

La Comédiathèque

Enough is enough!

Jean-Pierre Martinez

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A comedy made up of sketches that humorously tackle ever-relevant topics, starting from this tragicomic observation: when we stay still for too long, we eventually find ourselves somewhere else without realising it, because the world around us has changed...

*The 30 characters in these 15 sketches can be performed
by 2 to 30 actors, of any gender.*

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1 – Too Early

A character enters. They hesitate for a moment before addressing the audience.

One – I'm not too late, am I? (*Pauses*) No, otherwise I imagine you'd have already left... (*He looks around the stage, a bit worried*) Or maybe I'm a bit early... (*Pauses*) No, otherwise you wouldn't already be here... (*Pauses*) Have you been here long?

Another character enters, also a bit anxious.

Two – I'm not late, am I?

One – Pardon?

Two – No, since you're already here...

One – Ah, yes... No, no... You're just on time. At least, I think so...

Two – Have you been waiting for me long?

One – No... (*Pauses*) In fact, to be honest... I wasn't waiting for you.

Two – Oh, weren't you?

One – At least, not so soon... And you?

Two – Me?

One – Were you expecting to find me here?

Two – Well... I thought you wouldn't be here anymore.

One – I was just about to leave, actually.

Two – For a moment... We might have missed each other...

One – Well, here we are, both of us, that's the main thing...

Two – Yes, it's starting to feel like an appointment, isn't it?

One – An appointment?

Two – Being in the same place at the same time. That's what you call an appointment, isn't it?

One – Yes.

Two – If it's planned in advance, anyway.

One – And if everyone is consenting...

Two – I don't know why, but an appointment... It makes me think of a space rendezvous.

One – Oh, really...?

Two – Meeting at exactly the same time, in the same place, in the infinite space-time of the universe.

One – A rendezvous... between two spacecraft, you mean?

Two – Two craft that will gently dock with each other. At phenomenal speed, even though it looks like they're stationary because they're moving at exactly the same pace. A manoeuvre of extreme delicacy, where the slightest error could be fatal...

One – Two craft that will dock with each other...?

Two – It's a metaphor...

One – As I said earlier... If everyone is consenting...

Two – Of course...

One – But it could also just be a simple meeting.

Two – A meeting? You mean...

One – A chance encounter.

Two – Chance?

One – A coincidence.

Two – Yes... Well... You know what they say...

One – No.

Two – There's no such thing as chance, only appointments.

One – There are also missed appointments.

Two – In that case, this one is quite successful. Since we're both here.

One – And the audience too.

Two – That's true.

One – It's the magic of theatre.

Two – So, since everyone is here.

One – At the same time.

Two – Just at the right moment.

One – Neither too early nor too late.

Two – And we've nothing better to do.

Together – Let the show begin...

Blackout.

2 – Too Busy

Two rather elderly characters meet. The first is dressed in a sporty manner and seems full of energy. The second is dressed more traditionally for their age and appears more subdued. The first immediately recognises the second.

One – Well, well! What are you doing here?

The other seems surprised.

Two – Do we know each other?

One – Do we know each other? (*Introducing himself*) Robert! We worked together in the same company for forty years!

Two – Oh yes...?

One – So, old friend, how's retirement treating you?

Two – It's fine... And you?

One – Me? I thought I'd be bored. But no way... I don't have a minute to myself.

Two – Oh really...?

One – Well, on Mondays, I have my hiking club. Last week, we climbed a volcano.

Two – A volcano? I didn't know there were any around here.

One – An ancient volcano. Extinct, obviously. Going down is fine, but going up...

Two – Yes, it's like with stairs...

One – Well, it keeps you in shape, believe me. On Tuesdays, I teach literacy classes.

Two – At a school?

One – In prison.

Two – Oh yes...

One – There are many foreigners among the inmates, so naturally, there are also many illiterates...

Two – Like at school, then.

One – It's very enriching, you know.

Two – Oh, because it's paid?

One – Enriching... humanly, I mean. It's voluntary, of course. We give a lot, but they give back as well, I assure you. Some come from countries I didn't even know existed. It's an exchange, really. We learn as much as they do, you know. About their language... About their culture... They tell me about their lives... We share memories... Even cooking recipes sometimes...

Two – Oh yes... It must be fascinating.

One – Where was I?

Two – Wednesday, I think...

One – Well, Wednesday is sacred! I look after my grandchildren. Since both parents work. A real joy. I'm lucky, they live just across the street from us. Do you have grandchildren?

Two – Three. They live in Australia.

One – Oh, damn...

Two – Yes, well...

One – Yesterday, I took them to the zoo. You'll laugh, but they had never seen monkeys in real life. You should have seen their faces! Well, we didn't stay too long. They were bonobos...

