

La Comédiathèque

# IS THERE A CRITIC IN THE AUDIENCE?

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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# **Is there a critic in the audience?**

**Jean-Pierre Martinez**

*Translation by the author*

Fred and Sam have always dreamed of participating in the Avignon Festival, and finally, that dream has come true. But in Avignon, dreams can easily turn into nightmares. Right after the first performance, a harsh review discourages the audience from attending this already troubled show. Facing impending disaster, these two endearing underdogs make a daring choice – one that involves great risk. This play is a tribute to all those actors who toil in obscurity, yearning for a glimpse of the limelight, while also celebrating the remarkable power of passion that can elevate even the most profound failures into something extraordinary.

## **Characters**

Sam: actor

Fred: actor

Dan: critic (man or woman)

Max: press officer (man or woman)

*In this version, Fred, Sam, and Dan are men, and Max is a woman, but all roles can be either gender without significant changes to the dialogue*

This play is set at the Avignon Festival, but it can easily be adapted to other theatre festivals, such as The Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

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## Scene 1

*An empty stage with only two chairs. Trumpets sound in the distance, announcing the beginning of a performance in the Courtyard of the Palace of the Popes in Avignon. Sam is holding a watermelon. They both collapse into their chairs.*

**Sam** – I can't bear this anymore... Can you believe the festival hasn't even started yet?

**Fred** – You're right, it's hot.

**Sam** – Hot? It's a blazing 45 degrees in the shade!

**Fred** – Climate change deniers should be sent to Avignon...

*Sam takes out a water bottle, drinks, and then hands the bottle to Fred.*

**Sam** – Why do they schedule this in July anyway?

**Fred** – Probably because it's when most people are on vacation.

**Sam** – Yeah, well, it won't be a vacation for us.

**Fred** – Remember? Last July, we were doing a sailing course in Brittany.

**Sam** – And then they have the nerve to call artists freeloaders.

**Fred** (*to the audience*) – Go ahead, give it a try... We'll make way for you.

**Sam** – See if the artist's life is really a holiday.

**Fred** – Go on, try handing out one more flyer to people with pockets already bursting with them...

**Sam** – Or attempt to hang a poster at the bottom of a gutter covered with posters up all the way up to the third floor...

**Fred** – A gutter that's seen every dog in Avignon leave its mark over the past year.

**Sam** – When it's not the local drunks who have puked on it during the night.

**Fred** – Give it a whirl! Try it for a day or two. You'll see what the artist's life is like.

**Sam** – Honestly, you'd have to be a real masochist.

**Fred** – True...

*They share a moment, both breaking into broad smiles.*

**Sam** – But we've been dreaming of this for so long...

**Fred** – It's so awesome. I still can't believe it. The Avignon Festival...

**Sam** – We've always been in the audience until now. I feel like I've stepped through the looking glass.

**Fred** – Hoping it's not a fool's paradise... How did your leafleting go for you?

**Sam** – Fantastic! A guy asked me if I could hook him up with tickets for the opening night.

**Fred** – What did you tell him?

**Sam** – I said that if he came with his girlfriend, we could do a buy one, get one free deal.

**Fred** – Nicely done.

**Sam** – Unfortunately, he didn't have a girlfriend...

**Fred** – And then?

**Sam** – I just handed him a ticket.

**Fred** – Alright...

**Sam** – You have to kickstart the word-of-mouth somehow.

**Fred** – That's for sure...

**Sam** – And how about you with the posters?

**Fred** – The owner of a tobacco shop wanted two tickets in exchange for letting me plaster a poster on his storefront.

**Sam** – What happened next?

**Fred** – I told him to go screw himself.

**Sam** – Oh, that's good too.

**Fred** – It's crazy. Thanks to us, he'll boost his sales tenfold during the whole festival, legally selling highly carcinogenic products...

**Sam** – Meanwhile, we're stuck performing for free...

**Fred** – It almost makes me want to quit smoking.

**Sam** – Is that the tobacco shop around the corner?

**Fred** – Yep.

**Sam** – Doesn't surprise me. They're charging one euro for tap water during the festival.

**Fred** – And the restrooms are reserved for paying customers only, naturally.

**Sam** – Well, there are some nice shopkeepers too. The local grocer took a pack of flyers from me and gave me a watermelon.

**Fred** – It's not a melon, it's a watermelon.

**Sam** – Oh, yeah... I thought it was pretty large for a melon...

**Fred** – Come on, let's have faith in it.

**Sam** – Yeah, but we'll have to hold up...

**Fred** – You'll see, when it truly kicks off, the adrenaline will keep us going. (*A pause*)  
What's on the menu for lunch?

**Sam** – I'm not sure... Maybe a watermelon?

***Blackout.***

## Scene 2

*Fred enters. He is doing articulation exercises.*

**Fred** – She sells seashells by the seashore. The shells she sells are surely seashells. So if she sells shells on the seashore, I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

*Sam arrives.*

**Sam** – So, is it the big night?

**Fred** – The premiere... It's the moment of truth.

**Sam** – Will the audience like what we've spent over a year preparing for them?

**Fred** – Standing ovation or just polite applause...

**Sam** – Simple jeers or assorted projectiles?

**Fred** – If only those projectiles were tomatoes, we could enjoy something other than watermelon...

**Sam** – Only retired teachers and Parisian hipsters go to Avignon; they're probably organic tomatoes.

**Fred** – You're right; we need to stay optimistic.

*A pause. Fred looks at his phone.*

**Sam** – Yeah, but there still needs to be someone in the audience... How are reservations going?

**Fred** – So far, it's rather quiet.

**Sam** – I see... So, still no reservations.

**Fred** – Except for that guy you gave a ticket to. But it's Avignon; people don't usually book in advance! They just show up at the theatre.

*Sam looks around.*

**Sam** – At the theatre... You'd have to know it's a theatre. I don't know how they managed to fit 49 seats in here.

**Fred** – By eliminating the backstage area, for starters.

**Sam** – It's not any bigger than the kebab place we ate at yesterday. What is this place during the rest of the year?

**Fred** – A kebab place. Haven't you seen it? You can see the sign above the door, next to the theatre's sign.

**Sam** – Alright... So that's the source of this smell...

**Fred** – The smell of grease is quite persistent.

**Sam** – So, in a way, we've privatized a kebab place for three weeks...

**Fred** – Yeah...

**Sam** – And all for the modest sum of...?

**Fred** – 12,000 euros.

**Sam** – 12,000 euros...

**Fred** – And they don't even throw in free kebabs...

**Sam** – The magic of Avignon...

**Fred** – Well, it also includes the accommodation just upstairs.

**Sam** – The accommodation... That tiny room with no air conditioning... with the shared shower on the landing.

**Fred** – At least there are toilets. I heard that's not the case everywhere...

**Sam** (*looking at one of the flyers*) – "Double or Nothing"... I think we've chosen the right title for our show... We've invested all our savings to be in this festival. Either it will launch our careers...

