

La Comédiathèque

Him and Her

Interactive monologue

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Him and Her

Interactive monologue

*About the exciting adventure
of living together.*

Artists' Entrance.....	3
1 – Wedding night.....	6
2 – Cherry time.....	8
3 – TV breakdown.....	11
4 – Turning forty.....	14
5 – Definition of love (By Default).....	18
6 – Reunion.....	19
7 – Carpaccio and Bacon.....	21
8 – Disappearance.....	24
9 – Sports Illustrated.....	27
10 – Where do we go when we die?.....	30
11 – Rainy Season.....	34
12 – Small talk.....	36
13 – Growing old.....	39
14 – Nightmare.....	42
15 – Furniture.....	44
Emergency exit.....	47

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Artists' Entrance

Dark. As if the show is about to begin. But nothing happens — long enough for the audience to start feeling uneasy. A light comes up in a corner, where two spectators, a man and a woman — strangers — are sitting side by side. The man glances nervously at a cinema/theatre guide, then at his watch. The woman is picking popcorn from a giant bag, noisily stuffing handfuls into her mouth.

Him – Sorry... Do you know what's going on?

Her – I guess we're waiting for the actors.

Him – Until now, only the audience showed up late. If the actors start doing the same...

Silence.

Her (*worried*) – Can I see your guide? Just in case the play's been cancelled...

He hands it to her, but she doesn't know how to take it with her popcorn still in hand.

Her (*holding out the popcorn*) – Want some?

He has no choice but to take the bag. She looks at the guide but seems a bit lost. He eats some popcorn with clear distaste.

Her – Sorry, I'm used to *Time Out*. I can't find anything in this.

Him – And I don't like popcorn...

She hands back the guide and takes her popcorn again.

Her – Anyway, it's too late for a film now. We might as well wait.

Him – I hope it's worth it...

Her (*worried*) – Bad reviews?

Him (*glancing at the audience*) – Not many people here...

Her – Reviews don't mean much... Sometimes, critics rave about a show that drags on for hours, and no one dares say they're bored for fear of sounding stupid. Then afterwards they say: "It was so deep, you just didn't get it."

Him – Comedy's a different story. If nobody laughs during the show, they won't say afterwards: "Only a critic could see how hilarious it was."

Her – Are you a critic?

Him (*surprised*) – Not you?

Her – Actress.

Him – Of course...

Her – These days, only actors and critics go to the theatre. One in two audience members is an actor. It's hard to tell where the stage ends.

Him – You know the play?

Her – Oh, no. But a friend of mine is in it. I came to support her.

Him – Is she famous?

Her – Mostly theatre...

Him – So... (*suspicious*) You really are an actress?

Her (*slightly hurt*) – You don't think I'm convincing?

Him – Oh no... You're very good.

Her – Actress by night... museum attendant by day.

Him – Considering how modern theatre's become, it's more or less the same job, isn't it?

Silence.

Her – I'm out of popcorn.

Him – We might die before the show even starts.

Her – Yes... it's like they've forgotten us.

Him – Years from now, a cleaner will find our skeletons, side by side, hand in hand.

Her – Hand in hand...?

Him – I think when the end comes, we'll grow more affectionate. Like two shipwreck survivors on a desert island. No real choice.

Her – Do you think they'll give us a refund?

Him (*shocked*) – Don't tell me you paid for this...

Her – Of course not.

Him – Then...

They get up to leave.

Him – We can always come back another time.

Her – If it's still running. Which I doubt.

Him – We could try another show.

Her – Is that an invitation?

Him (*showing an invitation*) – For two.

Her – I just hope this one starts on time. What's it called?

Him (*reading*) – *Him and Her*.

Her – Sounds boring too...

Him – I'd better switch my phone back on.

Her – Oh, I forgot to turn mine off...

Black.

1 – Wedding night

Him and Her collapse onto the couch, obviously exhausted.

Her – I thought they would never leave...

Him – They say that seven out of ten couples don't have sex during their wedding night. Now I understand why...

Her – We could try to improve the average...

Him – You forget that we take off at 6:45 AM... From Luton...

Her – From Luton?

Him – I told you! I got the tickets on eBay...

Her – Why do the low cost companies have to take off from the most depressing town in England...? On the other hand, it's true that when you leave from Luton, it makes anywhere look like a dream destination. Even Bratislava...

Him – They say that Bratislava is very beautiful... In spring...

Her – Don't you mean Prague...?

Him – Same region?

Her – The Seychelles are beautiful all year round.. And don't forget that spring starts only in two months...

Him – Oh, The Seychelles... Everybody goes there...

Her – It's true that a honeymoon to Bratislava is a lot more original... We won't meet lots of honeymooners on the plane... The only couple who mixed up Bratislava with Brasilia resold their tickets on eBay...

Him – We will treat ourselves with the Seychelles in a few years... For our wedding anniversary...

Her – Yeah. Our silver anniversary... When I won't be able to get into my swimsuit... *(Sigh)* Life is unfair. We should inherit at 20, start working at 50 when we've finished our retirement, and procreate at 70, to have some company in our old age... And marriage would be at the end, a final vow...

Him – On the other hand, a lifetime without a mother in law... Is it really worth it...?

Her – Do you think I will still love you in 20 years?

Him – Will you still have the choice...? When you can't find a swimsuit that fits...

Her – I know a girl who said "no" on her wedding day, for a joke. She wanted to say "yes" immediately after but the mayor did not like the joke at all. She had to wait six months to get married for real...Turns out there's a legal delay. Like for a driving licence. When you screw up, you can't take it again right away. Did you know that?

Him – No...

Her – This wedding was as boring as hell, wasn't it?

Him – People don't marry just for the fun...

Her – Don't tell me that they do it to go to Bratislava from Luton in the middle of the night. Or I'll start asking myself why I said yes... What country is Bratislava in?

Him – Well... Prague was the capital of Czechoslovakia...

Her – Then you don't even know which country you're taking me to for our honeymoon! My mother was right: I really don't know where I am going with you...

Him – Wait... Prague is now capital of Czechia... Bratislava should be capital of Slovakia. Or Slovenia... Anyway, it's in Europe! We don't even need a passport...

Her – And you, will you still love me in 20 years...?

Him – How could I not love my whole life long a girl who is ready to follow me to an unknown country of the EU...?

Her – If it's a test then...

They kiss each other.

Him – I don't want to hurry you, but our plane takes off in two hours. And it's quite a long way to Luton...

Black.

2 – Cherry time

A couple, sitting on a couch.

Her – Did you see? The cherry tree's in bloom.

Him – Another year has passed...

Silence.

Her – We're happy, aren't we...?

Him – Yes... *(After a moment)* We're bored stiff, aren't we?

Her – Together?

Him – Generally.

She thinks about it.

Her – We could buy a new couch...

Him – What would we do with the old one?

Her – Take a vacation...