Two – Oh yes... And it's springtime.

One – Then we went to McDonald's... It's not really my principle, but hey. If you don't want to be out of touch with the youth, you have to make some compromises.

Two – That's true...

One – On Thursdays... I have my Chinese class.

Two – You're learning Chinese?

One – It's really fascinating, I swear. And it's not as complicated as it seems, really.

Two – If you say so...

One – Do you know how to say hello in Chinese?

Two – I confess that so far, I've managed to survive without knowing.

One – Ni hao.

Two – Meow?

One – Ni hao!

Two – Oh yes? But why Chinese? Are you planning to go to China?

One – Why not? If nothing else, I can always have a chat with the owner of the new Chinese restaurant that just opened in town. The Delights of Beijing. You know, just opposite the town hall.

Two – The Delights of Saigon... I think he's Vietnamese.

One – Oh really? On Fridays, I have my book club...

Two – You still have time to read, with all that? I suppose there's always the weekends.

One – Weekends? You're joking! On Saturdays, I have my theatre class, and Sundays are for the choir.

Two – Well... You're definitely not bored, that's for sure.

One – You can say that again... Sometimes I wonder if I should slow down a bit. We're not twenty anymore, after all.

Two – That's true... Then again, at twenty, I wasn't doing much already.

One – You have to stay active if you want to keep fit. And especially keep your mind sharp, because otherwise... You saw earlier, you didn't even recognise me!

Two – Well...

One – Did you know that after sixty, our brains lose 100,000 neurons a day?

Two – I must not have many left, then...

One – Anyway, tell me about yourself!

Two – Me?

One – What do you do with your days?

Two – Me...? Nothing.

One – Nothing?

Two – I'm bored out of my mind.

One – No way? That's crazy... But if you're interested, you know...

Two – No, thanks.

One – No, what?

Two – No, I'm not interested.

One – Oh really?

Two – Honestly, I'd rather stay bored.

One – Oh, yeah?

Two – Yeah.

One – Well... When I see the old colleagues from the Railway Company, I'll tell them how you're doing. Do you know what those idiots gave me for my retirement?

Two – No...

One – An electric train!

Two – Oh, those idiots...

One – We get together once a year in June for a big meal and to reminisce about the good old days. You should come!

Two – Uh, yeah, why not... But you know, I spent my entire career in an airline company.

One – Oh, yeah...?

Two – I was an airline pilot.

One – OK... I won't keep you any longer. Besides, I have to go. I also help out at the Red Cross at lunchtime. I don't even have time to eat. I'm telling you, I don't have a minute to myself...

Two – Yes, that must be quite a change from the Railway Company.

One – Well... Goodbye, Peter...

Two – My name is John.

One – In any case, enjoy your retirement.

Two – Yeah, you too. So... Tam biêt.

One – Tam biêt...?

Two – It means goodbye in Vietnamese.

One – Of course.

The first character walks away, still full of energy, while the second remains puzzled.

Blackout.

3 – Too Radical

A character is present, dressed as discreetly as possible (trench coat and dark glasses, for example). A second character arrives, in an old-fashioned bourgeois style. They hesitate a bit before addressing the first.

Two – Hello, I am...

One – Not so fast... Do you have the password?

Two – Ah, yes, that's right, the password... What was it again...? My memory's not what it used to be, you know... And you told me not to write it down anywhere. So let me think... Got it! A pear a day keeps the doctor away...

One – Provided you aim well.

Two – That's from Churchill, isn't it? I hope you're not just going to offer me blood, toil, tears, and sweat like he did.

One – Actually... It's not a pear, it's an apple, but well... Let's not be too rigid.

Two – An apple, of course... A pear, I don't know why I said that... But the truth is that things are going pear-shaped for me.

One – Right... So...?

The other extends their hand to introduce themselves.

Two – Charles Swindlemore von Hustlestein. Thank you for seeing me...

One – Dominic Dupont, from the Dupont and Dupont and Sons Detective Agency.

Two – Mr Dupont...

One – Of course, that's not my real name, as you might guess.

Two – Obviously.

One – You can call me DD.

Two – DD?

One – Dupont and Dupont...

Two – Of course.

One – Are you sure no one followed you?

Two – I changed taxis three times to get here, as you instructed. And I left my mobile at home to avoid being tracked.

One – Very good, so I'm listening.

Two – It's not easy to say, you know... At my age, I never thought I'd get to this point...

One – Don't worry, I'm used to it... So, what is it? Adultery? Heir search? Industrial espionage?

Two – I want... you to find someone for me.

One – Very well... A long-lost friend? A youthful love? An illegitimate child?

Two – More like... a general practitioner who's still taking new patients.

One – I see...

Two – I know my request might seem surprising...

One – You're the third this week.