**Fred** – Or it will prematurely end them.

**Sam** – I did the math. Just to break even, we would need to sell out every performance from start to finish.

**Fred** – And even then... Fortunately, we don't pay ourselves.

**Sam** – Yeah, but there are also posters and flyers.

**Fred** – Not to mention the press agent...

**Sam** – Speaking of whom, there she is...

### Scene 3

*Max, the press agent, enters. She is a cheerful woman dressed somewhat eccentrically.*

**Max** – How's it going, folks?

**Fred** – We were just chatting about you.

**Max** – Already missing me, are you?

**Sam** – We were saying you're expensive.

**Max** – I'm the most affordable press agent around!

**Fred** – Not necessarily the best, unfortunately.

**Sam** – We're counting on you to fill the seats, Max. Otherwise, it's bankruptcy...

**Max** – Well, you know... Making money isn't why you come to Avignon.

**Fred** – Is that so?

**Sam** – If we could at least avoid losing money.

**Fred** – So, what exactly are we doing Avignon for?

**Max** – You have to view it as an investment! Target the programmers.

**Sam** – Programmers? Have many of them announced their attendance?

**Max** – Not yet. But it's the first day, it will come... The streets of Avignon are bustling!

**Sam** – Yes, but there are over 1500 shows...

**Max** – Well, think of it this way, the theatre isn't very large, and with 15 spectators, you've got nearly half a house!

**Fred** – We still need to find those 15 spectators...

**Max** – We've been handing out flyers all day, and still, no reservations...

**Max** – Honestly, you don't have many cards in your favour...

**Fred** – Thanks... It's heartening to know our press agent has faith in us.

**Max** – Let's be realistic... You wrote the script yourselves, you're not famous actors, you're not performing in a big theatre...

**Fred** – True, we're performing in a kebab joint...

**Max** – You're not getting any media attention...

**Sam** – Well, that's why we enlisted a press agent, isn't it?

**Max** – Of course... But I can't work miracles either...

**Fred** – We were hoping for a small miracle at this price.

**Max** – And the theme of the play isn't exactly a crowd-pleaser either.

**Sam** – Theme? I didn't even know our play had a subject.

**Fred** – So, what's a crowd-pleasing subject these days?

**Max** – I don't know. Migrants. Domestic violence. Nazism...

**Sam** – Nazism is a current topic?

**Max** – Some subjects are timeless, you know. If only you were Jewish or Armenian...

**Fred** – Sorry, I'm Greek on my mother's side and Italian through a friend of my dad...

**Max** – No, with a show like yours, the only solution is for the actors to be somewhat famous. Have either of you ever been in a TV soap opera?

**Sam** – No...

**Fred** – I did a commercial for health insurance two years ago, but I was only seen from behind...

**Sam** – So, do you know the secret to becoming famous actors?

**Max** – By tonight? Unless you commit a murder...

**Fred** – Strangling our press agent on the premiere night could make us famous...

**Max** – I'll leave you to your preparations... But let's stay positive! There's always room for a pleasant surprise...

*Max exits.*

## Scene 4

**Sam** – She's got a point; perhaps we should've picked a play... penned by a professional writer.

**Fred** – And hand over an extra 10% in royalties?

**Sam** – Or a playwright who's six feet under...

**Fred** – Yeah, someone dead for over 70 years, or else you still have to deal with the estate.

**Sam** – True, we're already shelling out for the venue, posters, and the press agent... Adding an author's fee might break the bank!

**Fred** – Why not pay the actors as well?

*Sam's phone rings, and he answers the call.*

**Sam** – Hello, Mum... Yes, yes, everything's going smoothly... Yes, we've already got a decent number of reservations, and... Yes, thank you... Thank you so much... Alright, I have to take another call; probably another reservation... That's right; catch you later...

*He puts his phone away.*

**Fred** – Your mother...?

**Sam** – My mother... She lent us 10,000 euros; it's understandable, she's a bit worried...

**Fred** – You should've told her what our press agent just mentioned us: you don't do Avignon to make money...

**Sam** – True; she won't be getting her 10,000 euros back anytime soon.

*Fred looks at the poster for their show titled "Double or Nothing", featuring their photos.*

**Fred** – This poster is really underwhelming...

**Sam** – Yeah...

**Fred** – Maybe we should've invested in a graphic designer.

**Sam** – Do you have any idea how much a graphic designer costs?

**Fred** – I know how much it will cost us if we bomb...

**Sam** – Speaking of the posters... This morning, the mistral wind swept away all the ones we hung up overnight.

**Fred** – Well, at least it saved us from fines for putting them in prohibited spots.

**Sam** – It's still strange, isn't it? The festival wouldn't exist without us. We're the only ones not raking in the cash, yet we're seen as a nuisance...

**Fred** – Yeah... Polluters... Even delinquents...

**Sam** – Especially small companies like us, without any subsidies.

**Fred** – And yet, we manage to sell twenty times more tickets in the OFF than in the IN...

**Sam** – It's not thanks to us; we haven't sold a single one ourselves, but still...

*Fred checks his phone.*

**Fred** – Ah, we just received a reservation...

**Sam** – Great!

**Fred** – It's that guy you gave an invitation to. He wants to book another seat.

**Sam** – Did he find a girlfriend?

**Fred** – No, but he's bringing his grandma. He's asking if there's a senior discount...

*A pause.*

**Sam** – I'm starting to wonder if hiring a press agent was a wise move because up to now...

**Sam** – With the money we're giving her...

**Fred** – Maybe we should've gone with a press agent who's been deceased for over 70 years.

*A pause. Fred checks his phone, looking concerned.*

**Sam** – What's the matter...?

**Fred** – Nothing, it's just Alex...

**Sam** – She hasn't shown up yet? You told me she'd be here for the premiere...

**Fred** – Yeah...

**Sam** – Is there an issue?

**Fred** – Seems like a last-minute complication... She should be here in a few days...

## Scene 5

*The press agent returns with a big smile on her face.*

**Max** – I told you to trust me, folks! Great news, Daniel Stark will be coming to see the show tonight.

**Sam** – Daniel Stark?

**Fred** – Who is that?

**Max** – Stark! The critic from La Provence!

**Sam** – Fantastic...

**Max** – No, but you don't realize it! Everyone dreams of getting a recommendation from Daniel Stark! If he enjoys the performance and writes a review, it will launch you!