Him – Go where?

Her – Throw a party...

Him – To celebrate what?

Her – The blooming of our cherry tree!

Him – They say the Japanese do that in spring. Invite friends to admire the cherry blossoms, sipping tea...

Her – We'd better hurry up. Some petals are already falling...

Him – So is some of my hair...

Her – Your hair?

Him – It starts with one, then suddenly you're bald... *(After a moment)* And who would we invite?

Her – Friends!

Him – Friends...? Do we even have friends...?

Her – Probably...

Him – Anyway, people are always busy...

Her – You just have to give them notice.

Him – You invite them for a drink, and they get out their diary... Instead of having a drink, you talk about a possible date. Then they call you back to cancel and reschedule... When I want a drink, it's now. In three weeks, I might not even be thirsty anymore. There's no spontaneity left!

Her – Maybe because people are afraid of being bored...

Him – You'll see. They'll be busy. They'll talk about finding a date. And by the time they do, all the petals will have fallen.

Her – A carpet of petals is pretty too...

Him – It's sunny today. But what will the weather be like in a month? Along with matching calendars, you have to check the forecast. Inviting people has become more complicated than predicting an eclipse. No... Instead of gambling on having fun with a bunch of people in a month, I'd rather take the sure thing of being bored with you right now.

Her – That's so sweet...

Him – A few days ago, my best friend left me a message. I hadn't heard from him in months. I called him back right away to invite him for a drink. He told me he was busy, and would call to set a date. I'm still waiting. I never even found out why he called me in the first place...

Her – Maybe he was feeling a little down...

Him – I wonder if he didn't feel even lonelier after calling... In six months, he'll probably call again, and it'll be the same. Is that what we call friends now? Same with the internet. They call it “friendly.” You don't even say hello to the guy next door, but your computer lets you chat with a Chinese guy in Esperanto. Do you know many Chinese people?

Her – When I was a kid, I used to communicate at night in Morse code with my childhood neighbour, using flashlights. Even then, it didn't work very well...

Him – People are always overbooked. What can they possibly be doing that's so important they don't have a single moment to grab a coffee with their best friend without scheduling it weeks in advance? I try to stay available. But no one else ever is. So I get bored... Don't you ever get bored?

Her – With you, never...

Silence.

Him – What if we had that drink anyway?

Her – Just the two of us?

Him – Would you be available?

Her – When?

Him – Right now.

Her – Why not?

Him – I'll get the glasses.

Her – I'll take care of the peanuts.

The doorbell rings.

Him – Are we expecting somebody?

Her – No. Who could it be? It's almost dinner time.

Him – People have no manners. They won't leave you alone, not even on weekends.

Her – I'll see who it is...

Him – I'm not here for anyone.

She turns to him.

Her – And what if it's a friend?

He thinks about it.

Him – Tell him the Japanese cherry tree is still in bloom... and to come back when there are cherries.

Black.

3 – TV breakdown

A couple sitting on a couch. The room is otherwise empty. They are doing nothing, saying nothing, staring straight ahead.

Her – What's on TV tonight?

Him – No idea. Why?

Her – Just wondering... *(Pause)* Don't you think we should get a new one?

Him – When we had a TV, we couldn't stop watching it!

Her – That's what it's for, isn't it?

Him – We were completely brain-dead! We never did anything else!

They continue staring blankly ahead.

Her *(ironically)* – And now, what are we doing?

Him – What do you want us to do?

Her – Nothing...

Him – That's already better than watching TV... *(Pause)* When there was only one channel, it was still manageable. Now, with cable...

Her *(nostalgic)* – When I was a kid, we didn't have a TV. I used to watch it at the neighbour's...

Him *(ironical)* – Want me to ask the neighbour if you can go watch TV at his place?

Silence.

Her – We could talk.

He looks at her, slightly alarmed.

Her – Since we don't have a TV anymore, we could take the opportunity to talk.

Him – Well... You start.

She tries to think about something.

Her – Do you love me?

Him *(taken aback)* – Maybe we could start with something a bit lighter...

He thinks.

Him – What are we having for dinner?

Her – It's Wednesday. Fish day.

Him – Fish? Isn't it usually Friday...?

Her – Friday's chicken.

Him – That's a bit fishy, isn't it...?

Silence.

Him – What kind of fish should I get?

Her – I'll go. I need to pick up some custard anyway. How about cod for a change?

Him – It's a bit salty, isn't it?

Her – Not if it's done the French way.

Him – That doesn't involve custard, does it?

Silence.

Him – If ever you cheated on me, would you tell me?

She looks at him, surprised.

Her – You mean : if *you* cheated on me, would I want you to tell me?

Him – That too, yes...

Her – Why are you asking me that?

Him – Just making conversation... Since we don't have a TV...

She thinks.

Her – How am I supposed to answer that?

Him – Just say yes or no!

Her – You really think it's that simple?

Him – No?

Her – Answering means already accepting the possibility that you might cheat on me.

Him – So?

Her – It's like asking: if I murdered you, would you prefer me to turn myself in or run from the police?

He doesn't quite see the connection.

Her – It means calmly imagining the possibility that you might kill me. That's the real issue. The rest is just detail.

Him – Adultery isn't a crime though.

Her – Sometimes adultery leads to crime...

He thinks, slightly worried.

Him – If I cheated on you, could you kill me?

Her – Well, if I did, I'd probably turn myself in. The justice system tends to be quite lenient with crimes of passion...

Silence.

Her – So you're calmly imagining the possibility of cheating on me.

Him – 95% of animals are polygamous. The rest only stay together long enough to raise their young. Shows that fidelity isn't really natural...

Her – We're not animals.

Him – Still, 5% of animals are monogamous. That doesn't make them human. Why should fidelity be a sign of humanity?

Her – It's the foundation of the family, which is the foundation of society.

Him – So you're faithful out of civic duty?

Silence.

Her – Does being faithful really weigh on you that much?

Him – No... I just wonder whether fidelity means the same thing to men and women.

Her – And? Why do you think men are faithful? When they are, of course...

He thinks about it.

Him – To avoid complications...?

Silence.

Him – Maybe we should just get another TV.

Black.

4 – Turning forty

She is sitting on the couch. He enters.

Him – It's crazy. I've just had another call from a childhood friend inviting me to his 40th birthday. Can you believe it?

Her – If you were all 20 around the same time, it's not that surprising you're all turning 40 now.

Him – No, what's crazy is I hadn't heard from any of these people in years... and now the phone won't stop ringing!

Silence.

Her – Are you going?

Him – It makes me a bit nervous. They must've changed over the years.

Her – Physically, you mean?

Him – Physically, mentally... I just hope they haven't completely fallen apart.

Her (*teasing*) – And what about me? Are you sure I haven't completely fallen apart?

Him – I've had time to adjust to you little by little. But them? All at once... It's like *Night of the Living Dead*. It's strange, this sudden urge to get together when you hit 40.