Two – Oh really...?

One – Unfortunately, I don't perform miracles.

Two – I understand. But will you at least let me hope...?

One – These days, you know, finding a GP for a healthy patient is harder than finding a man's wife's lover.

Two – I can imagine. But I've tried everything, believe me. I even consulted a fortune teller.

One – I see...

Two – She found me an old doctor in Normandy. I was even ready to move there.

One – To Normandy?

Two – Yes, I thought the same, it's a bit radical, but well... I didn't even have to make that difficult decision. He died a few days later.

One – Goes to show, you can be a doctor and still have fragile health.

Two – He was 102 years old.

One – Ah yes...

Two – I even made a pilgrimage to Lourdes, but there too...

One – It's a medical desert...

Two – You're my last hope...

One – The thing is, nowadays... For a doctor to accept a new patient, one of their current patients has to die first.

Two – I'm fully aware of that.

One – And to take the deceased's place, you have to be the first to know about their death.

Two – That's what I've gathered.

One – Which isn't always very reassuring.

Two – And why's that?

One – Choosing a doctor whose patients are dropping like flies...

Two – True, I hadn't thought of that.

One – If you like, I can refer you to a colleague.

Two – Another detective, you mean? More specialised in the medical field.

One – I was thinking more... of a hitman.

Two – I'm not sure I understand...

One – As I said, for a spot to open up...

Two – A patient has to die.

One – So if you commission the execution yourself, of course...

Two – I'll be the first to know that a spot has opened up...

One – And at least in that case, the responsibility for the patient's death won't lie with their doctor.

Two – Which would allow me to hope that they're not necessarily a terrible doctor.

One – That's all I can offer you, unfortunately.

Two – I'll need some time to think about it.

One – Not too long, because you know... Hitmen are also getting a bit overwhelmed these days. At least the more professional ones.

Two – The more professional ones...?

One – You need someone quite discreet. You wouldn't want to end up in prison for commissioning a murder.

Two – Then again... In prison, at least I'd probably have a dedicated doctor.

One – That, my dear friend, is far from certain.

Two – Right... A hitman it is... Do you have someone trustworthy to recommend?

The other hands him a business card.

Two – Smith and Wesson and Sons, certified hitmen.

One – Of course, those aren't their real names either, I imagine.

Two – Strangely enough, they are.

One – Right. Thank you, Doctor. I mean, thank you, Mr Dupont...

Two – At your service...

One – And otherwise... you wouldn't happen to know a good dentist...? (*The other looks at him but doesn't reply*) Alright...

Blackout.

4 – Too Nice

One character is there, dressed in black with a white clerical collar. A second character arrives, dressed in a very casual style.

Two – Hello, Father.

One – Hello, my son. How can I help you?

Two – Well, I was wondering how to be sure of going to heaven.

One – Sure...? You know, heaven is not a given for anyone, my son.

Two – Not even for you?

One – We are all poor sinners. Myself included. Do you know what Jesus said to those who wanted to stone an adulterous woman?

Two – What?

One – Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

Two – OK, but aside from not stoning women... There must be a few tricks to earn points, right?

One – It's not a game either, you know, with a certain score to achieve, beyond which admission would be automatic. It's at God's discretion.

Two – But you must have an idea! After all, you're the specialist...

One – Of course... Let's say... You must strive to do good around you.

Two – Do good.

One – You must be nice.

Two – Yes.

One – This seems to perplex you, my son.

Two – It's just that... it's about what my wife often says.

One – Your wife?

Two – Too nice for your own good.

One – Excuse me?

Two – Too nice for your own good. That's what my wife says.

One – And what do you mean by that, my son?

Two – Well... She seems to suggest that when one is too nice, others take advantage.

One – I see.

Two – What do you think, Father? Do you think one can be too nice?

One – Too nice? Well...

Two – Because I want to be just nice enough to go to heaven, but not so much that people take me for a fool, you see.

One – I understand.

Two – So what's the middle ground?

One – That is...

Two – Take Jesus, for example.

One – Jesus?

Two – Don't you think he was a bit too nice?

One – But... Why do you say that?

Two – He did end up on the cross...

One – That's true.

Two – Too nice for your own good, I tell you. My wife is right.

One – My God... She might not be entirely wrong.

Two – Did he end up in heaven, at least?

One – Who?

Two – Jesus!

One – Jesus? In heaven? I must admit, that's a question... I've never considered.

Two – So where is he then?

One – Where?

Two – If he's not in heaven, where is he?

One – Well... I don't know.

Two – And what does he do all day?

One – How Jesus spends his days...? I must admit, you've stumped me there too.

Two – I'll ask ChatGPT about it.

He takes out his mobile and starts typing.

One – And so?

Two – So, according to ChatGPT, Jesus is waiting for God to command him to return to Earth.

