

La Comédiathèque

Lost Time Chronicles

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Lost Time Chronicles

A sketch comedy about time, life, death, love, and the eternal cycle...

Two characters per sketch. Variable cast

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Wake-Up

Light gradually fills the room. A couple is sleeping under a sheet. A pounding sound is heard, followed by three knocks. The man startle awake and fall out of bed. Dressed in striped pyjamas, reminiscent of prisoner attire, he rubs his ribs wincing, before looking around as if recognising nothing. He looks at his pyjamas, surprised. He gets up and searches the room for an exit but finds nothing. He freezes upon noticing the spectators watching him. Shaking his head as if dispelling a bad dream, he returns to the bed and comes face to face with the woman, also in striped pyjamas, who has also started to wake up while his back was turned. They both scream in terror upon seeing each other.

Her and Him – Ah!!!

Her (covering her chest with her hands) – What are you doing here?

Him – What about you?

She gets up as well and performs a similar routine to his earlier, while he watches.

Her – But... where are we?

Him – No idea...

Her – Do you even know your name?

Him (mimicking a no) – And you?

Her – If we're at summer camp, there's probably a name sewn on a little tag inside your pyjamas. Let me see...

She approaches him and tries to look behind his pyjama collar. He recoils, but eventually lets her.

Her – Oh yes, there's something written! I can't read it! Take that off, let me see...

He finally agrees to remove his pyjama top. He is now shirtless and visibly uneasy. She leans over the tag and reads.

Her – Adam...

He looks perplexed, rubbing his ribs mechanically.

Her – Are you injured?

Him – It's nothing. Probably cracked a rib falling out of bed. (Pause) And you?

Her – No, I'm fine...

Him – I mean, you might also have your name on a sewn tag somewhere. Let me see...

He approaches, but she stops him with a firm gesture.

Her – We'll deal with that later!

Him – At summer camp, you think...? There's no one around...

Her – We might be the first...

Him – Or the last... (*They explore the surroundings separately and face each other again.*) Haven't we met somewhere before?

Her – In your dreams, maybe... So, you really see no way to get us out of here?

Him – Hey, we're not married, right? Why should it be my job to get you out?

Her – Excuse me...

Him – Well... What do we do?

Her – Do we have to do something...?

Him (*determined*) – I hate staying idle. I go back to sleep...

Backing up his words, he go back to the bed.

Her – Well...

Him – Maybe it's a nightmare... And when we wake up, it'll be better...

Her – Or worse...

They are about to lie down again, a bit awkward about sharing the same bed.

Him – Do you have a preferred side?

Her – No...

Him – Well, I'll take this one again, then.

He lies down on the same side as before.

Her – Habits form quickly, huh...?

She lies down on the other side but doesn't seem eager to sleep.

Him – Can I turn off the light?

Her – I would have liked to read a bit, but we don't even have the script for the play...

Him – I'll turn it off then. (*He looks for a way to turn it off.*) I don't see a switch... (*The light gradually dims.*) Oh, there it is! (*He turns to her.*) Well then... Until another day, I guess...

Her – That's right... Until another day...

Blackout.

Her – Should I set the alarm?

Him – Isn't it Sunday tomorrow?

Her – There's no alarm, anyway...

1. Approach Procedures

They are sitting side by side. She is sleeping against his shoulder. She gradually wakes up and startles slightly.

Her – I'm sorry... But you should have...

Him – I didn't dare to wake you...

Her – I slept for a long time?

Him – We've started the approach procedures...

Her – Sorry?

Him – I mean, uh... Approach manoeuvres... for landing!

Her – Oh, yes...

She tidies up her hair a bit.

Him (*engaging*) – Are you on vacation?

Her – Uh... No... I'm joining my husband...

Him – Ah... What does he do?

Her – He... He's a doctor... He works for an NGO...

Him – Ah, yes, of course... In a country like this... Apart from tourism and humanitarian work... Prostitution a bit... And drug trafficking, of course...

Her (*thrown off*) – And you? Are you on vacation?

Him – Uh, no... I'm into arms trafficking.

Her – You mean...

Him – Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, landmines... I just got a batch of almost brand new tanks. If you're interested...?

Her – Thanks... My husband already has an SUV...

Him – He's right, it's more practical. Parking a tank is very difficult, and it consumes as much as an Airliner.

Awkward silence, followed by a jolt that the actors can emphasise with a slight start.

Him – Ah, there we go... We just landed. (*They get up.*) Well, nice to have met you.

Her – You... You're really an arms dealer...?

Him – No. It was just to make you dislike me. To avoid any regrets. A married woman... with an Humanitarian Doctor, it's hard to compete... And you?

Her – Me?

Him – Are you really married?

Her – Uh... Not really, actually...