**Sam** – No, no, we're very happy.

**Fred** – It just adds a bit of pressure. We'll have to deliver...

**Sam** – To start with, we'll have to make sure the critic isn't the only one in the audience.

**Fred** – We'll get back to handing out flyers and maybe give away some tickets.

**Sam** – Isn't it a bit late for that? We're performing in two hours...

**Max** – Don't worry. I might have a solution...

**Fred** – Oh, really?

**Max** – I can bring in a group of 30.

**Sam** – No?

**Fred** – A group of 30?

**Max** – It's a plumbing class from a vocational school in Avignon. I know the headmaster.

**Sam** – Alright...

**Max** – Of course, you'll have to invite them.

**Fred** – Of course...

**Max** – So? Who do you owe this one to?

*Sam and Fred display a somewhat forced smile.*

**Blackout.**

## Scene 6

*Sam and Fred arrive, exhilarated.*

**Sam** – So?

**Fred** – We did well, didn't we?

**Sam** – I believe so.

**Fred** – Except for those five lines you skipped at the end.

**Sam** – Hey, you skipped a line just before that...

**Fred** – Finally, we made up for it.

**Sam** – I'm sure the audience didn't notice.

**Fred** – These little hiccups give live performances character, don't they?

**Sam** – Nonetheless, a full house for our first show is a promising sign.

**Fred** – Even with those complimentary tickets...

**Sam** – We have to admit that our press agent did a great job on this one.

**Fred** – But the audience didn't seem very engaged, did they?

**Sam** – They didn't even applaud at the end.

**Fred** – Yeah, that's odd... They seemed happy, though.

**Sam** – They just waved their hands like this.

*He makes a gesture of waving both his hands in the air like puppets.*

**Fred** – What about the critic?

**Sam** – Who knows... but I'd say he liked it, right?

**Fred** – He was in the front row. I saw him taking notes throughout the performance.

**Sam** – Yes, it didn't make me very comfortable, to be honest... It felt like I was taking my high school oral exams again... which I failed, by the way.

**Fred** – He left very quickly after the show.

**Sam** – He probably had another performance to attend right after ours.

## Scene 7

*Max enters.*

**Max** – Hey there, folks! How's it going?

**Fred** – Great!

**Sam** – Did you get any feedback from Daniel Stark yet?

**Max** – Dany? I just bumped into him, actually.

**Fred** – So, how did he find the show?

**Max** – It was a quick chat; he was in a rush. But he assured me he'd write a review very soon.

**Sam** – An article in *La Provence* would really help us.

**Fred** – Imagine if we could flaunt a glowing endorsement from Daniel Stark right at the theatre entrance.

**Max** – And you'll be pleased to know the younger crowd absolutely loved it.

**Sam** – Oh really? That's strange; there wasn't any applause at the end...

**Fred** – Yeah, they just waved their hands above their heads like this.

*He imitates the gesture again.*

**Max** – Oh, no, that's just their way of applauding.

**Sam** – Is this the trendy way for young people to applaud these days?

**Max** – Well, it's how the deaf-mute audience claps, at least.

**Fred** – Deaf-mute people...?

**Max** – Yes, they happened to be deaf-mute.

**Sam** – I thought it was a plumbing class.

**Max** – Indeed, it was a plumbing class, but at a specialized school.

**Fred** – I get it... So they didn't understand a thing, huh!

**Max** – Oh, but they did! They can lip-read... well, except when you're facing away from the audience, of course.

**Sam** – Deaf-mutes...

**Fred** – To get word-of-mouth going...

**Sam** – Fantastic...

**Max** – Well, you didn't choose the easiest route either. The 11:00 PM slot is not very convenient...

**Fred** – It was the only one available.

**Sam** – And the cheapest.

**Max** – Yes... one wonders why...

**Fred** – On the other hand, being the last show of the night means we don't have to rush to pack up the props.

**Max** – Props? There are only two chairs...

**Sam** – And above all, we can sleep on the stage after the performance... it's so hot up there...

**Fred** – Do you have air conditioning?

**Max** – I have a villa with a pool in a nearby village.

**Sam** – Maybe we should have become press agents instead of actors.

**Max** – But you're the ones in the spotlight, folks! You're the ones we're applauding!

**Fred** – Well, it depends on the audience. Who do you have planned for the applause tonight? One-armed persons?

**Max** – You should write a play about that someday. I'm sure that one would be a hit.

**Sam** – About what?

**Max** – The trials and tribulations of a small company, tackling Avignon for the first time with a not-so-great show.

**Fred** – Thanks, we'll keep that in mind for next year...

**Max** – When I can help...

**Fred** – What about the program directors?

**Max** – Actually, one is attending tonight.

**Sam** – Really? Who is it?

**Max** – He's... the programming director for the parish hall in Camembert.

**Fred** – Camembert? Where's that?

**Max** – It's in Normandy...

**Sam** – The parish hall in Camembert...

**Fred** – Lovely...

**Max** – He's the first one. A good review from Daniel Stark should attract other program directors...

**Blackout.**

## Scene 8

*Fred is there, dozing in one of the chairs. Sam arrives with a newspaper in hand. Fred stirs from his drowsiness.*

**Sam** – I bought the newspaper.

**Fred** – Has the review been published?

**Sam** – I didn't have time to check. I took the opportunity to hand out flyers on my way back...

*He sits in the other chair and flips through the newspaper.*

**Fred** – So, what's the verdict?

**Sam** – I don't see anything... Oh wait, it's on page three...

**Fred** – Great!

**Sam** – Our first review.

**Fred** – What does it say?

**Sam** (*reading*) – "Theatre in a kebab"... that's the title of the article...

**Fred** – That's quite amusing.

**Sam** (*reading*) – "A comedy performed in a kebab, the concept had its charm to attract OFF aficionados. Because, in fact, there are great shows in very small venues as well. Unfortunately, the play we attended yesterday is to theatre what a kebab is to French gastronomy: both tasteless and hard to digest..."