One – He's waiting...?

Two – He's waiting.

One – And he does nothing else?

Two – Basically, he's bored out of his mind.

One – Ah, yes...

Two – He must be doing something while he waits. But what?

One – I don't know...

Two – If even ChatGPT doesn't know where Jesus is and what he does all day...

One – On the other hand, my son, you know what they say...

Two – What?

One – Great is the mystery of Faith...

Two – Yeah.

One – Yeah...

Pause.

Two – Too nice for your own good, I tell you...

Blackout.

5 – Too Rich

One character is there. A second character arrives, with a wide smile on their face.

Two – Good morning, Sir. I have some good news to share with you!

One – Alright, start with the bad news then.

Two – Um... no, I didn't say I have good and bad news... Just good news.

One – Oh, sorry. When you're not used to it... And... what's this bad news then?

Two – Did you happen to validate a lottery ticket last week?

One – Yes, I did.

Two – Well, I'm pleased to inform you that you've won.

One – Me? Won? How much?

Two – 233 million euros.

One – 233 million?

Two – 233 million.

One – Ah, yes, that's quite a sum.

Two – But it doesn't seem to make you happy.

One – No, no, of course it does, but...

Two – But?

One – Isn't it a bit too much?

Two – Too much?

One – I mean, a million would be enough. I'd buy a house and...

Two – And?

One – You're right. Let's say 10 million then. I'd buy a house and retire. But 233 million!

Two – I understand it might take some time to get used to this idea.

One – Couldn't it be a bit less?

Two – Less?

One – I don't know... Maybe 33 million euros. Honestly, I really can't handle more...

Two – Sorry, but it's take it or leave it.

One – I'll need some time to think about it.

Two – Sure, take your time. But not too long. Because there's a deadline... To claim your prize, I mean...

One – You know, with several hundred million euros, I'd have no family left. No friends.

Two – Trust me, with such fortune, you'll rediscover distant cousins you thought you'd lost touch with. And you'll find out you had more friends than you imagined.

One – Yes, but that's precisely what scares me. I'll be surrounded only by interested people.

Two – Yes...

One – Not to mention my wife...

Two – Your wife?

One – She's a communist, my wife! She already criticises me for not being left-wing enough... So when I tell her I've won 233 million euros...

Two – Trust me, experience shows that with 233 million euros, a wife doesn't stay communist for long...

One – No, you don't understand... Relationships with everyone around me will be completely distorted...

Two – You'll meet new people... People as wealthy as you.

One – I'm not under any illusions. I know that true rich people, those born into it, will never accept me. To them, I'll always be the guy who won his fortune in the lottery.

Two – Perhaps...

One – And if my wife leaves me? How do I find another one?

Two – With 233 million euros?

One – I'll always think they only want to marry me for my money!

Two – Obviously...

One – No, I think I'll just buy another ticket instead.

Two – Another ticket?

One – A lottery ticket!

Two – What for ? You've already won!

One – Perhaps this time, I'll be lucky enough to win a bit less...

Blackout.

6 – Too Polite

One character is there, sitting on a chair. A second character arrives, looking older.

One – Good morning... (*Standing up*) Please, have a seat!

Two – What?

One – Take my seat, please. I'm perfectly fine standing.

Two – Because I give you the impression that I can't stand?

One – No, no, not at all, it's just that...

Two – Don't you think this attitude is a bit insulting after a while?

One – Insulting?

Two – I call it ageism.

One – Ageism?

Two – Exactly! Ageism. Like racism or sexism, but against old people.

One – Oh, really?

Two – It's condescension, if you prefer. Towards women, towards Black people, towards old people... And unfortunately, it's not exclusive. Can you imagine the humiliation an elderly Black woman must feel when a young white jerk offers her his seat on the bus out of pure condescension?

One – An elderly Black woman... like Rosa Parks, you mean?

Two – So you look down on old people?

One – Oh no, not at all, I assure you. I adore old people.

Two – You see? "I adore old people!" As if old people were a different race... That's ageist racism.

One – I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

Two – It's like saying to me: "I love Arabs, my cleaning lady is Moroccan." Or "I love homosexuals, my hairdresser is transgender."

One – Is that so...?

Two – You too will be old one day, you know... You'll never be Black, that's for sure. But you will be old.

One – Of course, I'm perfectly aware...

Two – You wouldn't think so...

Pause

One – So... you really don't want to sit down?

Two – That's right, keep going...

One – It doesn't bother me, I assure you. On the contrary, it pleases me.

Two – Please stop!

One – You don't want to sit down?

Two – Well, I...

One – But...?

Two – I'm wary...

One – Wary of me? You shouldn't be, I assure you! Am I scaring you? But why?