Her – It's called a birthday, isn't it?

Him – They say animals draw closer to humans when they sense the end is near. Must be something like that. A kind of herd instinct. (*Pause*) What on earth am I going to give him?

Her – A funeral plan?

Him – Isn't that expensive?

Her – I'm joking... What about you?

Him – I'm joking too.

Her – No, I mean: are you planning anything for your 40th?

Him – What do you want me to do? Got any ideas to stop it from happening? In any case, please, promise me: no surprise party, OK? If I haven't seen these people in 20 years, there's probably a good reason.

Silence.

Him – How old are you, exactly?

She looks at him, offended, and doesn't answer.

Her – Maybe we should invite the neighbours for dinner one evening.

Him – Why?

Her – No reason!

Him – They've never invited us.

Her – With that kind of logic...

Silence.

Him – Just because we're neighbours doesn't mean we have to be friends.

Her – All our friends live 500 kilometres away! It's nice having friends nearby...

Him – Yes, convenient. Cuts down on travel costs. So it's more eco-friendly to socialise with your neighbours.

Silence.

Him – What does he do, anyway?

Her – I'm not exactly sure. I see him leave every morning with a briefcase. No idea where he goes. I'll ask him next time, if you like.

Him – And her?

Her – They keep to themselves...

Him – Sounds like a cheerful dinner. If we don't want to seem intrusive...

Her – You can always talk about yourself.

Him – They've got kids, haven't they?

Her – Every day, three children leave the house to go to school. I assume they're theirs.

Him – Oh yes... A little one, a medium one and a big one... (*worried*) Do we have to invite them too?

Her – No! We'll make it clear it's an adults-only evening. That'll put them at ease.

Him (*suddenly uncertain*) – You were talking about the neighbours across the road, right?

Her – The ones next door! The people across the road moved out six months ago after they got divorced. Didn't you see the For Sale sign?

Him – No.

Her – They didn't have any children anyway.

Him – Oh, right...

Silence.

Her – Isn't it our cleaning week, by the way?

Him – Could be. (*Sighs*) Cleaning really is what holds a couple together... That's why it's called a “domestic partnership”, right? Domestic as in vacuuming. And with three people, it's a ménage à trois.

Her – Three could also be a couple with a child...

Him – Everyone's got their own fantasies.

Silence.

Her – So?

Him – Do you really think we can afford to have a child right now?

Her – It's not about money, and you know it... Besides, we're not that poor...

Him – We will be, with a bunch of kids! Look at what's happening in Africa with the soaring birth rates... I read a book years ago: *False Start in Africa*. Well, things haven't exactly got better, have they? No one seriously thinks Africa has a future anymore... except maybe with continental drift. The more children people have, the poorer they get...

Her – Are you sure it's not the other way round?

Him – Either way, if poor people stopped having children, in one generation everyone would be rich. Look at the Chinese. Now they're only allowed one child. And things are already looking up...

Her – Then let's start by having just one.

Him – When would we even take care of this child? We can't even find time to sweep the floor!

Her – We'd get a cleaner.

Him – And where would we put the baby?

Her – You could move your office downstairs.

Him – Great start... And you? Planning to stop working?

Her – We'll get a nanny.

Him – On top of the cleaner? That's not a household anymore, it's a small business! I'm not sure I've got the entrepreneurial spirit...

Silence.

Him – We won't be able to go out in the evenings.

Her – We'll get a babysitter.

Him – I never realised how directly birth rates affect employment.

Her – And consumption.

Him – Nappies, baby food, toys, medical care...

Her – A new car...

Him – You know what, you're right. I think this child could save the country from recession.

Black.

5 – Definition of love (By Default)

Him (*to an imaginary woman*) – How long have we known each other? Twenty years at least, right? (*Pause*) Why did we never sleep together, by the way? I mean, we get on really well... We could've even got married!

It's funny, I kind of think of you as an ex. Even though we've never been together. We almost were, once. Remember? You got me drunk. Or maybe it was the other way around. We ended up at your place, completely smashed. We laughed like idiots all night... and somehow forgot to sleep together. Maybe it's because we get along too well. There wouldn't have been enough spark. We'd have ended up bored, eventually. Sure, we laugh a lot, but... I just can't picture myself having sex with someone who's laughing. I mean, there's laughing and laughing. I can make a girl laugh to get her into bed. But sleep with a girl who makes me laugh...? No, if I slept with you, I'd feel like I was sleeping with a mate. A girl mate, if you prefer.

And I don't like blondes. I know, you're not blonde anymore. But you were when I met you... How was I supposed to know it wasn't your natural colour? Funny how these things work, isn't it? It's not that I don't like blondes, but... It depends. You were just a bit too blonde for me. Girls who are too blonde, I don't know, they sort of gross me out a little. Physically. I don't know why... Maybe it's a skin thing. Now it's too late. I'll always picture you as a blonde who dyed her hair brown. Although you're not really a brunette either... Not quite chestnut. I don't even know what to call it... It's not blonde, it's not brown.

It's not that I don't find you attractive. Actually, every guy fancies you. Normally that would be a turn-on. But with you... no. I honestly don't know why I've never wanted to sleep with you... Maybe that's what love is... I mean, that *je-ne-sais-quoi* that makes two people want to have sex. Or more, if there's chemistry. Looks like we've just defined it – by default.

Now, why did I marry my wife instead of you, or someone else...? Well, first of all, she fancied me. That made things simpler. If she hadn't, would I have kept trying...? And if I had kept trying, would she have liked that...? We'll never know. Mutual love is simpler, but it's less... How can I put it...? No risk, no glory. Actually, I do wonder what she saw in me. Do you have any idea...? I suppose I could just ask her, but... What if she asks me the same thing? There are some things it's best not to bring up. A little mystery in a relationship never hurt anyone. Though, well, moderation in all things.

Once, I dated a girl. After a year, she dumped me. I asked her why. She said she was bored in bed. With me. A whole year! I mean, come on – there's a limit to discretion. So now I wonder: why did she stay with me for a year? I didn't even think to ask... There must've been a reason! Or maybe she lied. About the sex, I mean. Just to get back at me... Not that I'm saying that because my male ego was hurt, right? It just took me by surprise, that's all. I mean, I do have a bit of a reputation for being good in bed. And you? No, I mean... you really don't want to tell me why you never fancied me, do you? (*Nervous*) You don't have to answer, you know...

6 – Reunion

She arrives, beaming.

Her (*delighted*) – Do you recognise me?

Him (*turning around, awkward*) – No.

Her (*with a knowing smile*) – It was a few years ago, but still...

Him – Oh right, maybe...

Her (*slightly offended*) – Maybe?

Him – No, no, it's coming back to me... yes... How are you?

Her – I'm fine. What are you doing here?

Him – Nothing really. You?

Her (*a little worried*) – Have I changed that much?