**Fred** – Is that all?

*Sam reads a bit more in silence before looking up from the newspaper.*

**Sam** – It continues like this for a few lines, but I think you get the general idea...

**Fred** – Yeah...

**Sam** (*reading*) – It ends with: "We leave this show feeling a bit greasy with some nausea, and our clothes permeated with the smell of bad frying..."

*Sam and Fred are devastated.*

**Fred** – The bastard...

**Sam** – Our show is called "Double or Nothing?". I think we now have the answer...

**Fred** – But hold on, we're not going to give up on the first day. It's just one critic's opinion. A loser who has never created anything in his life and takes great pleasure in denigrating what others do...

**Sam** – We've given everything to make it to Avignon. I even had to part with my stamp collection...

**Fred** – Well, on the bright side, we're getting some press coverage...

**Sam** – I could've done without this kind of article.

**Fred** (*rereading the article*) – "We leave this show feeling a bit greasy with some nausea, and our clothes permeated with the smell of bad frying..."

**Sam** – It's well-written, I'll give them that...

**Fred** – We already had no reservations, and this will scare off the audience!

**Sam** – So... what do we do now?

**Fred** – What do you want us to do? Buy up all the copies of *La Provence* before the festival-goers can read this scathing review?

**Sam** – Right now, I'm trying to resist the temptation to jump into the Rhône River...

**Fred** – I'd rather go strangle the jerk who wrote this.

**Sam** – Flyering is already challenging in this scorching heat. Now they're going to throw them back in our faces.

## Scene 9

*The press agent arrives, just as cheerful as ever.*

**Max** – How's it going, folks?

**Fred** – She's asking if we're doing okay...

**Max** – What's the matter?

**Sam** – No, things are not going well at all.

**Fred** – Did you see the article by Stark in *Vaucluse-Matin*?

**Max** – *La Provence*.

**Sam** – Yes, well, that's not the issue, is it?

**Max** – At least they're talking about you in the newspaper! Isn't that what you wanted?

**Fred** – Is that all you have to say to us?

**Sam** – So, this is what we're paying you for? To get crappy reviews?

**Max** – Hey, hold on, you haven't paid me yet, okay? And my job is to get journalists to come. I can't guarantee that the reviews will always be good.

**Fred** – I see... So that's the premium option...

**Sam** – We were counting on this article to bring in an audience. With a review like this on the first day, we're doomed!

**Max** – It's just one critic's opinion. You might get better reviews.

**Fred** – Do you think so?

**Max** – And you know, in Avignon, there are also shows that play to full houses with bad reviews.

**Sam** – Oh yeah? Like which ones, for example?

**Max** – Right now, I can't think of any, but... there must be some.

**Fred** – So you're a press agent, and you're explaining to us that reviews are pointless?

**Max** – It's just *La Provence*, you know...

**Sam** – Oh really? Were you expecting a critic from *Le Monde* or *The Times*, perhaps?

**Max** – Honestly... I'm not sure that would be doing you a favour...

**Fred** – Well... What do we do now?

**Sam** – Yesterday, you said that to become famous, all you needed to do was murder someone. Well, I feel like we're the ones who got killed.

**Fred** – Yeah... It makes me feel murderous, too.

**Sam** – It's true that killing a critic could give us some visibility.

*Fred's phone rings, and he answers.*

**Fred** – Yes, Alex, how are you...? Yes...? Oh, really...?

*He exits.*

## Scene 10

**Max** – Your friend seems a bit on edge, doesn't he?

**Sam** – We've put everything into this festival. And things aren't going well with his girlfriend either. So, this article... it's the final blow, you understand?

**Max** – Well... Bad reviews happen... There will be more...

**Sam** – More? You mean... ones that are better.

**Max** – Or worse, who knows... Come on, I'm sure things will pick up. The first week in Avignon is always a bit tough.

**Sam** – Yes, and I've heard that during the last week, there's no one left. And since the festival only lasts three weeks...

**Max** – It gives you a week in the middle! Well, excuse me, but I have to run... I have an appointment with a journalist, actually... I'll try to get them to come tomorrow, but you know, it's not always easy. The press is in high demand during the festival...

*Max exits.*

## Scene 11

*Fred returns, looking disheartened.*

**Sam** – How's it going?

**Fred** – Alex won't be coming...

**Sam** – No...?

**Fred** – She just dumped me, actually...

**Sam** – Ah, damn... But why?

**Fred** – Maybe because she doesn't want to spend her vacation with a loser like me... and his buddy. In a three-square-meter room without air conditioning...

**Sam** – Oh, that sucks... Especially since she was supposed to help us hand out flyers...

**Fred** – Her ex invited her to spend the summer in his parents' villa in Corsica.

**Sam** – Of course... it's hard to compete...

*Fred takes La Provence and turns to the page with the review.*

**Fred** – I sacrificed everything to do this festival. And that bastard assassinated us on the first day.

**Sam** – Yeah... that sucks, too...

*Fred throws the newspaper.*

**Fred** – We're not going to let this slide!

**Sam** – What do you want us to do?

**Fred** – We're going to pull off something huge! Do you believe in me?

*Sam looks at him with a worried expression.*

**Blackout.**

## Scene 12

*Sam and Fred are wearing theatre masks. Daniel Stark, the theatre critic, is tied to a chair, gagged, and blindfolded. Sam remains calm, but Fred's excitement will grow.*

**Sam** – Kidnapping a journalist over a bad review... Is it a bit excessive, don't you think?

**Fred** – No, it's not just a bad review; it's a real assassination!

**Sam** – An assassination...

**Fred** – I see it as self-defence.

**Sam** – I guess...

**Fred** – But you don't understand! We were already unsure about breaking even with three weeks of sold-out shows. Now, with a review like that, we're guaranteed an empty house!

**Sam** – There's still word of mouth.

**Fred** – Word of mouth? From the deaf-mute audience?

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

**Fred** – This guy just handed us a death sentence, believe me... Avignon is done for us! And if we can't figure out how to bounce back, it might spell the end of our acting careers as well.

**Sam** – That's not untrue...

**Fred** – But of course! For this scribbler, it's just another venomous piece in a local rag. For us, it's like a death sentence!