Him – You're single and on vacation, like me.

Her – I'm going to the Club... Don't tell me you too...?

Him – We all go there... It's a charter...

Her (*innocently*) – Oh, really...?

Him – You were really asleep...?

Her – No... Thankfully... I snore...

Him – How about I buy you a drink at the bar tonight?

Her – I took the all-inclusive package, with unlimited drinks. Didn't you?

Him – Yes... I think it's time to get off, or else the plane will take off again. It does two rotations a day... After you, please... (*They head towards the exit.*) Weren't you here last year?

Her – Yes...

Him – I thought so too...

2. Love Always

Her and Him, side by side, affectionately.

Her – We're good like this, aren't we?

Him – Yes...

Her – Do you love me?

Him – Yes.

Her – Will you love me forever?

Him – Forever?

Her – I don't know... Will you love me for 50 years?

Him (*astounded*) – 50 years...?

Her – 40...? (*He looks skeptical*) 20...? 10...? (*A pause*) Will you love me for one year?

Him – One year? (*Confident*) Oh, yes! And you?

Her (*skeptical*) – One year?

Him – Six months? (*She looks doubtful*) Two weeks? One week?

She still looks doubtful.

Him – Will you love me until tomorrow?

Her – Tomorrow morning? What time?

Him – I don't know. Let's say 9 o'clock?

She smiles in agreement. They kiss.

Her – Should I set the alarm?

3. Highway

He stands before her.

Him – How much?

Her – 30 euros...

Him – Super or regular?

Her – Does regular still exist? I thought there was only super now? (*He doesn't say anything.*) Well, put in regular. For a change...

Him – Regular is more expensive.

Her – Oh, really?

Him – Regular has become very rare. It's not everywhere...

Her – Well, put in super, then.

Him – Regular super or super plus?

Her – What's the difference?

Him – Super plus is more expensive, but it consumes less.

Her – What do you recommend?

Him – Do you consume a lot?

Her – I don't know. I always put in 30 euros...

Him – Take super plus.

Her – Alright, then... Fill it up. I wouldn't want to run out of gas...

Him – Should I check the levels and the pressure?

Her – Is that free?

Him – It's at the discretion of the customer.

Her – But... how much, if you don't mind me asking?

Him – One euro, on average. Two for the more generous. Five for the benefactors of humanity. Would you like a loyalty card?

Her – What do we get?

Him – With five fill-ups, you're entitled to a free car wash.

Her – Usually, I wash it myself...

Him – What's this? Pigeon droppings...

Her – You think so?

Him – You need to clean that. It's very corrosive.

Her – What can I do?

Him – Get a loyalty card.

Her – I don't come around here often. I'm on vacation...

Him – It's valid everywhere.

Her – Maybe next time...

Him – There you go, that's 95 euros.

Her – Here, keep the change. (*She starts to walk away but reconsiders.*) Excuse me, do you know where we are?

Him – Where are you headed?

Her – I don't know yet.

Him – Anyway, you can't make a U-turn.

Her – And is the next exit far?

Him – Oh, well...! It's not right away, huh...!

Her – Well, I'll keep going, then.

Him – Safe travels.

Her (*as she leaves*) – Thank you.

Him – Ah, women...

4. Time Difference

A man arrives breathless in front of a woman, resembling a hostess.

Him – Good morning, miss. I am Mr. Smith...

Her (*checking a list*) – Mr. Smith, yes, perfectly.

Him – Sorry, I'm a bit late...

Her (*pleasantly*) – You're the last one, indeed. We were just waiting for you to take off... Do you have any luggage?

Him – Uh, no... (*Pointing to the plastic bag in his hand*) Just this... Can I take it in the cabin...?

Her – Of course... Economy class, is that correct...?

Him (*nodding*) – How long does the flight last?

Her (*checking*) – Wait, so I don't say anything wrong... Exactly 37 years... You'll arrive on April 16, 3022, at noon, local time...

Him – I thought in April there would be fewer people...

Her – Outside of school holidays, it's still cheaper. And there, April is the beautiful season. The days get longer. In winter, we barely have time to get up, and it's already dark: the days only last five hours!

Him – Have you been there before?

Her – Yes! Several times. As flight attendants, we get discounted rates... Did you pack warm clothes for defrosting?

Him – Of course.

Her – It's a good thing we have perks, you know... Because being a flight attendant... It's a crazy life... You leave on any flight for about sixty years, you come back, you have to make new friends. Yours are already all dead and buried... Or completely worn out... Do you have friends?

Him – No.