Him – No, why?

Her – You didn't seem to recognise me just now.

Him – Sorry, I just wasn't expecting to see you again, that's all.

Her – Anyway, you haven't changed a bit, have you?

Him – Thanks...

Her – So, what are you up to these days?

Him – Oh, same old, same old...

Her – Still as talkative as ever, I see.

He doesn't know what to say.

Her – Have you been back long?

Him – Back from where?

Her – Well... from over there!

Him – Oh, um... yes. I mean, no.

They smile awkwardly at each other.

Her (*moved*) – It was really nice seeing you again.

Him (*uncomfortable*) – You too...

Her (*knowingly*) – I've got to go now, someone's waiting for me.

She hesitates.

Her – Shall we kiss goodbye?

Him – OK...

She catches him off guard and gives him a full-on kiss.

Her (*pathetically*) – Maybe another time.

Him (*shaken*) – Maybe, yeah...

Her – Well then, bye Paul!

She steps back, eyes misty.

Him – Yeah, bye.

She walks away. They wave awkwardly. He's left alone.

Him (*stunned*) – Paul?

Black.

7 – Carpaccio and Bacon

A couple is admiring a painting we can't see, hanging on an invisible wall.

Him – Panini, isn't it?

Her – Let's have a look.

She steps closer and, leaning in, reads the painter's name above the frame.

Her – Not quite... it's Carpaccio.

Him – Of course...

They admire the painting for a moment, then move on to another.

Her (playfully) – Want to have another go?

Him – Sure...

He examines the painting carefully.

Him – Picasso...?

She gives him a look to let him know he's wrong.

Her – Pissarro... Picabia!

Him – Oh yes... I always mix those two up.

They move on to the next painting.

Him – Your turn?

She studies it carefully.

Her – Manet...?

Him (reading the name above the frame) – Monet!

Her – Well... close enough, isn't it?

They continue.

Her – Look! They've got a lot of Bacon here too...

He glances at her, unsure what she means. Then they go look at the painting.

Her – It's good, isn't it?

Him – Yes, it's...

Her – It's Bacon.

Him – Yes...

Silence.

Her (*thoughtful*) – Sometimes I wonder...

Him – What?

Her – If I didn't know it was Bacon, would I still find it that good?

He looks at her, surprised.

Her – If I didn't know these paintings were worth millions... Let's be honest. Imagine you'd never heard of the Mona Lisa. You spot her at a flea market. Price tag: three hundred pounds. Can you honestly say you'd hang her above the fireplace? That daft woman with her silly smile?

He thinks about it.

Him – We don't even have a fireplace...

Her – No, but seriously, even after visiting dozens of museums and hundreds of exhibitions, could we really tell the difference between a masterpiece and total rubbish?

Him – We'll never know. You only ever see masterpieces in museums. It's not fair, really. Every museum should keep one room just for awful paintings. Like a kind of placebo test, you know? To check whether the other ones are actually beautiful, or if we just think they are because someone told us so.

Her – In the end... going to a museum is a bit like going to church, isn't it? You go for the atmosphere, more than anything.

Him – Luckily, you can still go even if you don't believe... Same goes for love...

She looks at him, uncertain.

Him – I mean marriage. Look at us... We got married in church. And yet, we don't really believe in God.

Silence.

Her – Do you remember our honeymoon in Paris? You took me to the Picasso Museum...

Him (*nostalgic*) – Of course I remember...

Her – We were so excited... It was only halfway through that we realised we were actually in the Carnavalet Museum...

Him – Yes... They're both in the same neighbourhood...

Her (*smiling*) – I did wonder why the preliminaries were taking so long...

Him – The preliminaries...?

Her – I mean Picasso. His early period.

Him – Ah, yes. Of course...

Silence. They begin to leave.

Her – Have you heard of that artist who paints underwater? (*He isn't sure he's understood.*) He puts on a wetsuit, dives down, and paints coral reefs.

Him – I can't say I have. Any good?

Her – Actually... yeah, not bad at all.

Black.

8 – Disappearance

A couple, sitting on a couch. They're not talking or looking at each other. They seem bored. He starts looking for something, but can't find it.

Him – Have you seen the remote? It's disappeared...

She looks at him, surprised.

Her – But... we don't have a TV anymore!

Him – Oh right, that's true...

Silence.

Him – What would you do if I disappeared?

She looks at him, puzzled.

Her – Like the remote?

Him – No, not like the remote! I mean... if I disappeared. You know what I mean.

Her – Are you feeling all right?

Him – Yes, yes, I'm fine. It's just hypothetical.

Her – Don't you have a more cheerful hypothetical?

Him – I'm older than you. I'll probably go first.

Her – There's only three years between us.

Him – Women live longer than men! And I could have an accident. A heart attack. Cancer.

Her – So could I!

Him – Yes, but I asked the question first.

Her – I don't know. There'll be time to think about it.

Him – Better to be prepared...

She looks at him, confused.

Him – I mean... better to plan ahead.

Silence.

Him – Anyway, just so you know, I'd rather be cremated.

Her – Why are you telling me this now?

Him – Well, I'm not going to tell you after, am I? (*Pause*) That's my biggest fear, being buried alive. Isn't it yours?

Her – That probably doesn't happen very often.

Him – Once is enough.

Her – And being burned alive, doesn't that worry you?

He looks at her, concerned.

Him – I hadn't thought of that... *(Pause)* Do you think there's life after death?

Her – Would that really be a good thing...?

Him – You wouldn't have to worry about money, you know...

Her *(surprised)* – You mean if there's life after death?

Him – If I disappeared!

Her – Oh, right... I wasn't worried.

Silence.

Him – I wouldn't blame you if you remarried.

Her – Thank you.

Him – Well, you wouldn't have to get married.

Her – Who, exactly?

Him – You and him. The guy you'd end up with. Might as well keep your independence.

Her – What independence?

Him – It's funny, though. I can't really picture you with another guy.

Her *(offended)* – You think no one else would want me?

Him – No, no, quite the opposite. Actually, I think I'd be jealous.

Her – When you're dead, you'd be jealous?

Him – Yes...

Her – And what if I died before you?

Him *(caught off guard)* – That's different. *(Pause)* If I ended up with someone else, would you mind?

Her – I wouldn't be there to see it.

Him – But you'd be jealous...?

She looks at him suspiciously but doesn't answer.

Him – Who could you see me with?

Her – You want me to introduce you to a friend, just in case, is that it?

Him – Well, for kids you've got godparents... For MPs, you've got substitutes. If one dies or resigns, there's already a replacement lined up. It's part of the plan.

Her – Yeah... Like spare tyres. In case of a puncture... (*suddenly worried*) You're not telling me you've already found a replacement... are you?

Him – Well, it's not that easy, you know...

Silence.

Him – The good thing about bigamy is that if someone dies, you're only half a widower.

She stares at him, stunned.

Her – Right...