**Sam** – Okay, but let's not get carried away, alright? You're pretty worked up at the moment.

**Fred** – Fine, I'll try to calm down...

**Sam** – Good... And now, what do we do with him?

*The critic desperately tries to speak through his gag. Sam and Fred exchange a glance.*

**Fred** – Well, silencing a critic is a start.

**Sam** – We wouldn't want him to choke, either.

**Fred** – If we remove his gag and he starts screaming, we'll be in hot water.

**Sam** – On the other hand, theatres are well soundproofed.

**Fred** – You're right... If bystanders hear someone screaming, they'll think it's part of the play.

**Sam** – And if we need to negotiate something with him, we have to let him talk.

**Fred** – Alright, let's give him a chance to speak.

*Fred removes Dany's gag.*

**Dan** – You guys are completely crazy! And who are you, by the way?

**Sam** – We're wearing masks, idiot. Do you think we'll tell you?

**Dan** – But seriously, what do you want from me? If this is about a ransom, you'll be disappointed. I have almost nothing in my bank account. And no one will pay anything to free me. I'm single and childless.

**Fred** – Well, that's not surprising. Most critics end up as bitter old bachelors.

**Dan** – So you know I'm a critic. So you must also know we don't make a fortune in this job. Especially not in a regional newspaper...

**Sam** – It's not your money we're interested in.

**Dan** – Oh yeah? Why did you kidnap me, then?

**Fred** – You have any idea?

**Dan** – No...

**Sam** – Let's talk about your job... Is that what we're paying you for? To discourage aspiring actors? To crush small theatre companies that invest their life savings to perform at Avignon?

**Fred** – Do you even have dreams left, Mr. Stark? Or has your sole joy in life become dashing the hopes of others?

**Dan** – Don't you think you're getting a bit cliché here? The embittered critic whose only satisfaction is to denigrate those who are actually pursuing their dreams?

**Fred** – Are you really sure it's a cliché?

**Dan** – I also praise and wholeheartedly recommend some shows...

**Sam** – Oh really?

**Dan** – My role is to spare audiences from disappointing experiences and guide them towards performances that truly deserve their support.

**Sam** – And naturally, your opinion is the only one that matters.

**Dan** – It's simply an opinion. No one is obliged to share it.

**Fred** – Except you write for a newspaper. When you tear a show down, it has concrete consequences, and not just on the egos of the actors...

**Dan** – A show? What show?

**Sam** – It doesn't matter.

**Dan** – And by the way, where are we?

**Fred** – You think we're going to tell you? You must really think we're idiots...

**Dan** – I I've reviewed just two or three shows since the festival started....

**Sam** – And I imagine you torpedoed all three of them.

**Dan** – This place seems familiar...

**Fred** – You have a blindfold on!

**Dan** – It's this scent... A nauseating scent... A scent... of kebab!

**Sam** – Not at all...

**Dan** – Yes, it's you! "Double or Nothing"!

**Fred** – Absolutely not...

**Dan** – You guys are seriously insane.

*Sam removes the blindfold from Dany's eyes. Sam and Fred take off their masks.*

**Sam** – Okay, it's us...

**Dan** – But what do you want exactly?

*Sam and Fred exchange a glance.*

**Fred** – I don't know...

**Dan** – You don't actually believe that kidnapping me will make me revise my review to endorse your show, do you?

**Sam** – It would be a good beginning...

**Dan** – And how do you think you'll force me? Through violence?

*Fred and Sam exchange a dubious look.*

**Fred** – We haven't figured that part out yet..

**Dan** – Your show is awful. I'd rather die than write otherwise.

**Sam** – So you'd choose death over reconsidering your words?

**Dan** – I doubt you're crazy enough to kill me over a bad review.

**Fred** – Who can say...? Earlier, you called us madmen...

**Sam** – At the very least, we could keep you confined for the duration of the festival, preventing you from harming other theatre companies...

**Dan** – People will notice I'm missing. The police will start an investigation.

**Fred** – You claimed nobody cares about you... Do you honestly think anyone will notice your absence?

**Dan** – We're in a theatre, for heaven's sake. Tomorrow morning, another show will take place. You can't keep me confined here.

**Sam** – We're delighted to offer you the deluxe suite right above us. You'll get a taste of the true actor's life during the festival when they're not in the limelight.

**Fred** – You'll see... It's not much larger than a sauna cabin, and it's even hotter...

**Sam** – Yet it costs us a fortune...

**Fred** – While you get paid for writing your spiteful reviews in air-conditioned comfort.

*Sam looks at Fred with a dubious expression.*

**Sam** – Spiteful?

**Fred** – We'll give you the night to think about it...

***Blackout.***

## Scene 13

*Sam and Fred are seated, both looking disheartened. Dany has vanished.*

**Sam** – I'm starting to think we let our emotions get the best of us...

**Fred** – You think so...?

**Sam** – Perhaps we should consider letting him go now.

**Fred** – He knows who we are. He'll rush to the police to report us, and we'll spend the festival in jail.

**Sam** – Any other ideas?

**Fred** – I don't know... Get rid of him...?

**Sam** – Let's just pretend you didn't say that.

**Fred** – So what's the plan?

**Sam** – We could keep him here for a few more days while we brainstorm.

**Fred** – Brainstorm about what?

**Sam** – We could try to convince him to change his mind.

**Fred** – About our show?

**Sam** – Why not?

**Fred** – Did you hear him? He won't budge!

**Sam** – We have to admit he's quite stubborn.

**Fred** – Yeah... It surprises me, actually... I didn't think a critic would be willing to die for his ideas...

**Sam** – In that case, it's better to release him... The longer we wait, the worse our situation becomes...

**Fred** – I don't know...

**Sam** – If we apologize and give him some money, he might agree not to file a complaint.

**Fred** – Money?

**Sam** – You're right... We can't even afford to eat. I'm getting hungry, by the way.

**Fred** – So...?

**Sam** – He told us he lives alone. No one has noticed his disappearance yet. Let's free him right away...

**Fred** – If he accuses us of kidnapping him, we can always deny it.

**Sam** – We'll say he's making it up.

**Fred** – Kidnapping a critic... How foolish would actors have to be to do something like that?

**Sam** – And besides, there are no witnesses.

*Their gazes turn towards the audience.*

## Scene 14

*The press agent arrives.*

**Max** – Have you heard the news?

**Fred** – What news?

**Max** – The critic from *La Provence*. He's vanished!

**Sam** – Vanished?

**Fred** – Daniel Stark?

**Sam** – Seriously?

**Max** – He didn't show up at his office this morning, and he didn't submit the latest review for the show he attended last night.

**Fred** – The theatre company must be relieved...

**Sam** – Maybe he took a few days off...

**Max** – During the festival? And a bar owner on Dyers Street found his small checkered notebook he uses to take notes during performances.