Two – I don't know, you're... too polite to be honest.

One – Alright... Well, never mind then, stay standing if you want.

Two – I will, thanks.

Pause

One – On the other hand, it's obvious that you're honest.

Two – Oh yeah?

One – Politeness isn't exactly your strong suit.

Two – Oh yeah? Say that again?

One – Old bag!

Two – Piece of shit.

One – Fat lump.

Two – Illiterate.

One – Woke.

Two – Procrastinator.

One – Procrastinator? Are you sure that's an insult?

Two – Oh no?

One – Do you know what it means?

Two – No, do you?

One – Me neither.

Pause

Two – I think we got a bit carried away.

One – Yes.

Two – I'll sit down after all.

One – Oh really? And do you really think I'm going to give you my seat now?

Two – No?

One – You'll stay standing. Consider it a lesson.

Two – That's what I thought... No respect for old people...

Fade to black.

7 – Too Short

Two characters. They remain silent for a moment.

One – How time flies...

Two – What time is it?

One – No, I meant... in general.

Two – In general?

One – How time flies... in general.

Two – Oh, I see...

One – As Aznavour sang... "Yesterday when I was young"...

Two – Yeah...

One – If only young people knew how short life is...

Two – You think they don't know?

One – Doesn't stop them from thinking that old people are a different breed.

Two – Well, sometimes old people don't make much effort to stay young either.

One – Call us old fools, too.

Two – Isn't that what we are?

One – There are young fools too.

Two – At least they have the excuse of youth.

One – You're right... If only young people knew how short life is...

Two – They'd already be old.

Fade to black.

8 – Too Fast

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – Hello. Can I kiss you?

Two – It's nice of you to ask first, but... isn't that a bit fast?

One – I don't know.

Two – You might find me old-fashioned, but for me, it's a bit too quick.

One – Sorry. You're probably right.

Two – After all, we don't know each other.

One – True.

Two – To start a conversation, you have to admit it's quite direct.

One – Of course... But then... what could I have said?

Two – I don't know, you could have... asked me for a lighter, for example.

One – That's a bit old-fashioned, isn't it?

Two – Yes... Plus, I don't have a lighter.

One – And I don't smoke.

Two – Well, that's a plus point for you.

One – Oh really?

Two – Don't get too carried away though.

One – Sorry...

Two – It's true that you're very handsome, but... exactly.

One – Exactly what?

Two – You know what they say...

One – No...

Two – Too good to be true.

One – You flatter me, but... too handsome... Let's not exaggerate.

Two – And there's also another saying.

One – What?

Two – Jack of all trades, master of none.

One – That's true, I forgot they say that too.

Two – No, really, it would be a bit hasty. But we can kiss on the cheek, if you want...

One – You're right, it's better to start slowly.

They kiss on the cheek.

Two – Was that okay, not too...?

One – No, no, it was just right.

Two – We could have just shaken hands, but...

One – That might not have been enough...

Two – Maybe next time.

One – Yes...

Two – It's always been my rule anyway. Never on the first night.

One – Of course... But then, there's always a first time.

Two – That's true...

One – No, because never on the first night... I didn't mean to ask you to...

Two – Clearly.

One – Well, it's up to you.

Two – So, do you think I was too...

One – Honestly, I'm not sure anymore.

Two – It's true, you need to find a middle ground.

One – You're right, I was a bit too direct.

Two – On the other hand, you did say hello first.

One – Sorry?

Two – You said, "Hello. Can I kiss you?" So, technically, you did start with hello. First.

One – That's true.

Two – It's still quite direct but... polite, nonetheless.

One – Yes.

Two – Now... it's true that you're very handsome.

One – Too good to be true...

Two – And what about me?

One – You?

Two – Am I not a bit too... to be true, I mean.

One – No, you're fine. You're... quite believably handsome.

Two – I'm not sure how to take that...

One – Sorry, I didn't mean...

Two – Let's stick to the cheek kiss after all.

One – Okay.

Two – Until next time, perhaps.

The second character leaves.

One – I think I might have done too much... Or maybe not enough?

Fade to black.

9 – Too Exhausting

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – There are too many unemployed people in this country.

Two – That's true.

One – How many are there?

Two – I don't know.

One – In any case, there are too many.

Two – Definitely.

One – And why are there too many?

Pause.

Two – Because there are too many workers.

One – What?

Two – Well... Who is taking the jobs from the unemployed?

One – Who?

Two – The workers!

One – Yes, I suppose you're right.

Two – So if there are too many unemployed, it's because there are too many workers?

One – If there were fewer workers, there would be more jobs for the unemployed, right? That makes sense.

Two – That's true.

One – So we could also say: there are too many workers in this country.

Two – You're right. It's the workers who are taking the jobs from the unemployed, when you think about it.