Black.

9 – Sports Illustrated

She's reading a women's magazine. He's clearly bored. He hesitates, then picks up a copy of Sports Illustrated. She notices and looks surprised.

Her – You're reading *Sports Illustrated* now?

Him (*caught off guard*) – Why wouldn't I read *Sports Illustrated*?

Her (*incredulous*) – And... you're actually going to read it?

Him – I'm just flipping through it... To see.

Her – To see what?

Him – I don't know. All the guys read it on the train. I was curious what was so fascinating about it.

Her – And did you find out?

Him – No...

She looks rather dismayed.

Her – Are you into sports now?

Him – Not really...

Her – Then it's no surprise you don't see the point of reading *Sports Illustrated*.

He puts the magazine down.

Him – Well... being into sports is one thing. But waking up every morning with an irrepressible urge to know whether Luton beat Bratislava 3–1 or if it ended in a draw . That's something else. I don't even know where Bratislava is...

Her – It's the capital of Slovakia, isn't it...?

Him – Are you sure?

Her – Or maybe Slovenia...

Him – Slovenia? Do you really think they can afford a football team? It's tiny...

Her – Well, the Vatican's even smaller. And they've got plenty of money.

Him – Don't tell me the Vatican has a football team too...?

He goes back to Sports Illustrated. She now looks seriously worried.

Her – But why are you suddenly so obsessed with understanding why men read *Sports Illustrated*?

Him – Maybe I need to feel reassured about my masculinity...

Her – Well, that didn't work!

Him – Thanks.

Her (*trying to comfort him*) – Look, you can still be a man without reading *Sports Illustrated*!

Him – You think so...?

She thinks for a moment.

Her – I could get you a subscription to *Car & Driver*, if you like?

He looks at her, unsure if she's mocking him. She goes back to reading Elle.

Him – And you?

Her – What about me?

Him – What do you get out of reading *Elle*?

She looks at him.

Her – You read it too.

Him – Yeah, well... Just for a laugh.

Her – I don't read *Sports Illustrated*. Not even for a laugh.

Him (*troubled*) – So you think I'm effeminate, is that it?

Her – No... It's just that almost every man ends up reading his wife's women's magazines. Everyone knows that. Why do you think there are car ads in *Elle*?

Him (*thoughtful*) – There aren't many ads for washing machines in *Sports Illustrated*.

Her – And yet football is a very dirty sport... Just look at the number of footballers in washing powder commercials.

She goes back to her reading. He still looks preoccupied. She notices.

Her – Something still bothering you?

Him – I was just thinking about the difference between men and women...

Her – Yes...?

Him – Take clothes, for example. Trousers aren't exclusive to men anymore, but skirts are still reserved for women.

She looks at him, sceptical.

Him – Same with colours. You can wear grey, pink, whatever. We only get grey. Or brown... (*Pause*) You say we don't like shopping, but have you ever seen a men's shoe shop? It's so depressing.

She now looks genuinely worried.

Her – Are you saying you want to wear a pink miniskirt and stilettos?

Him – No! I'm just making an observation. You've taken the best of our masculine identity, and we've got nothing in return. (*He reopens Sports Illustrated, frustrated.*) Good thing we've still got *Sports Illustrated*.

Black.

10 – Where do we go when we die?

They are sitting on a couch.

Him – Has the post arrived?

Her – Were you expecting a letter?

Him – Not really... But I always hope for a miracle when I open the letterbox. Something telling me I've won a competition I never entered. That some long-lost rich aunt I never knew existed has died without an heir. That the Nobel Prize committee has decided to award me one in advance for future work... Every day, opening the letterbox, I'm like a kid at Christmas.

Her – That's true... We grow out of believing in Santa, but we never stop believing in the postman. And there are similarities, aren't there... They both wear a uniform. They carry a sack. They deliver mystery packages. And we never actually see either of them...

Him – Well, the postman, you do see him at Christmas. When he comes asking for his tip... I hate Christmas. It smells more and more like pine and death every year... And there are more and more death notices in the mail... But why I wait for the postman like the second coming... who knows. Then again, maybe the father of the messiah was the postman. That whole immaculate conception thing... Come on, let's not push it, even Santa wouldn't fall for that one.

Her – If you want to get letters, you have to write some. Most people only get replies. If you never send any, don't be surprised when you don't get any. I don't think I've ever received a letter from you...

Him (*ironic*) – Want us to start writing to each other from time to time?

She looks at him, unsure.

Him – What would we even say? I'd feel like I was writing to myself. In the end, aren't we always writing to ourselves a little? There are people you can write endless letters to... and then when you see them, you've got nothing to say. No, writing is kind of... onanistic.

She pours herself a drink and lights a cigarette.

Him – You smoke now?

Her (*surprised*) – Yeah... it's been twenty years. You never noticed?

Pause.

Him – Did you know each cigarette shortens your life by ten minutes? (*She says nothing.*) How many do you smoke a day, roughly?

Her (*ironically*) – According to my calculations, I should've died six months ago. I don't get it...

Silence.

Him – Same with mobile phones, right? They're not great for your health. Apparently, more than fifteen minutes a day and you're guaranteed a tumour. Better not go over your limit... (*Pause*) By the way, do you know what your daughter asked me this morning while I was brushing my teeth?

Her – No?

Him – “Where do we go when we die?”

Her – And what did you tell her?

Him – What do you think?

Her – No idea.

Him – That's exactly what I said.

Her – And?

Him – She said, “But Daddy, when we die, we go to the cemetery!”

Her – And then?

Him – Then she went back to her cornflakes. She seemed quite pleased to have taught me something. And slightly surprised I didn't know that already, at my age... (*Pause*) Amazing, isn't it?

Her – That she asked that?

Him – No, that kids can accept simple answers to simple questions. A philosophy teacher would've gone on about metaphysics, immanence, transcendence, the whole mess... Maybe even God, in the worst-case scenario. Kids are way more pragmatic. Actually, they're natural-born atheists.

Her – They believe in Santa.

Him – Yeah... because their parents tell them he exists and he'll bring them presents. They wouldn't have made him up on their own. If someone told you a mysterious benefactor would send you a Christmas bonus every year, you wouldn't be in a hurry to start questioning his existence either. (*Pause*) But God? He's never brought us anything for Christmas. Yet some adults still believe. Do you?

Her – In Santa?

Silence.

Him – What's also amazing is how unbothered she was by the idea of being buried. Us? It freaks us out. Why isn't she scared? *(Pause)* I'll have to ask her tonight what exactly she meant by “when you die, you go to the cemetery.” *(Pause)* What do you think she meant?

Her *(puzzled)* – What?

Him – I mean, what do you think she meant by that?

Her – Well... that.

Him – That what?

Her – That when you die, you go to the cemetery.

He stares at her, stunned.

Him – Wait... you believe that too?

Her – Why, don't you?