Her – You're right. It's much simpler. (*Her phone rings, and she answers.*) Yes...? Perfect, thank you. (*She hangs up and addresses her passenger again.*) This time, it's time. I'm told your rocket is about to take off any moment now. I won't say goodbye. When you come back, I probably won't be in this world anymore. I'm working on the solar system right now. There's almost no annual time difference. It's much less tiring.

Him – Especially when you have children...

Her – You leave them at the nursery, and when you come back from work, they've finished medical school... Bon voyage!

He leaves, forgetting his plastic bag.

Him – Thank you.

Her – Ah, you're forgetting your carry-on...

Him – Oh, for what's inside...

Her – You're right... No need to burden yourself... When you arrive, fashion has completely changed... Might as well buy clothes on-site...

Him – Oh, I didn't ask you about the return. When is it?

Her – The return? Oh, that's a question I'm rarely asked... I can give you an estimate, but you know... It will depend on the evolution of aviation in the meantime...

Him – Don't bother. I'll see that there. Have a good day...

Her – Good day to you... Well, I mean... Good hibernation...

Him – Yes, indeed... 37 years, though...

Her – Oh, you'll see, you won't feel the time passing... And you'll wake up as fresh as a daisy...

Him – Excuse me for asking, but is this really a safe company...? You've never had a cold chain break...?

Her – Think so! Everything is very controlled. The last incident we had was a passenger who got on the wrong flight. He was supposed to meet his fiancée on Venus for their honeymoon, and he accidentally boarded a planet located about forty light-years away... Of course, when he came back, she...

Him – She wasn't exactly as fresh as a daisy anymore...

They laugh.

Her – Well, now go on, or you'll miss it. And the next flight is only in seventy years...

Him – I'm going...

5. Fishing Outing

The first person is fishing. The second one arrives.

Two – Are they biting?

One – I just got here...

Two – What bait are you using?

One – Bread crumbs...

Two – Oh, yes... Have you tried the... Damn, what's it called again...? The... What we find in camembert! The... You know what I mean?

One – No...

Two – It doesn't matter, it'll come back to me in a moment...

One – Are you a fisherman?

Two – No! I would never have the patience... Sitting still for hours doing nothing, just waiting for a bite... If it even bites! Don't you ever get bored?

One – It's a way to be a bit tranquil...

Two – No, I still prefer hunting...

One – Are you a hunter?

Two – No. But if I had to choose, I'd prefer hunting. There's more action. And at least, you get some exercise. Because sitting like that all day... I don't know how you do it.

One – It's relaxing. You listen to the sound of flowing water...

Two (*shouting*) – Worms! In the camembert! For baiting! Worms, that's the word I was looking for! Have you tried worms?

One – No.

Two – You should.

One – Maybe another time...

Two – A safari... That would be nice... In Kenya, for example... You know Kenya?

One – No.

Two – Big game hunting. A dozen elephants charging at you. Bam! Between the eyes! After that, you better find a good hiding spot, so you don't get flattened by the herd.

One – Elephant hunting is prohibited now...

Two – Yes, I saw a documentary on that. They say they're starting to proliferate again. And they're becoming aggressive! They attack humans... For no reason, just like that... They charge at anything that moves... There have been deaths, you know! Apparently, it's because they remember being hunted decades ago. Those who survived with a limp leg, a missing ear, or a bullet in the trunk. And the baby elephants who saw their parents massacred before their eyes. Even fifty years later, they remember, and they start charging whenever they see a four-wheel drive passing nearby... Elephants live a very long time. And they have a memory... Don't you have a bite there?

One – It's the wind...

Two – What do you do when you catch one? Do you eat it...?

One – I throw it back into the water...

Two – Well, that really serves no purpose... But they must be a bit battered when you throw them back in the water, right? Having a hook piercing your cheek like that can't feel good... (*The other remains impassive.*) They say eating fish is good for memory... Do you think a fish has a memory?

6. Excessive Slowness

A man approaches another (or a woman).

One – Papers.

The second person hands over their papers.

Two – There you go.

The first person examines the papers.

One – Do you know how fast you were driving?

Two (*humbly*) – I didn't realise..

One – And this isn't the first time.

Two – It's the last time, I promise.

One – But do you realise? 12 kilometres per hour on the highway! You could have caused a very serious accident! What do you have to say for yourself?

Two – I wasn't in a hurry...

One – Are you kidding me?

Two – I swear I'm not! In fact... It's a kind of phobia... Every time I set off, I have the fear of arriving...

One – You mean not arriving...

Two – No, arriving! It's the same when I'm on a plane...

One – Are you afraid of flying?

Two – Not at all... I'm afraid of landing... Well, not landing per se... It's the end of the journey, if you prefer... It terrifies me... I'm so anxious... I could divert the plane to prevent it from landing... But it wouldn't serve any purpose. Even if we circled the airport, we would eventually burn all the fuel and still have to make an emergency landing, right?