One – Exactly! Of course, you're right.

Pause.

Two – There's a pile of dishes in the sink...

One – Just thinking about it tires me out.

Two – You wash and I'll dry?

One – Alright...

Fade to black.

10 – Too Long

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – Do you think people will remember us after we die?

Two – You mean... the people who knew us when we were alive? Family, friends...?

One – No, I mean... after. When all the people who knew us are also dead.

Two – I see... Will we pass into posterity?

One – Why not?

Two – We'd have to do something truly significant, right?

One – Let's say we did.

Two – Alright... Like saving the free world, as Winston Churchill did.

One – Churchill isn't that distant in memory. There are still people who knew him personally... There's no guarantee that in a hundred years...

Two – Okay... So we're talking more about staying forever in the collective memory.

One – What does it take to achieve immortality, do you think?

Two – Exterminate millions of people, like Hitler or Pol Pot?

One – Let's aim for leaving a positive legacy instead.

Two – Discovering America, like Christopher Columbus...?

One – Maybe, though Native Americans might not share the same sentiment. But true, it's been five hundred years and we still remember it.

Two – Founding a religion, like Jesus Christ...

One – That was two thousand years ago.

Two – And we're likely to remember it for a long time.

One – Indeed, some figures have been remembered even longer.

Two – Yeah...

One – Do you know who the oldest human being we still remember is?

Two – Lucy?

One – Lucy is just a bunch of bones. The skeleton isn't even complete. We hardly know anything about her.

Two – We know she was a woman.

One – That's a thin basis for posterity. Especially since she probably wasn't called Lucy when she was alive.

Two – Well... Who then?

One – Pharaoh Narmer. He lived five thousand years ago. He's the oldest historical figure we still remember today, for unifying Upper and Lower Egypt.

Two – I don't remember him.

One – Egyptologists do.

Two – And when there are no more Egyptologists?

One – There will always be Egyptologists, right?

Two – Always, you think? What about when Earth is destroyed by human madness?

One – Maybe there'll still be a few Egyptologists among the survivors.

Two – And when the Sun absorbs the Earth in five billion years?

One – By then, perhaps humans will have colonised another planet.

Two – Taking an Egyptologist with them? I'm not sure they'll be the first to be saved...

One – It will still be in the books of Egyptology.

Two – And when the universe self-destructs, in the big crunch or the big freeze, depending on which theory holds at that time?

One – Yeah... At that point, no one will be left to remember us, that's for sure.

Two – Yet many people have already forgotten us, and we're not even dead.

One – You're right... What's the point of bothering to try to do something significant to achieve immortality? If in the long term, we're all doomed to be forgotten.

Pause.

Two – Let's have another drink to forget this sad reality...

Fade to black.

11 – Too Slow

One character is there. A second one arrives.

One – You don't seem okay. What's going on?

Two – I got flashed again.

One – By a speed camera?

Two – Yeah, a speed camera! Not the paparazzi...

One – Ah, damn... Were you going too fast...?

Two – No, I was going too slow.

One – Seriously?

Two – Yeah, caught doing twelve kilometres per hour.

One – That's insane...

Two – On the highway. I had just come out of the petrol station.

One – Twelve kilometres per hour...

Two – I don't drive a sports car, you know. Takes a while to get up to speed. Five hundred euros.

One – No way...? Is it true?

Two – Of course it's not true, idiot!

One – You didn't get flashed?

Two – I did!

One – But... why?

Two – Because I was going too fast, you moron! I got flashed, I'm telling you!

One – No need to get upset. It wasn't very clear, either...

Two – It seems like you're the one who's not very clear... Are you okay?

One – I just got out of the hospital.

Two – No way? So that's why you're still a bit groggy. What happened?

One – Allergic reaction to a bee sting. Right on my throat.

Two – Seriously?

One – Yes. Bees are real bastards, I swear.

Two – They make honey. And they enable pollination. If bees disappear... with all the chemicals...

One – Chemicals?

Two – The ones they spray on crops! Bees pollinate the flowers, and that's what poisons them.

One – You know a lot about bees.

Two – I have a friend who's a beekeeper.

One – Anyway, I didn't think a simple bee sting could land you in the emergency room.

Two – Maybe that's why.

One – Of course that's why! I got stung, I'm telling you!

Two – No, I mean, maybe it's because of those chemicals. Bees collect them, and then when they sting you, they inject all that crap back into you.

One – Are you suggesting if I had been stung by a bee from organic crops, I wouldn't have ended up in the hospital?

Two – Who knows... But now, are you okay?

One – I'm fine. And you?

Two – Apart from getting flashed...

Fade to black.

12 – Too Centrist

Two characters are leafing through a stack of electoral manifestos.

One – How many are there exactly?