Him – Yes... I mean...

He bursts out laughing.

Him – Come on, don't tell me you think it's that simple too!

Her – Well... in a way, yeah.

He gives her a mocking look.

Her – A minute ago you were saying how wonderful it was not to overthink things. To just accept simple answers to simple questions.

Him – Yeah, but... you're not five years old!

Her – Fine, go ahead. I'll ask you: where do we go when we die?

He's caught off guard.

Him – Well... it's not that simple, is it?

Her – Go on...

Him – I don't know, it's... it's a question of the subject.

She stares at him, waiting for more.

Her – The subject of the question? Or the question of the subject?

He's lost.

Him *(thoughtful)* – Where do we go when we die...? *(He shrugs.)* Nowhere.

Her – Oh, but we do...

Him – Yeah, if you like...

Her – Even if I don't.

Him – “We go to the cemetery, we go to the cemetery”... That doesn't mean anything! You can go to a cemetery while you're still alive, take a walk, and then go grab lunch at a Chinese restaurant. What does “going to the cemetery” even mean? And what if you die and they never find the body? Then what “when you die, you go to the cemetery”? That doesn't really hold up. See? It's not that simple.

Her – So if your daughter asks you again, what will you say?

Him – I don't know... (*He thinks.*) I'll say: “When you die, you go to the cemetery... usually. If they find the body. When you're alive, you can go to the cemetery too... But when you're dead, it's for good.”

Her (*hiccups*) – Hic...

Black.

11 – Rainy Season

He's there, not fully awake. She walks in, full of energy.

Her (*towards the audience*) – Did you see? They're back!

Him – Who? The audience?

Her – Yes, not the Invaders!

He gives her a tired look.

Her – I've got so much energy this morning... I slept like a baby!

Him – Good for you...

Her – Some days are just like that... I must've gotten up on the right side of the bed.

Him – Mmm...

Her – I'm starving! Aren't you?

Him – Not really...

Her – I feel like I've eaten amphetamines. Must be spring. Doesn't it have that effect on you?

Him – I don't know... I've never eaten amphetamines...

Her – For me, one ray of sunshine and boom! Life's all rosy.

Him – Lucky you.

Her – I should've been born in a country where it's sunny all year round.

Him – That exists?

Her – In the tropics!

Him – They have the rainy season.

Her – Oh, right...

Him – It lasts six months.

Her – That long?

Him (*pointing to the audience*) – Why do you think they all flock to Costa Brava in August? In the tropics, the good weather is in winter. In summer, it's crap.

Her – At least there, you get good weather for half the year, and you know exactly when. It's more organized than here. You don't have to wonder every morning if you should take your umbrella. And when you do, you know it's for six months.

Him – It's the same in Antarctica. The year is split in two. Day in summer, night in winter.

Her – You could always hibernate, like polar bears.

Him – Yeah... But now with the melting ice... You go to bed in October, and wake up in April drifting on an iceberg off the coast of the Canary Islands...

She sighs.

Her – And what about a country with 365 days of summer and winter spread over the 365 nights? Doesn't exist? Who cares if it's cold at night? We're asleep.

Him – Doesn't exist.

Her – I should've been born on another planet.

Him – Sometimes I wonder if you weren't...

A beat. They watch the horizon.

Her – Looks like it's clouding over, doesn't it?

Him – You think?

Her – Look at those big clouds over there. The wind's bringing them this way.

Him – We live in a temperate climate... In weather speak, that means the worst is always possible. And likely, in the short term.

Her – Weather forecasts... Have you heard their latest thing? They don't talk about Celsius or Fahrenheit anymore, it's all about “feels like” temperature. Feels like to who? To cold types like me, or to people who are never cold? To the ones who forgot their sweater, or the ones in thermal underwear? I'd love to see the thermometer that measures that, “feels like” temperature...

Him – It's like the national happiness meter... Down again this week, they say.

Her – That depresses me.

Him – There you go. It's raining.

Her – I'd rather not watch that... I'll call my mum, see if the weather's nice in the South.

Him – What did I just say?

Her – What?

He mimics E.T., finger pointing toward the sky.

Him – Phone home...

Black.

12 – Small talk

She's reading. He's staring blankly into space. She notices.

Her – What are you staring at like that?

Him – The TV...

Her – We don't have a TV anymore!

Him (*sighs*) – I know, but... It's like having both legs amputated and still getting phantom pains...

She widens her eyes, then goes back to her book, before changing her mind.

Her – Strange, I got a call for you on my mobile today.

Him – Oh, right... Sorry, I forgot to tell you. I left your number on my voicemail for work, so people could reach me during the holidays.

Her – The holidays? But we're not leaving for another week!

Him – Yeah, but this way they'll already have it.

Her (*dumbfounded*) – My number? And in the meantime, for a whole week, I'm going to be taking calls from your clients?

Him – I don't know... Just tell them to call back while we're away.

Her – Wouldn't it be simpler for you to just get your own phone?

Him – A mobile? Come on... When I go out, it's to get a bit of peace. I don't want to be hassled.

Her – So you'd rather I get hassled by your work calls? I was in the middle of a parent-teacher meeting when some guy rang to ask when you were planning to deliver your article titled “Should we legislate against thongs in schools?” You think that doesn't bother me?

Him – Don't you switch your phone off during meetings?

Her (*dryly*) – Sorry, must've slipped my mind... Look, a mobile is personal. You don't lend it out, even to your spouse. I don't know... It's like a toothbrush!

Him – A toothbrush? Well then, if you want to use mine during the holidays, be my guest...

Her – Fine, make it a laptop, if you prefer. Would you lend me your laptop if I didn't have one?

He stays silent. That says it all.

Her – And after the holidays?

He pretends not to follow.

Her – I'll still be getting your calls! Good thing you've got nothing to hide...

Him – After the holidays, I'll just say I lost the damn thing. Or it got stolen! Mobiles get stolen all the time.

Her – Perfect! That way, if someone still calls me, I'll be accused of stealing it. Might I remind you, that phone is mine!

Him – If it means that much to you, just leave it with me and buy yourself a new one.

Her – Oh, great idea! Then anyone trying to reach me will get you!

Him – I'll give them your new number, easy.

Her – Right, because that's so much simpler than you just buying your own phone. *(Pause. Then, suspiciously)* You didn't do all this just to avoid getting your own, did you...?

He shrugs, playing innocent. Silence.

Him – You know what the butcher called me this morning?

She clearly doesn't.

Him *(imitating the butcher)* – “What does the little gentleman fancy today?” First time he's ever called me that...

Her – Mmmm... That's the male version of “What does the little lady fancy today?”

Him – Isn't that terrifying? That the butcher now sees us as “the little gentleman and the little lady”? Thank god we don't do the shopping together. He'd probably call us “the little couple.” *(imitating again)* “What does the little couple fancy today?” At that point, I think I'd go vegetarian.