One – Yes...

Two – Unless we're refuelled in flight...

One – Yes...

Two – You don't have this kind of anxiety on a motorcycle?

One – No...

Two – What I liked as a child was the amusement rides... Since they go around in circles, you're sure never to get anywhere... I always rode the saucer... You know, the spinning top? We spin around ourselves... In addition to going around in circles... By the way, going around in circles is the universal movement, right...? Planets spin on themselves and around the sun... And you...?

One – Me...?

Two – What did you ride on at the amusement park?

One – On the motorcycle...

Two – Already...

One – In fact, my father used to place me astride the motorcycle.

Two – And yet, motorcycles are very dangerous.

One – What I would have liked is to ride in the pumpkin...

Two – The pumpkin?

One – Well, the carriage, you know... Especially because even on a motorcycle, I could never catch up with the carriage... On the amusement ride, I mean...

Two – Do you remember Mary Poppins?

One – Mary Poppins...?

Two – The movie! (*Horried*) That scene when the wooden horses detach from the carousel to roam the countryside and end up galloping on a racecourse, racing breathlessly towards the finish line, mouths full of foam...

One – Mouths full of foam, are you sure?

Two – For me, it was worse than *The Exorcist*!

The other looks at him for a moment with a perplexed expression.

One – Well...

He returns the papers to the other.

One – You're not drunk, are you?

Two – I swear I'm not...

One – Alright, it's fine for this time... You can go...

Two – Go...?

One – And faster than that!

Two – Well... You don't want to revoke my license...?

The other gives him a negative look.

Two – Okay, I'm going...

7. Lost and found

Him and Her arrive, clearly lost and exhausted.

Her – Haven't we been here before? It feels like we took shelter under this oak just fifteen minutes ago...

Him – At the same time, one tree looks much like another. By the way, how do you know it's an oak?

Her – There are acorns underneath...

Him – I wonder if we wouldn't be better off sitting down and waiting...

He sits on the ground, discouraged.

Her – Wait for what? We're in the city park, not in the Amazon jungle! Do you really think the police will mount a rescue mission just because they see our car alone in the parking lot tonight?

He doesn't respond. She sits down too, resigned. He stares fixedly at something straight ahead.

Her – What are you looking at like that?

Him – The crow over there... I have the feeling I've seen it before...

Her – Ah, you see, what did I say... We've been here already...

Him (*thoughtful*) – When I was a kid, my father brought a crow home one evening... He was a lumberjack, my father... So he cut down the tree and... Naturally, the nest... I fed it with a small spoon... You can't imagine the noise a baby crow makes when it's hungry... At first, I didn't even dare to approach... And then little by little, I tamed it... It followed me everywhere, like a little dog.

Her – On foot?

Him – It must have thought I was its mother. Since it didn't see me fly, it had no idea of doing it either.

She looks visibly as if she wonders if he's delirious.

Him – He used to steal my father's pencils from his desk and bury them in the garden. We had a good laugh about that...

Her (*perplexed*) – Mmm...

Him – And then little by little, it learned to use its wings!

Her (*lost*) – What?

Him – At first, it was just small jumps. From one garden chair to another... And then from the chair to a tree...

Her – It must have seen other crows flying. That gave it ideas...

Him – At first, it only left for a day or two... We knew it would come back... And then one day, it left for good, and we never saw it again... It went back to the wild...

Her – Or maybe a hunter shot it. If it wasn't shy...

Him (*continuing without hearing her*) – Since then, every time I see a crow, I wonder if it's not Baback...

Her – Baback...?

Him – That's what we called it...

He still gazes at the crow with a dreamy look. She looks at him more and more perplexed.

Her – Wait, your crow must have been dead for a long time!

Him – Don't believe that. A crow can live more than a hundred years...

She stands up to break the spell.

Her – Well, I wouldn't want to disturb these touching reunions, but maybe we should think about heading back. It's starting to get dark...

He looks in the direction of the crow.

Him (*disappointed*) – It flew away... Maybe it wasn't him after all...

She seems relieved to see him coming back to reason.

Him – Or maybe you scared him away...

They leave.

Her – Are you sure it's this way? I'm not ready for a return to the wild yet...

8. Love at First Sight

A man enters, looking like a sales representative, carrying a briefcase. He waits, unsure of what to do. Then he takes the opportunity to discreetly examine the surroundings. His judgment seems very favourable. His phone rings, and he answers.

Him – Yes...? Yes, honey... Yes, I'm here... No, the agency girl hasn't arrived yet. I'm a bit early. A chance like this, you know. I absolutely wanted to be the first. Yes, she mentioned that someone else is interested in the property... No, no, it was open, so I took the opportunity to enter... Oh, yes, I assure you, it's really magnificent. Love at first sight, I swear. No, I think this time it's the one. And at this price... The owners seem to be in a hurry... A divorce, it seems... Excuse me, I'll have to let you go... I hear her coming... OK, I'll call you back later, alright...? Bye...