**Fred** – No?

**Max** – It was floating on the Sorgue River.

**Sam** – Stark?

**Max** – The notebook?

**Fred** – Maybe he committed suicide...

**Max** – The notebook?

**Fred** – Stark!

**Max** – You're among the last ones to have seen him. Did he look depressed after leaving your show?

**Sam** – He looked normal... For a critic...

**Fred** – It's always hard to distinguish between a normal critic and a depressed one.

**Max** – I hope he didn't commit suicide right after seeing your show. That wouldn't be good publicity.

**Sam** – That's for sure...

**Max** – Then again, committing suicide by jumping into the Sorgue...

**Fred** – Yeah... It's two meters wide and fifty centimetres deep.

**Sam** – While there's the Rhône right next to it.

**Max** – Or maybe he was kidnapped.

**Fred** – No?

**Sam** – This story is incredible.

**Fred** – Who could possibly have the idea to kidnap a critic?

**Sam** – Yes, it's really insane...

**Max** – The police are investigating. They might come to question you.

**Sam** – Us? Why us?

**Max** – Your show was the last one he critiqued, and it wasn't a favourable review...

**Fred** – The police should focus on the theatre owners who rent a kebab shop for 12,000 euros for three weeks. And put them in jail.

**Sam** – Some even rent chapels, I've heard.

**Fred** – Jesus once drove the merchants out of the temple, but nowadays, in Avignon, it seems like they're buying up churches at exorbitant prices just to rent them during the festival.

**Max** – Well, excuse me, but I have other companies waiting for me.

*Max leaves.*

## Scene 15

*Awkward moment.*

**Sam** – Why didn't we confess to her?

**Fred** – When she brought up the police, I got flustered.

**Sam** – I know what you mean. I felt like a kid caught torturing a cat.

**Fred** – Have you ever tortured a cat?

**Sam** – It's just an expression.

**Fred** – So, now that we're on their radar, it'll be tougher to plead innocence.

**Sam** – You're right. So, what do we do with Stark?

**Fred** – They say with acid, in one night, you can make a body disappear down a bathtub drain.

**Sam** – Yeah, but there's a hitch.

**Fred** – What's that?

**Sam** – We don't have a bathtub...

*They pause, racking their brains.*

**Fred** – We do have toilets.

*Silence.*

**Sam** – Whose crazy idea was it to participate in the Avignon Festival?

**Fred** – I believe it was you.

**Sam** – Are you absolutely sure?

**Fred** – I can't say why, but I had a bad felling...

**Sam** – What's for certain is that you suggested kidnapping a critic.

*Fred gets up to leave.*

**Sam** – Where are you off to?

**Fred** – What's for certain is that you suggested kidnapping a critic.

**Sam** – The hardware store next door is quite accommodating... They even put up our poster.

*They leave.*

**Blackout.**

## Scene 16

*The critic is tied to a chair. Fred and Sam enter.*

**Dan** – Do you have any idea what kind of punishment you face for kidnapping and unlawful detention?

**Sam** – Not really. How much are we talking about?

**Dan** – I'm not entirely sure, but it's probably many years in prison...

**Fred** – All you need to do is follow our instructions, and we'll release you.

**Dan** – Publish a correction to claim I love your show now? Never!

**Sam** – Do you realize the sacrifices actors make to come to Avignon? Especially when they have no subsidies...

**Dan** – No one's compelling you to participate in Avignon. It would be a public service to abstain...

**Fred** – I'm going to kill him...

**Sam** – At least we'll get some media coverage.

**Dan** – You guys are crazy, but I doubt you're crazy enough to go through with something like this.

**Fred** – Yet I can already envision the front page of La Provence: "Actors Abduct Journalist in Revenge Over Bad Review, Dissect and Flush Him Down Toilet."

**Dan** – That would certainly make you famous. In prison...!

**Sam** – And if we manage to pull this off without getting caught...?

**Dan** – In that case, you won't make the headlines!

**Fred** – Yes, that's not entirely untrue.

**Sam** – How do we resolve this dilemma...?

**Dan** – You guys are totally idiotic! Your show is terrible!

**Fred** – He's getting on my nerves, what about you?

**Sam** – You're right; we need to get rid of him.

**Fred** – I'll fetch the tools I purchased at the hardware store. They had a sale on jigsaws.

**Sam** – I'll come along. We'll also need some large garbage bags.

*The critic listens, obviously horrified.*

**Dan** – Please tell me this is a joke...? You're not really going through with this...?

**Fred** – Put his gag back on.

*Sam gags the critic.*

**Fred** – Seems it's not so hard to silence a critic. You just have to gag him...

*The critic makes muffled protests as they exit.*

## Scene 17

*The press agent returns and steps to the front of the stage without seeing the critic tied to one of the chairs.*

**Max** – Fred? Sam? I've got some exciting news for you, guys! (*She scans the room*) Where have those two idiots run off to...?

*Behind her, the critic tries to get his voice through the gag.*

**Dan** – Mmmm...

*Max doesn't hear him.*

**Max** (*to the audience*) – Have you seen those two goofballs? (*Throws in a bit of playful improvisation based on the audience's reactions*) I don't know, they seemed a little off the last time, didn't they? And you... did you observe anything unusual...?

**Dan** – Mmmm...

*Dany turns around and discovers the critic.*

**Max** – Stark? What are you doing here?

**Dan** – Mmmm...

**Max** – But speak clearly, my old friend; I can't understand a word you're saying!

**Dan** – Mmmm...

**Max** – Ah, I see... (*She removes his gag*) We've been looking for you everywhere, Stark! We thought you drowned in the Sorgue!

**Dan** – These two lunatics kidnapped me and are holding me here...

**Max** – Kidnapping? But why...?

**Dan** – I'll explain later; we need to leave right now! They'll be back any moment; they went to get some tools...!

**Max** – Tools?

**Dan** – Untie me, I'm telling you!

**Max** – OK, OK... No need to get worked up...

*She tries to untie him but is clearly struggling.*

**Dan** – What on earth are you doing?

**Max** – What kind of knot is this...? The person who tied this must have been a sailor; it's impossible...

**Dan** – Don't you have a knife?

**Max** – No, sorry... I don't carry a knife around in the streets of Avignon...

**Dan** – Well, as a critic, I'd better ask for a carry permit...

## Scene 18

*Sam and Fred return, visibly embarrassed to see that Max has discovered their hostage.*

**Sam** – Max? We weren't expecting you so soon...

**Max** – I came to tell you that the critic from *Free Theatre* will be seeing your show tonight.

**Fred** – Great...

**Max** – But I have to admit, I'm having second thoughts now. You guys are crazy! Kidnapping a journalist? We're not in Russia!