Pause

Him – I've always found meat a bit gross, anyway. Haven't you?

She stays buried in her book. He goes on regardless.

Him – Chicken, maybe... at a stretch. *(Pause)* I mean, butcher shops are terrifying if you think about it. All that bloody flesh laid out. Whole animal carcasses in the cold room. All those innocent cows kept in countryside camps, behind barbed wire, sometimes even electrified, waiting to be slaughtered and chopped up... Poor things. At least they don't know what's coming. And when I see those guys in white shrouds hauling dead bodies off refrigerated trucks on their backs...

Still no reaction from her. He turns toward her again.

Him – Did you know Sikhs are strictly vegetarian?

She finally lifts her head from the book.

Her – Oh, by the way, no need to stop by the hardware store for the bathroom light. I went this afternoon. (*Pause*) I ran into the neighbour. She was buying a suitcase...

He stares at her, not getting it. Her phone rings.

Her – Yes...?

Her face freezes.

Her (*overly polite*) – No, this is his assistant. Hold on, I'll put you through. May I ask who's calling? (*hands him her phone, annoyed*) It's your friend Mark...

He takes the phone as if nothing's wrong.

Him – Hello?

He fumbles with it a bit.

Him – How does this thing work again...?

Black.

13 – Growing old

She is stage left, saying goodbye to their daughter, who is not visible. He stands slightly back, watching the farewell with a faint smile on his face.

Her – Have fun, you two. But don't do anything stupid, all right? And don't bring her home too late, okay? I'm counting on you!

The daughter leaves. The couple returns to centre stage, exchanging a glance full of mixed emotion, amusement and tenderness.

Her – Her first outing with a boy...

Him – Doesn't make us feel any younger.

Her – Yeah... It's a bit of a blow to my spirits.

Pause.

Him – What's his name again?

Her – Adolf.

Another pause.

Her – It's odd, isn't it?

Him – What?

Her – That his name is Adolf!

Him – Well, my name is Wolfgang.

Her – Exactly! It's such an old-fashioned name...

Him – Maybe he's actually a creepy old man disguised as a spotty teenager. Like those characters you see on TV in internet safety ads. Right now, he's probably pulling off his mask.

Her (*turning back to him*) – Don't joke about that...

Him – Perhaps his parents are borderline fascists. That would explain the name.

Her – Your parents named you Wolfgang and you never even played the piano.

He gestures in a conciliatory way.

Him – Come on, you'll have to get used to it. It's just the beginning. In a year or two, we'll be alone in the house, like a pair of washed-up old farts.

Her – Thanks. That's exactly what I needed to cheer me up...

Him (*playful*) – I've got a surprise to help you through this difficult time.

Her – You're taking me out to dinner?

Him – Better than that.

He pulls a joint from his pocket and shows it to her.

Her (*tempted but hesitant*) – No... You think? I haven't smoked in fifteen years, not even a cigarette. The last time I tried a Marlboro Light, I thought I was going to overdose...

Him – It'll take us back to our youth. Remember, we smoked our first joint together. Would we even be married today if we hadn't been completely stoned when we met?

Her – Probably not...

He lights the joint, takes a deep drag, and passes it to her.

Him – Wow... That feels good...

She takes a puff too, visibly enjoying it. But her blissful smile quickly fades.

Her – What if he offers her drugs...?

Him – If his name were Jamel, maybe... But Adolf...

Her – Your name was Wolfgang, and you're the one who gave me my first joint.

Him – Maybe it'll end in a wedding... Come on, relax a bit...

Her – You're right... We can't do anything about it anyway... We'll have to live with it...

Him – You mean without...

The phone rings. She takes another puff, passes him the joint, and answers, nonchalantly. He inhales again.

Her (*somewhat spaced out*) – Yeah... (*Suddenly composed*) Yes, sweetheart, what's going on? Oh, you scared me. I thought you had an accident... I understand, but it's still less serious than a car accident. Do you still want to go to the movie? It might take your mind off things... I don't know, why don't you ask a friend to go with you...? Of course, come on over. We'll talk about it. Okay, we'll wait for you...

She hangs up.

Him – What's going on?

Her – She's been dumped by Adolf...

Him – I didn't like that guy... You were right. Adolf really is a stupid name...

Her – Of course, she's devastated... Her first heartbreak...

Him – Well, it's not the end of the world... Won't be the last... (*hands her the joint*) Here, have another hit. It's good stuff, I'm telling you...

Her (*ignoring the joint*) – She's on her way... I'm her mother... I need to comfort her... Oh God, my head's spinning... I feel sick... Why did you make me smoke that crap...?

He's totally out of it, grinning like an idiot.

Him – I feel amazing. You wouldn't believe...

Her – Oh no... And now the house reeks of weed...

She tries to waft away the smoke with a magazine. The doorbell rings.

Her – Oh no... She's already here!

Him – Shit... Couldn't Adolf have dumped her after the film? I thought we were finally going to have a quiet evening for once...

Her – Yeah, well, not tonight...

The doorbell rings again.

Her – Open the windows, air it out a bit. I'll try to keep her on the landing for a moment... (*Another ring*) Yes, yes, I'm coming, sweetheart... (*She turns to him one last time. He still has the joint dangling from his mouth*) And put that damn thing out, for God's sake!

Black.

14 – Nightmare

He enters wearing a blonde wig and holding a football. She enters behind him, wearing a man's jacket and a moustache, either Hitler-style or like Charlie Chaplin's.

Her (*loud*) – Guten Tag...

Him (*jumping*)- But... Who are you?

Her – I am... the baby-sitter. (*He looks terrified. She takes out a pack of cigarettes and offers him the pack.*) Do you smoke?

Him (*about to take one, then changing his mind*) – No, thank you.

Her – Natürlich. It's forbidden! There's an ashtray, but that doesn't mean anything! It's only there so rule-breakers don't burn the carpet... That's so French. We make laws, but always plan a plan B in case someone breaks them... (*She takes out a pack of chewing gum.*) Want a chewing gum?

Him – It gives me gas...

Her – You know why subway crickets are going extinct?

Him – There are crickets in the subway?

Her – Or grasshoppers, I can't remember. It's because they used to feed on cigarette butts. Now that smoking's banned in the metro, they're dying out. Can you believe it? An entire ecosystem, ruined... Although I suppose they could start chewing old gum instead...

Him – I saw an exhibition about urban wildlife. People don't realise it, but there's incredible fauna in big cities like London. I heard there are even wolves. Hundreds of them!

Her – Wolves?

Him – But they only come out at night, in the parks...

Her – You mean... foxes?

Him – Oh, yes, maybe... I've never actually seen one.

Her – That's because the parks are closed at night...

A door slams. He looks very worried.

Her – The cleaner shut the door on her way out... and took the key with her.

Him – There aren't any windows... We can't even call for help...

Her – You don't have a mobile phone...?