A woman enters. She is dressed somewhat like him, in a feminine way, and also carries a briefcase.

Her – Hello... Are you...?

Him – Yes...

Her – I parked in a disabled spot, but well... We won't be long...

Him – No, of course...

She glances around the room. He seems puzzled.

Her – Oh, yes, it's...

Him – Is this your first time seeing it...?

Her – Yes... Why?

Him – Nothing, I...

Her – It's not very large, obviously, but well...

Him – For a couple.

Her – Yes.

Him – There are quite a few closets...

They both seem a bit awkward.

Her – It must be admitted that at this price, it's an opportunity not to be missed.

Him – Yes...

Her – You... You've been doing this for a long time...

Him – This?

Her – You're new at this, am I wrong?

Him – Well...

Her (*amused*) – It shows a bit...

Him – Oh, really...?

Her – You're not very... But it's great, I mean... We've been searching for six months, so obviously... Excuse me, but... real estate agents, we're starting to know their spiel... So, it's a bit refreshing for me...

Him – Of course...

Her – And it's true that an apartment like this, at this price... There's really no need to add anything...

Him – No...

Her (*resuming her tour*) – Oh, yes, it's... It's very bright...

Him – Yes, well...

Her – Sorry?

Him – Especially during the day...

Her – Yes... It's sure to be a bit darker at night...

Him – Well, not really.

Her – No?

Trying to find something to argue, he positions himself in front of the supposed window.

Him – Have you seen that neon sign on the roof over there, right across...

Her – Oh, no...

Him – For the nightclub downstairs! Before going to bed, you better close the shutters...

Her – Oh, yes...

Him – The problem is... there are no shutters.

Her – Oh, no...

Him – On the other hand, if you're an insomniac, you can read until the next morning without even turning on the light. Are you an insomniac?

Her – Sometimes...

Him – The advantage is that you won't be woken up at four in the morning when the customers leave the club and smoke a cigarette while making noise before going home half-drunk.

Her – I thought this was your first time here... You seem to know the neighbourhood well...

Him – Professional habit... In our job, we have an eye for all these little inconveniences that usually only appear to unsuspecting buyers after signing the sales agreement...

Her – There is still a nice ceiling height...

Him – Yes...

Her – No...?

Him – Yes, yes... It's... It's sure that this feeling of volume is very pleasant...

Her – Yes...

Him – But you also have to think about heating...

Her – Heating...

Him – Full north, like that... Here, it's summer... But in December...

Her – You think so?

Him – When you're heated with gas, maybe...

Her – Yes...

Him – But with electric heating...

Her – Oh, yes...

Him – Plus, there's only one radiator...

Her – Mmm...

Him – And not very big either.

Her – No...

Him – Who knows if it even works...

Her (*intrigued*) – Do you work on commission?

Him – No, why?

Her – Just like that... Well, during the day, it seems rather calm, right?

Him (*looking out the window again*) – Oh, there... Have you seen, on the right?

Her – What?

Him – The school!

Her – Oh, yes... We don't have children yet, but... It's true that it would be practical...

Him – Mmm...

Her – No?

Him – Wait for recess...

Her – You mean...

Him – You don't work at home, do you?

Her – Yes... I... I'm a translator...

Him – Believe me... A school... When you only go home in the evening, it's fine... But when you need tranquility to work during the day...

Her – To that extent...?

Him – How long has it been since you set foot in a schoolyard?

Her – I don't know...

Him – Believe me, a school... It's still better to live next to a nuclear power plant...

Her – Oh, yes?

Him – It makes less noise...

Her – But... Why are you telling me all this? Your job is to sell apartments, right?

Him – I like you, I don't know why... I wouldn't want... And then I'll eventually find another sucker...

Her – Thank you for your honesty... I'm very touched...

Him – You're welcome.

Her – And the toilets?

Him – In the bathroom...

Her – It takes up less space.

Him – But it's not very convenient... especially if you plan to expand the family.

Her – Okay... I might think a bit more then...

Him – Take your time... I don't think this kind of property sells quickly anyway...

Her – Thanks... So, I'll be going... I parked in a disabled spot...

Him – Yes... I think there's a psychiatric hospital not far away...

She wonders if he just escaped from there.

Her – You're a strange real estate agent...

Him – Do you think so...?

Her (*disturbed*) – I'm leaving...