Two – Twenty-three.

One – That's crazy. Every election, there are always more candidates.

Two – Must be inflation.

One – Yeah. And candidates are like banknotes, the more there are in circulation, the less they're worth.

Pause.

Two – Who are you thinking of voting for?

One – I don't know... I quite like this one...

Two – Which one?

One – The one with the nice tie, always well-groomed.

Two – Oh, yeah...

One – Look at this one. He could have shaved at least!

Two – And what do you think of this one? I think he presents himself well too.

One – Yeah... Maybe a bit too much, though.

Two – Too much?

One – I don't know, he's a bit too... Could he be...

Two – No... You think so?

One – Or maybe this one.

Two – Which one?

One – This one!

Two – Looks like Lieutenant Columbo.

One – True... But I like Lieutenant Columbo.

Two – I heard him on TV last time, swearing like a trooper!

One – Yeah.

Two – No, this one's always well-mannered.

One – Yes, but you know what they say.

Two – What?

One – Too polite to be honest.

Two – Then again... Rude people aren't always honest either.

One – Can't argue with that.

Two – When you're representing the country, though... Especially abroad.

One – Yeah.

Two – Back in our day, when they still wore uniforms, it had more panache.

One – True... Although General De Gaulle... His uniforms weren't always well-tailored, were they?

Two – He was very tall.

One – Some people wear their suits too big, he was a bit too big for his suit.

Two – True, Marshal Petain wore the uniform better.

One – Because he was shorter.

Two – Well, all this doesn't help us decide who to vote for

One – That one looks completely stupid.

Two – He's the incumbent candidate.

One – Oh, really?

Two – We voted for him last time.

One – No? I didn't realise he was so ugly.

Two – And what about this one?

One – Too centrist.

Two – How can someone be too centrist? Centre is centre, isn't it?

One – I'm not saying too centrist compared to the centre, I'm saying too centrist compared to me!

Two – You want him to lean more left?

One – I don't know. Or maybe more right. Because the centre...

Two – Yeah, it lacks a bit of...

One – It's true, he seems a bit wishy-washy.

Two – Hey, we've never tried this one.

One – Yeah... Well, I've never tried sodomy either.

Two – What?

One – Oh, nothing, I was just saying... Yeah, why not this one...

Fade to black.

13 – Too Static

Two characters, bohemian style, stare straight ahead.

One – Remember? When we moved here, all around us were fields.

Two – There were even cows.

One – And you could still see the river flowing. I used to go fishing there when I was a kid.

Two – Now it runs under the parking lot of the shopping centre, in a big pipe. And our house is surrounded by council flats.

One – Yeah... We used to live in the countryside, and without moving, now we live in the city.

Two – When you stay still for too long, you end up somewhere else without even realising it, because the world around us has changed.

One – Same with us. In '68 we were rebels, and now we're just old farts.

Two – And yet, we don't feel like we've changed.

One – We were born in the era of record players, we invented the Walkman to listen to music while walking, but in the end, we didn't really go anywhere.

Two – We've been treading water.

One – And now, here we are.

Two – In an estate, surrounded by young people who don't speak the same language as us anymore.

One – Yet we tried to educate them.

Two – Offered them discounted tickets to the theater for the classics

One – They preferred to do rap.

Two – I can't stand rap.

Pause.

One – Are you planning to go to the Avignon Festival this summer?

Two – I'm not sure. The Avignon Festival isn't what it used to be.

One – I remember the Cour d'Honneur in the time of Jean Vilar.

Two – He tried to educate the masses by bringing them the great classics at home in their remote provinces.

One – Racine, Sophocles, Shakespeare...

Two – It didn't last long either.

One – In the "IN" there are only retired teachers, and in the "OFF" there are only one-man shows.

Two – Today, everyone can get on a stage in a garage and tell their life story to their friends.

One – It's like social media.

Two – Maybe that's finally the dictatorship of the proletariat.

One – Yeah... The left-wing newspapers have no more readers.

Two – And the Socialist Party has no more voters.

One – Except for a few old farts like us.

Two – What if we moved?

One – Where to?

Two – To the countryside.

One – That's what we did back in '68. But the city caught up with us...

Two – Apparently, we didn't go far enough...

Fade to black.

14 – Too Much is Too Much

Two characters. They remain silent for a long moment.

One – Too much is too much! That's enough now!

The other looks at him, slightly surprised.

Two – Uh... Yeah...

One – Don't you agree?

Two – Yeah, I do...

One – But...?

Two – Nothing, really...

One – You don't agree with me?

Two – No, I do agree...

One – Come on! You don't agree with me?

Two – Yes, I do, but...

One – But what?

Two – I think you're exaggerating a bit, to be honest.

One – Me? Exaggerating?