He searches his pockets. His face lights up when he pulls something out.

Him – Ah, yes! (*His face drops again.*) Damn, it's the remote control I've been looking for all week...

Her – But... there's no TV!

Him – Right... The postman will rescue us tomorrow morning.

Her – Tomorrow's Christmas!

Him – Oh, right... Shit...

Her – Maybe you'd like to lie down?

He stares at her, terrified. She pulls out a white sheet.

Her – If we're going to spend Christmas Eve together, we might as well get comfy... Which side do you prefer?

Him – I don't have a preference.

Her – Then I'll take this one...

She slips under the sheet. He gets in too. They prepare to sleep.

Her – Well then... Merry Christmas!

Him – Yeah... Merry Christmas...

A pause. He lets out a cry and suddenly wakes up. She wakes up too. He no longer has the wig, and she's no longer wearing the moustache.

Her – Are you okay, darling?

Him – Yes, yes... I must've had a nightmare. I dreamt it was Christmas...

Her (*looking at him, baffled*) – But darling... it *is* Christmas!

Black.

15 – Furniture

The stage is totally empty. He is already there, standing. She arrives.

Her (*looking around, astonished*) – But... where's all the furniture gone?

Him (*proud of himself*) – You'll never guess. (*She looks at him, waiting for an explanation*) A guy rang the doorbell this morning. An antique dealer!

Her (*worried*) – And?

Him – At first, I told him that we had nothing to sell...

Her – And then...?

Him – I thought there was no harm in having it all valued. The estimate was free. You'll never guess how much he offered me for all that old junk.

Her – How much?

Him – Enough to buy new stuff. Easily.

Her – Then why did you sell it?

Him – For a change! You said you wanted a new couch.

Her – And?

Him – Well, you know very well if we'd changed the couch, we would've had to get a matching table. Then new chairs, and so on...

Her – Maybe...

Him – It would've cost us a fortune! And what would have we done with the old furniture?

She says nothing.

Him – This way, it's much simpler.

Her – And in the meanwhile?

Him – In the meanwhile what?

Her – Until we buy new furniture...

He looks around at the empty room.

Him – Personally, I've never liked cluttered rooms.

Her – Well, this one's definitely not cluttered anymore...

Him – Aren't you happy?

Her – I didn't say I wanted no furniture at all. We don't even have a bed anymore!

Him – I just explained... I thought you'd be pleased!

Her (*trying to be conciliatory*) – Look, let's go out to dinner tonight. We'll stay in a hotel, and tomorrow we'll go furniture shopping. OK?

Him – OK...

Silence.

Him – We just have to pick a style.

Her – If we're starting from scratch, maybe we should go modern?

Him – Yeah... But then we'll need to repaint.

Her – Don't you think you're being a bit too perfectionist?

Him – Modern furniture with these filthy walls... it'll clash.

Her (*ironically*) – Maybe we should just move altogether.

Him – You think? (*Pause*) Actually, moving would be easy... Just shut off the water and electricity, we wouldn't even have to come back.

She suddenly has a doubt.

Her – Did you empty the drawers?

Him – Of course.

Her – And your wedding ring?

Him – My wedding ring?

Her – The one you kept in the nightstand drawer!

Him – Shit...

She says nothing, but we can see she's devastated. He looks crushed too.

Him – It had been there for so long. I'd completely forgotten about it...

Silence.

Her – Do you have the dealer's contact details?

Him – No... He paid in cash, loaded everything into his van, and drove off. (*Pause, uncertain*) If he finds it, he'll surely call us...

Her (*bitter*) – Right... And if you don't find it, you can always get yourself a new wife. A more modern one, to match the new paint and furniture.

Him – I'm sorry...

Her – Why did you never wear that ring?

Him – I did wear it! (*Pause*) Before we got married... Remember? I bought them in a market in Yemen. To make it look like we were already married. Otherwise, they wouldn't rent us a room in the hotels.

Her – Now that you've sold all our furniture, including the marital bed, we'll have no choice but to go to a hotel tonight...

Him – Don't worry, it's not like they're going to ask for our marriage certificate.

Her – And after the wedding? Why did you keep your ring in that drawer?

Him – Well... I was afraid of losing it.

Her – Well done...

Silence.

Him – Are you mad at me?

She doesn't answer.

Him – Come on, let's go!

Her – Where?

Him – To the hotel! It'll be like a second honeymoon... No more ring, no more furniture, soon no more apartment. A fresh start!

Her – I still have my wedding ring...

Him – You should probably take it off.

Her – Why?

Him – You look married, I don't. At the hotel, they'll think I'm having an affair...

Her – So my options are: go back to being single, or play the mistress?

They leave.

Her – You have a funny idea of what marriage means...

Black.

Emergency exit

Lights up on a couple in the audience. He puts his coat back on. She takes out a cigarette.

Her (*enthusiastic*) – So...?

Him – Rubbish.

Her (*outraged*) – Rubbish?

Him – Complete rubbish.

Her – Then you clearly didn't get it.

Him – Was there something to get?

Her – Oh, I see... (*A beat*) You're getting back at me.

Him – Getting back at you?

Her – I liked it, so now you pretend you didn't. That's petty, isn't it?

Him – Look, I didn't like it, so I say I didn't like it. I'm not going to pretend just to please you.

Her – You didn't say you didn't like it, you said it was rubbish. That's not the same thing!

Him – I don't see much of a difference...

Her – So it was rubbish, I liked it, therefore I'm rubbish.

Him – You said it, not me.

Her – It wasn't me, it was Plato.

Him – Plato said you were rubbish?

Her – It's called a syllogism. All women are mortal, I'm a woman, therefore I'm mortal.

Him – If Plato says so... Anyway, I thought this thing was deadly dull. (*A beat*) And I'm not even sure your syllogism holds up.

Her – Go on, keep digging...

Him – But what did you like about it?

Her – Everything!

Him – That's vague.

Her – And you, what didn't you like?

Him – Look, I'd rather not get into details. You'll get offended again.

Her – Me? Offended? Come on, I don't care if you didn't like it! I liked it, that's all. Too bad for you if you were bored...

Silence.

Him – Come on, let's not argue about this...

Her – Sometimes I wonder what we're doing together.

He reaches toward her.

Her – I hope next time we'll both enjoy it...

Him – Or at least agree about it...

She gives him a questioning look.

Him – Maybe we'll both be bored.

Her – Hmm... That's a pretty minimalist idea of relationship harmony...

They leave.

Black.

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

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
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Joker
The Rope
The Window across the courtyard

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

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

Comedies for 5 to 6

All's well that starts badly
Christmas Eve at the Police Station
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but Stable
In lieu of flowers...
King of Fools
Traffic Jam on Graveyard Lane

Comedies for 7 or more

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

Collection of sketches

Backstage Bits
Don't panic
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

All of Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays are available to download for free from his website: <https://comediatheque.net/>

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