Him – OK... (*She leaves. He glances at the apartment, looking much less satisfied. His phone rings.*) Yes...? Ah, it's you... No, it wasn't the real estate agent, actually, it was... Listen, I can't tell you this right away, the agency girl is about to arrive... All I can say is that now, we're the only ones in the running... (*Trying to motivate himself again*) It's great, right? The apartment...? Listen... I'm starting to wonder if it's not as good as I thought, after all... Yes, I know, that's what I thought, but you know how it is... Sometimes, you have a crush and... But no, I'm not saying this to you... I'm talking about the apartment! Well, we'll talk about it later, okay, I hear footsteps on the stairs...

To his great surprise, it's the woman who comes back.

Her – Do you believe in love at first sight...?

He remains dumbfounded. She goes towards him and gives him a passionate kiss. In the distance, the increasing noise of children playing during recess is heard. The lights go out, replaced by the intermittent flash of light from the neon sign.

9. Current time

She is sitting, reading. He approaches very hesitantly.

Him – Um... Excuse me for bothering you, but...

Her – Yes?

Him – I was wondering if... you'd be willing to... tell me the time, please.

Her – Sorry, but my watch has stopped.

Him – Oh...

Her – Probably the battery.

Him – That's inconvenient...

Her – Yes.

Him – Well, then, I won't bother you any longer.

Her – Mmm...

He's about to leave but reconsiders.

Him – Could you maybe still tell me what time it was when your watch stopped?

Her – Um, yes, why not...

Him – That would give me an idea...

Her – An idea?

Him – An idea... of the current time.

Her – Oh, yes...

Him – For example, I don't know... If your watch stopped at three twenty-eight, I would already know that it's past three twenty-eight now...

Her (*checking*) – My watch stopped at half-past three...

Him – Thank you very much; that already gives me an indication... I now know with certainty that it's past three thirty...

Her – Yes...

Him – Once again, sorry for bothering you...

Her – No problem.

He's about to leave but reconsiders again.

Him – Are you sure your watch is really stopped?

Her – Oh, yes, it is...

Him – Excuse me, but... How can you be absolutely certain?

Her – I don't know, I...

Him – Sometimes, it happens that we have the impression time is not passing very quickly... or not at all... temporarily, at least...

Her – That's true, but...

Him – When you're bored, for example...

Her – Um, yes...

Him – You look at your watch, and you feel like it stopped, but in reality...

Her – Mmm...

Him – Were you... very bored while waiting?

Her – Waiting for what?

Him – I don't know, I... I wouldn't presume to ask what you're waiting for... or who.

Her – Not particularly... I have my book...

Him – Then I'm sorry for you, but in that case, I'm afraid your watch is truly broken...

Her – Yes... It's been a good half-hour since it showed half-past three... I believe there's no doubt about that...

Him – Wait... Half an hour, you say?

Her – Approximately, yes...

Him – How do you know?

Her – Well... I've had time to read three chapters of my book...

Him – In that case, if your watch stopped at three thirty half an hour ago, it means it's approximately four o'clock now.

Her – Yes, probably close to that...

Him – And do you know from experience that it takes you exactly ten minutes to read a chapter?

Her – Not exactly... It depends on the length of the chapters...

Him – Ah... And given the thickness of your book, I suppose those must be considerably longer than average...

Her – Yes, perhaps...

Him – Mmm... So it could very well be a little past four.

Her – Oh, certainly not!

Him – No? What makes you say that?

Her – Well... I have an appointment with someone, actually...

Him – Ah...

Her – At exactly four o'clock...

Him – I see... But... your appointment could be running late.

Her – Oh, I don't think so.

Him – And why is that?

Her – It's a first meeting... A man never arrives late for a first meeting, right? Generally...

Him – Generally, a woman doesn't arrive early for a meeting either. Especially the first one...

Her – Oh, really? And why is that?

Him – To not look completely desperate, I suppose...

Her – Yes, of course...

Him – Well, you told me you've been here for a good half-hour, right?

Her – Yes...

Him – You see, in this case, one can't rely on generalities...

Her – That's true... And why do you need to know the time so badly yourself?

Him – I have an appointment at four o'clock too. And since I'm someone who's very punctual...

Her – When you're very punctual, it's better to have a watch, isn't it?

Him – Ah, but I have one!

Her – And it's broken too...

Him – No! Well, I don't think so...

Her – Then why were you asking me for the time?

Him – But... to check that my watch wasn't stopped, precisely. Like yours.

Her – So, can you tell me what time it is?

Him – Absolutely... It's exactly six minutes past four... You can trust me; it's a Swiss watch...

Her – Thank you...

Him – I've had it for years... My godfather gave it to me for my first communion... He's been dead from a heart attack, but the watch... Not a single breakdown since I got it!

Her – And what about when the batteries run out?

Him – There are no batteries! I wind it up every day at eight o'clock sharp!