Two – You're exaggerating a lot, actually.

One – I'm exaggerating a lot? Me? Just because I said too much is too much?

Two – Yes, I think you're exaggerating. Way too much...

One – Well damn...

Two – Yeah...

Pause.

One – Wait... How can one exaggerate too much?

Two – Don't twist my words, okay? I didn't say you were exaggerating too much, which would be a pleonasm. I said you were exaggerating way too much.

One – How can one exaggerate way too much, when exaggerating too much is already a pleonasm?

Two – Because too much is too much! You either exaggerate or you don't. You can't exaggerate too much. It's categorical and unequivocal. It's an absolute truth. But exaggerating a little or a lot, or even way too much, is the speaker's feeling. It's a relative judgment. And from that personal and subjective perspective, there's some tolerance for exaggeration.

One – Oh really...?

Two – Take someone from Liverpool, for example; they tend to exaggerate a bit. We tolerate them exaggerating a bit, it's part of their charm. A person from Liverpool who doesn't exaggerate enough wouldn't really be Liverpool-like. But they shouldn't exaggerate too much either, you see? There's a limit to exaggeration, after all!

One – Uh... Yeah...

Two – Right.

One – Yet, I just said "too much is too much."

Two – Yes. But then you added "that's enough now." That's where I think you're exaggerating a bit. Or even a lot. (*Pause*) Even for someone from Liverpool...

One – So you think I'm too excessive?

Two – Too excessive, no. That would be another pleonasm. Let's say rather a bit too much or way too much excessive. Or better yet, very excessive.

One – Very, too... It's the same, isn't it?

Two – Are you not hearing what I'm saying? Too much implies exceeding a threshold. It's binary. You're either below or above the threshold. On one side or the other of the border. Similarly, "excessive" implies going beyond a norm. That's why "too much excessive" is a pleonasm.

One – Ah, I see...

Two – "Very," on the contrary, is a matter of degree. It's gradual. In summary, you can only be on one side or the other of the boundary, which is why "too much excessive" is pleonastic. But once you've crossed the boundaries, you can move away from them to a greater or lesser extent. It's the idea of "very excessive."

Pause.

One – Don't you think you're exaggerating a bit...?

Two – Apologies, I got carried away.

Fade to black.

15 – Too Late

One character is there, sweeping the floor. Another arrives, visibly out of breath.

One – Sorry, my watch stopped. I only noticed an hour later... Am I too late?

Two – Too late...? Yeah... It just ended.

One – Ah, damn it... I was counting on that money to pay my rent...

Two – Well, now you're officially a job seeker. And finding a job... I'm not sure you'll find one at the theatre.

One – I can do anything, I assure you!

Two – Did you know your lines, at least?

One – Oh, because we had to learn lines? I thought it was an improvisation show.

Two – Well no. We still do it the old-fashioned way, you know.

One – The old-fashioned way...?

Two – The playwright writes a script. And the actors have to learn it. Before performing it.

One – Oh, I see...

Two – So you show up after the performance, and you don't know your lines?

One – Alright, so it's definitely over.

Two – Because I find you likeable, I'll give you one last chance. Come on. Here (*He hands him the broom*). Show me what you can do with improvisation...

One – Thank you! I'll surprise you, you'll see! (*He takes the broom with hesitation*) And... is it paid?

The other hands him a five euro note.

Two – Here, this is for your watch.

The other looks at the note.

One – Do you really think I can buy a watch with five euros?

Two – You can always change the battery... Well, do you want this role, yes or no?

One – Yes, yes, of course!

Two – Go ahead! Show me what you can do with a broom...

The first starts sweeping in a somewhat theatrical manner. The second watches him with a disillusioned look.

Two – Don't overact... Play it more... Actors Studio, you know?

The other starts sweeping in a falsely detached way.

One – Like this?

Two – That's better... Well, I'll leave you to work on your role. Who knows, it might even help you in your future career...

One – Thank you! Really...

Two – You will slam the door on your way out...?

He exits. The other continues sweeping, trying out different acting styles.

Fade to black.

The End.

About the author

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

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

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

Comedies for 2

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

Comedies for 3

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

Comedies for 4

A Cuckoo's nest
A hell of a night
Back to stage
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Crisis and Punishment
Family Portrait
Family Tree
Four stars
Friday the 13th
Gay friendly
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
Quarantine
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Deal
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Pyramids
The Smell of Money

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

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
Offside
Open Hearts
Save our Savings
Special Dedication
Stories and Prehistories
The Jackpot
The Performance is not cancelled
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!
White Coats, Dark Humour

Collection of sketches

Him and Her
Lost time Chronicles
Open Hearts
Sidewalk Chronicles
Stories to die for

Monologues

Happy Dogs
Like a fish in the air

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