**Sam** – We got carried away, it's true.

**Max** – Just a bit?

**Fred** – Did you read his article?

**Max** – Release him immediately. There might still be time to calm things down if you apologize...

**Fred** – Apologize? No way!

**Dan** – You won't get out of this with apologies, believe me. I'm going straight to the police to file a complaint. Untie me!

**Sam** – See, we can't let him go.

**Fred** – He just said it: he's going to tell the police everything.

**Max** – In any case, I don't want to be involved in this.

**Sam** – It's all your fault anyway. You're a lousy press agent!

**Dan** – But it's your show that's lousy!

**Max** – Stark is right. I've been in this business for years, and this is the worst show I've ever seen! Even the critic from *Free Theatre* didn't want to come. I had to promise him a dinner invitation... and more if he was interested.

**Dan** – See? Even your press agent agrees with me. You guys are awful!

**Max** – I'm calling the police.

*Max takes out her phone. Sam turns to Fred with a questioning look.*

**Fred** – We have no choice...

**Blackout.**

## Scene 19

*The press agent is gagged next to the critic.*

**Sam** – If this continues, we're going to need more space...

**Fred** – Yeah, because I'd like to take the guy who rented us this rat hole hostage too.

**Sam** – And I'm not just saying it, believe me... This morning, I saw two rats come out from under the bed and cross the hallway to get to the toilet.

**Fred** – There are more rats than spectators in this theatre...

**Sam** – And what about the press agent?

**Fred** – We couldn't let her call the police.

**Sam** – Yeah, but now, what's the plan? (*His phone rings, and he answers*) Yes, Mom... Yes, the first one went really well; we had a full house. Word of mouth is starting to work... If everything goes well, I think we'll be able to pay you back... Well, you know, we already have our first review... In *La Provence*, yes... Okay, I'll send it to you... Sure... I need to go; we're with the press agent and a journalist right now... That's right, for an interview... Thanks... Love you too...

*He puts his phone away.*

**Fred** – We need to make a decision...

**Sam** – They don't seem to be moving anymore...

**Fred** – They're not dead, are they?

*Sounds of snoring.*

**Sam** – Oh no, they're sleeping...

**Fred** – All this aside, we'll still have to go and distribute flyers.

**Sam** – It's not thanks to them that we'll fill the seats...

*They exit.*

## Scene 20

*Dany and Max regain their senses and exchange a look.*

**Dan** – Max? So, you too...

**Max** – I knew they were a bit goofy, but not to this extent...

**Dan** – A bit goofy? They're psychopaths! They went to the hardware store to buy saws to cut up our bodies into pieces!

**Max** – The hardware store? Oh right... they have some discounts going on...

**Dan** – If you hadn't taken so long to untie me earlier...

**Max** – So now it's my fault! You're the one who provoked them with that scathing review in *La Provence*.

**Dan** – But their show is dreadful!

**Max** – It's their first time at Avignon...

**Dan** – I hope for the audience's sake it's their last.

**Max** – Okay, they're not great, but they're eager to improve. You have to give them credit for their enthusiasm...

**Dan** – In a strange way, I admire you. Because defending shows like this can't be easy every day. Why do you even do this job?

**Max** – Well, what can I say... I have a soft spot for the underdogs. Sure, they lack talent, but they're at least following their passion.

**Dan** – It'd be nice if they pursued a different passion, especially...

**Max** – Don't be too harsh on them. They're like kids, you know. All actors do this job to hear the applause, to be told they're loved.

**Dan** – I still can't bring myself to call it a good show! Just to make them feel better...

**Max** – No, of course not... But some words can cut deeper than others. For you, it's just a negative review. For them, it's their entire world on the line...

**Dan** – For now, we have to save our own skins! Because if we're still here in five minutes...

**Max** – You're absolutely right. We'd better go... I have other tasks to attend to...

**Dan** – At least we should be able to free ourselves. *(He attempts to untie himself with some acrobatics)* I'll give them credit for one thing: they certainly know how to tie a knot...

*The press agent looks at the audience.*

**Max** – Let's ask them.

**Dan** – Ask them...? Ask who?

**Max** – The audience!

**Dan** (*whispering*) – But that's the fourth wall... We're not supposed to talk to the audience.

**Max** – Don't be so rigid, old man! We're in the realm of contemporary theatrical writings here. We're breaking all the conventions. We can do anything!

**Dan** – You think?

**Max** – Do you want to get out of here or not?

**Dan** – Okay...

**Max** – Hey!

**Dan** – Can someone come and untie us?

*If someone accepts, a little improvisation. Otherwise, it's the press agent who manages to untie herself and free the other hostage.*

**Dan** – Finally, we're free!

**Max** – Let's get out of here before those two lunatics come back...

*Dany turns to the audience.*

**Dan** – See, I warned you not to come and see this show! You should read the reviews in the newspapers, right? Or else, don't complain later...

*They exit.*

## Scene 21

*Sam and Fred return. Fred has La Provence in his hand and takes a look.*

**Sam** – Another glowing review of our show in the press?

**Fred** – It's about Stark's disappearance...

**Sam** – So what?

**Fred** – The abduction angle has been confirmed.

**Sam** – OK...

**Fred** (*reading*) – "Festival-goers claimed to have witnessed two men wearing theatre masks forcing the famous critic into a van."

**Sam** – It looks like the net is closing in, doesn't it...

**Fred** – No...

**Sam** – What now?

**Fred** (*reading*) – "The kidnappers are demanding a 10,000 euros ransom..."

**Sam** – Is this some kind of prank?

**Fred** – It's probably a struggling theatre company attempting to recover their expenses this way.

**Sam** – This is insane... Nobody knows us, and there are already actors pretending to be us.

**Fred** – 10,000 euros... Or maybe it's your mother trying to get back the money she lent us.

*Sam realizes that the critic and the press agent have disappeared.*

**Sam** – Did you put the hostages up there before leaving?

**Fred** – No...

**Sam** – Then they must have managed to escape...

**Fred** – But I tied those sailor's knots...

**Sam** – Just like the ones we learned during that sailing course last summer in Brittany...

**Fred** – I can't fathom who could have unraveled them.

**Sam** – I'm stumped as well...

*They cast a suspicious glance at the audience.*

**Fred** – They're probably at the police station right now, filing a complaint.

**Sam** – Kidnapping and hostage-taking...

**Fred** – Tonight, we'll sleep in prison...

**Sam** – Indeed... But it's showtime now. Let's at least try to finish on a high note...

*They exit.*

*Blackout*

## Scene 22

*Sam and Fred arrive, very excited.*

**Fred** – We were even better than last time, right?

**Sam** – Yeah... I think I even heard one or two people applauding at the end.

**Fred** – And one person got up, did you see?

**Sam** – Maybe it was to leave faster, but still...

**Fred** – Since there were only three spectators in the audience, two who clapped, and one who got up, it's almost a standing ovation...