Her – Well, um... Thanks for telling me the time...

She gets up.

Him – Are you leaving already?

Her – You said it's six minutes past four. I wouldn't want to seem like I'm waiting. We had a meeting at four o'clock...

Him – I understand... So, goodbye... And... sorry again for bothering you...

She leaves. He remains alone.

Him – I'll wait another five minutes... Let's say... until eleven past four... But I don't like women who are late either... Especially for a first meeting...

Pause

One character is there, idle. Another one arrives and greets him.

One – Good morning.

Two – Hi.

One – I'm the author. Taking a little break.

Two – A break? Live performances are like life. There's no pause button...

One – There isn't even a commercial break. (*He takes out a pack of cigarettes and offers it to the other.*) Want one? To kill time... It's seriously harmful, but it solves the retirement problem.

Two – Thanks. I don't smoke.

One – Ah... Sorry. (*He puts away his pack of cigarettes.*) Are you unemployed?

Two – On and off.

One – And you never get bored?

Two – You know what they say...

One – The hardest part of this job is waiting.

Two – Will it be in the play?

One – What?

Two – What we're saying right now.

One – Ah, um... I don't know yet. It depends.

Two – On what?

One – On the interest of our conversation, I guess. Do you have something interesting to say?

Two – You're the author.

One – Yeah.

Two – Well, that's what you say.

One – Yeah...

Two – Do you write mostly at night?

One – No, why?

Two – You look a bit tired...

One – I go to bed early, wake up late. I mostly write in the late morning. Sometimes, when I'm inspired, I get back to it after a nap. (*He looks at his watch.*) Actually, it's not that I'm bored, but I'll have to get back to it.

Two – Yes, I think so.

One – Thanks for keeping me company. It was nice chatting with you.

The author extends his hand to the other for a handshake. The other hesitates for a moment but shakes his hand.

One – Your hand is cold.

Two – Are you really an author?

One – Why?

Two – It's kind of meandering, isn't it?

One – You're not helping much... Yes, I know, I'm the author. But they say when you have a good character, you just let them talk...

Two – When you want to kill your dog, you accuse it of having rabies... And the play within a play... It's been done a lot, hasn't it? When an author starts talking shop... It means he has nothing left to say, right?

One – Well... (*Leaving, to himself*) I think I won't keep this scene...

10. Face to Face

They both look at each other discreetly.

One – Do we know each other?

Two – I don't know.

One – Sorry, I had the feeling...

Two – No, no, don't apologise I felt the same way. Your face rings a bell...

One – Where could we have met?

Two – Do you live around here?

One – Not very far. And you?

Two – I was walking my bird...

One – Maybe we crossed paths here...

Two – Or somewhere else...

Silence.

One – It's strange. I really feel like we know each other...

Two – We see so many people...

One – Well, I'll have to go...

Two – Nice meeting you.

One – Pleasure's mine!

The first one is about to leave but changes his mind.

One – Oh, by the way, I'm Peter... In case we run into each other here again...

Two – Peter? That's funny. Me too...

One – It's a quite common name...

Two – Peter what?

One – Peter Smith.

Two – No way! Same as me!

One – So, we're namesakes, so to speak!

Two – But that still doesn't tell us where we've seen each other before...

One – Well, then, um... I'll be going...

Two – I'm leaving too.

One – Which way are you headed?

Two – And you?

One – That way.

Two – After you, I'll follow.

One – Thank you.

They leave.

One – Come on, Baback!

Two – No way! Is that your crow?

One – Yes, why?

Two – It's mine too!

One – I knew your face looked familiar...

11. 107 Years

A prison cell. The first one is already there, idle. The second, younger, arrives.

Young – Hi.

Old – Hi.

The young man takes a few steps to familiarise himself with the place.

Old – I'm not giving you the grand tour...

Young – Have you been here for a long time?

Old – I don't know... I'm losing my memory. In a way, it's not so bad here, you'll see... I know I still have a bit of time left, but since I always feel like I arrived yesterday... How many?

Young – 10 years... And you?

Old – 107 years.

Young (*impressed*) – 107 years? For what?

Old – Fraud.

Young – That's expensive for fraud...

Old – And you?

Young – I killed a policeman...

Old – Not very expensive for killing a policeman...

Young – A big fraud...?

Old – 115 million.

Young – Who can you defraud 115 million from? Besides another fraudster... A bank? An insurance company?

Old – National Lottery.

Young – Ah, yeah...

Old – The numbers I played were never the right ones. I managed to make the winning numbers the ones I had played...

Young – And how do you do that?

Old – A magician never reveals his tricks. Otherwise, there's no more magic...

The old man performs a small magic trick, whether successful or failed.

