones standing.

*Pat looks slightly startled.*

**Blackout.**

*The next morning. Ben is still slumped in a corner against a box. Alex and Pat emerge from the camping tent.*

**Alex** – You OK?

**Pat** – My head's still spinning... What the hell was in that sangria?

**Alex** – I'd rather not know.

**Pat** – I don't remember anything... But what are we doing in this tent?

**Alex** – You seriously don't remember?

*Pat shoots her a worried glance. Sissi enters, looking radiant.*

**Alex** – So, Sissi, feeling happy?

**Sissi** – Happy? You bet! I'm rich! No more money problems—I can pay my rent and unpack my boxes.

**Alex** – If I were you, I'd hold off on unpacking those boxes.

**Sissi** – Why's that?

**Pat** – Now that you're rich, you might want to move into a bigger place.

**Sissi** – Yeah, that's true.

**Alex** – No, when I said “happy,” I meant the night you just spent... with Mrs Claus.

**Pat** – It was your first time, wasn't it?

**Sissi** – Honestly, with all the painkillers I took last night, I didn't feel a thing...

**Alex** – Oh no, that's a shame...

**Sissi** – Honestly, I was so out of it, Mrs Claus might as well have been Santa Claus.

**Pat** – Oh, I see...

**Sissi** – Anyway, the important thing is I won the lottery. I'm heading straight to the corner shop to cash in my winnings.

**Alex** – I don't think they'll hand you ten grand on the spot, but they'll tell you what to do.

**Sissi** – Ten grand? Yesterday, you said fifty.

**Alex** – Oh yeah, sorry, fifty... Maybe...

*Ben regains consciousness.*

**Ben** – Hi...

**Sissi** – Ah, Ben! Thanks for coming to my party. Hope you had a good time.

**Ben** – Yeah, but I'm not really sure where I'm going now. My parents kicked me out.

**Sissi** – You can have my pop-up tent. I don't need it anymore.

**Ben** – That's kind of you, thanks.

**Sissi** – Right, I'm off...

**Ben** – Can I come with you?

**Sissi** – Sure...

**Ben** (*to the others*) – We'll keep in touch on Facebook, yeah?

**Alex** – OK. Let's hope you get Wi-Fi in your camping tent.

**Pat** – Happy New Year...

**Sissi** – Don't forget to shut the door on your way out.

*Sissi and Ben leave.*

**Alex** – We'd better leave before he returns.

**Pat** – Why?

**Alex** – Because he didn't win anything!

**Pat** – What?

**Alex** – Those lottery numbers I gave him? Completely fake. He didn't win a thing.

**Pat** – You're kidding...

**Alex** – You didn't really fall for that, did you?

**Pat** – That's awful! When he realises it's not true...

**Alex** – He might have a reason to kill himself, but at least he won't die a virgin!

**Pat** – Who knows if he even spent the night with a real woman...

**Alex** – The main thing is he had a good evening. And so did we... Besides, it's not like we told him he was a millionaire. It's just fifty grand, after all.

**Pat** – Please, tell me you're not serious...

**Alex** – I wanted him to hit the jackpot, but I might've messed up the numbers a bit.

**Pat** – This is terrible!

**Alex** – We had a free New Year's Eve party! And he's not charging us for his crappy evening. Let's get out of here before he changes his mind.

**Pat** – This is crazy... Where did you even come up with that story?



**Alex** – *The Games of Chance and Love*, remember? It's almost straight out of my play.

**Pat** – Well... I guess you're right. At least he got to experience love...

**Alex** – Not sure sleeping with a drag queen technically counts, but whatever.

**Pat** – Either way, you're right—we should be gone before he gets back...

**Alex** – We didn't forget anything, did we?

**Pat** – I don't think so...

**Alex** – Oh, let me grab my bottle of sparkling wine. It should have thawed by now. I might need it for next New Year's.

**Pat** – I think this is the worst New Year's Eve I've ever had. And you?

**Alex** – Let me think... Nope. Three years ago takes the cake.

**Pat** – I'm not sure I want to hear this...

*They leave together.*

**Blackout.**

**The End**

## *About the author*

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

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

## Other plays by the same author translated in English

### Comedies for 2

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

### Comedies for 3

A brief moment of eternity  
A simple business dinner  
An innocent little murder  
Cheaters  
Crash Zone  
Fragile, Handle with care  
Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>  
Ménage à trois  
One small step for a woman,  
one giant leap backward for  
Mankind  
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 13<sup>th</sup>  
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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