*Their mood darkens.*

**Fred** – The police aren't here yet.

**Sam** – It shouldn't be much longer.

**Fred** – We'll have to issue a press release to announce the premature end of the show...

**Sam** – Out of respect for our audience...

**Fred** – It would be a shame if spectators lined up outside the theatre for nothing.

*A moment of dejection.*

**Sam** – We should look on the bright side... At least we won't have to hand out flyers in 45-degree heat.

**Fred** – Behind bars... That's where we'll spend the rest of the summer.

**Sam** – A prison cell can't be worse than that broom closet up there in the attic.

**Fred** – Do you think they have air conditioning in prison?

**Sam** – It's probably optional, like in hospitals.

**Fred** – Anyway, for us, Avignon is over...

*Sam checks his phone.*

**Sam** – Too bad... You'll laugh, but against all odds, we had a few bookings for tomorrow.

**Fred** – After all, as long as the police don't come to arrest us, we can keep performing... The show must go on...

**Sam** – Having cops barge in during the show to slap us in handcuffs would definitely provide a memorable ending for our careers.

**Fred** – I hear someone; it must be them...

**Sam** – They're not making much noise.

**Fred** – Must be the special forces.

**Sam** – Oh no, it's Max...

**Fred** – I would have preferred it to be the special forces...

## Scene 23

*The press agent enters, holding a newspaper.*

**Max** – Hey there, folks. So, what's going on?

**Sam** – You're here to bid us farewell before the police take us away?

**Fred** – Or perhaps you've come to cash your check...

**Sam** – With today's box office, we won't have much to pay you, I can guarantee that.

**Fred** – In prison, please bring us oranges; it'd be a refreshing change from watermelons.

**Max** – Have any of you read the newspaper?

**Sam** – No, why? Did we shift from the culture section to the crime page?

**Max** – Daniel Stark issued a correction to his review of your show.

**Fred** – Just to bury us even deeper, I presume...

**Max** (*reading*) – "I have to say, this show isn't just bad; it's shockingly bad. But there are failures that approach the surreal, and it reaches a level of ineptitude that's almost like a masterpiece in its own peculiar way."

**Sam** – A masterpiece? That's good, right?

**Max** (*reading*) – "This disastrous show reminds us of those low-budget B-movies that have somehow become cult classics today, the guilty pleasures we secretly enjoy. Not because of their plot or directing quality, but for the refreshing spirit of freedom that these absolute turkeys exude."

**Fred** – At least there's a cinematic reference...

**Max** (*reading*) – "After all, why should talent have a monopoly on the stage? Like many others, the two actors who wrote and perform this distressing show have poured their hopes and savings into achieving their dream: performing at the Avignon Festival. They've proven they're willing to go to any lengths to make it happen. So, let's give them a chance to improve. I'm certain that with a bit of imagination, they can manage to be even worse..."

**Sam** – I'm not quite sure how to interpret that...

**Fred** – It does end on a positive note, doesn't it?

*Sam checks his phone again.*

**Sam** – In any case, reservations are on the rise again. It's amazing! We're almost sold out for tomorrow...

**Max** – I told you! A write-up by Daniel Stark in *La Provence* can kickstart a career...

**Fred** – And he didn't file a complaint?

**Max** – Trust me, I had to work hard to get him to drop it... But well... I think this experience taught him something...

**Sam** – So, are we going to finish the festival?

**Max** – I have more good news, folks: the programming director of the Camembert village hall is showing interest...

**Fred** – Is he actually purchasing the show?

**Sam** – How much is he offering?

**Max** – Oh, no, he's not buying it, but he's offering room and board.

**Fred** – Room...?

**Max** – You'll be staying in a barn near the village hall.

**Sam** – Well, Molière began his journey that way...

**Fred** – It's a start, right?

**Max** – So? Double or nothing?

**Sam** – We're still considering it...

**Fred** – In any case, we already have an idea for next year's OFF Festival.

**Max** – Oh really?

**Sam** – You actually gave us the idea. You know, the struggles of a small company tackling Avignon for the first time with a dreadful show.

**Max** – Oh, yes...

**Fred** – It will be called "Is There a Critic in the Audience?"

*Sam shows the poster of the show. Dany arrives.*

**Dan** – Ladies and gentlemen, you came to see this comedy that I had strongly advised against, so it's your problem. If, however, you enjoyed this show, feel free to spread the word. If you didn't like it, think twice before posting a negative review on those online ticketing platforms. You've witnessed what these folks are capable of...

*With suspenseful thriller music playing in the background, Fred and Sam display the equipment they bought at the hardware store: ropes, a saw, a can of acid...*

**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.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

***Other plays by the same author translated in English:***

*A Cuckoo's nest*  
*A simple business dinner*  
*All's well that starts badly*  
*An innocent little murder*  
*Bed and Breakfast*  
*Casket for two*  
*Cheaters*  
*Check to the Kings*  
*Crash Zone*  
*Crisis and Punishment*  
*Critical but stable*  
*Eurostar*  
*Four stars*  
*Fragile, handle with care*  
*Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>*  
*Heads or Tails*  
*Him and Her*  
*In lieu of flowers*  
*Is there a pilot in the audience?*  
*Is there an author in the audience?*  
*Just a moment before the end of the world*  
*Last chance encounter*  
*Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall*  
*Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey*  
*New Year's Eve at the Morgue*  
*One marriage out of two*  
*Preliminaries*  
*Quarantine*  
*Running on Empty*  
*Strip Poker*  
*Surviving Mankind*  
*The Costa Mucho Castaways*  
*The Ideal Son-in-Law*  
*The Jackpot*  
*The Joker*  
*The perfect Son-in-Law*  
*The Performance is not cancelled*  
*The Smell of Money*  
*The Window across the courtyard*  
*The Worst Village in England*  
*Welcome aboard!*

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