Young – 107 years...

Old – Oh, I won't make them.

Young – Do you have a trick to escape from here?

Old – A foolproof trick. How much time are you really going to do?

Young – With parole, I might hope to get out in 5 years.

Old – I'll be out before you. Wanna bet?

Young – You defrauded National Lottery...

Old – At my age... I'll even leave through the front door. Feet first...

Young – Excuse me, but... Why steal 115 million... at your age, precisely?

Old – It's true... At my age, there's nothing more to gain... On the other hand, there's nothing more to lose either. At worst, it was prison instead of a nursing home. At least here, I'm with young people... Why did you off that cop?

Young – He was my wife's lover...

Old – Oh, yeah, that's tough... If he had been a butcher, you would have gotten three years. And you, what do you do in life? Well, what did you do...

Young – I was a watchmaker.

Old – Ah... Here, it's better not to look at your watch too much... I have a Rolex. Swiss precision... It's all they left me, I don't know why. Well, I have a bit of an idea... (*He looks at his watch.*) By the way, I'll ask you to excuse me for a moment, it's time for the draw...

He takes a small radio and puts it to his ear.

Young (*surprised*) – You still play the lottery?

Old – Old habits die hard... Unfortunately, I can't go to the tobacconist to validate my tickets anymore.

Young – What's the point of playing? If you can't place a bet anymore...

Old – To pass the time! I have nothing more to win, as you said... But they can't stop me from playing... Last week, I got four correct numbers...

Young – How much?

Old – 19 euros... Want to play a grid with me? And we'll split the prize... (*The young man looks skeptical*) You'll see, you'll virtually become a billionaire...

12. Object Lesson

An older character and a younger one (playable interchangeably by men or women).

Old – So? What do you want to do when you grow up?

Young – I don't know... What did you want to do when you were young?

Old – That's a long time ago... Certainly not what I'm doing now, in any case...!

Young – What are you doing?

Old – Oh, nothing very interesting, you know... Sometimes, I even wonder if it's worth it... But someone has to do it...

Young – Why...?

Old – What do you think? There are plenty behind me waiting for the spot! Ah, if only I could do it over... To be your age and know what I know...

Young – What would you do?

Old – Who knows? In any case, I certainly wouldn't be where I am now... But I've seen too much... They've made me see too much... When you're young, you want it... You believe in it... But I have no illusions left... You'll see when you're my age...

Young – See what?

Old – You'll know soon enough... Those things are not easy to explain... And yet, you're lucky. At your age, I couldn't even ask those kinds of questions.

Young – What questions?

Old – Come on, go study your lessons... If you don't want to end up like me...

Young – You didn't study your lessons?

Old – Yes...

Young – Then what's the point of learning lessons?

Old – Come on, do what I tell you... You'll understand later... And you'll thank me... *(He leaves.)* Ah, these kids... You have to explain everything to them...

13. Cash Memory

Him and Her, kissing for a long moment. They release their embrace and look straight ahead.

Her – Does this remind you of anything?

Him – No... And you?

Her – Neither.

Him – It's the first time.

Her – It's not unforgettable.

Him – The first time, you can't compare. You don't remember anything.

Her – The first time, you don't recall. You just keep it in memory.

Him – What is memory?

Her – I don't know...

Him – What is forgetting?

Her – I don't remember...

Him – Shall we start again?

Her – Okay.

They kiss again, then release their embrace.

Him – And now, does this remind you of anything?

Her – I vaguely remember a déjà vu.

Him – Me too.

Her – There, I remember.

Him – It's a start.

Her – Yes.

Him – It's the second time.

Her – Then it's not a start.

Him – The first time, you don't know it's a start, since you don't remember anything.

Her – What's the point of remembering?

Him – It passes the time.

Her – And in the end? How do you know it's the last time?

Him – You never know.

Her – You should be able to remember. Afterwards.

Him – We only remember the second-to-last time.

Her – That's life.

Him – Yes. Between the second and the second-to-last time.

Her – Life is when you reminisce.

Him – It's a senseless story.

They start to walk away, each going their own way.

Her – Do we remember?

Him – Or do we erase the cache memory?

14. Memories

An old man is sitting, leaning on an umbrella. An old woman approaches. She sits next to him and takes his hand. He allows it, a little surprised.

Her – A bit of calm, it feels good, doesn't it?

Him (*not contradicting*) – Yes...

They enjoy this moment of serenity.

Her – Do you remember our first vacation?

Him – No...

Her – Now, for us, it's like a vacation every day...

Him – Yes...

Her – Did you take your pills?

Him (*surprised*) – No...

Her (*handing him a box*) – Here, I brought them for you.

Him – Thank you... (*He takes a pill and swallows it, then looks at the box.*) It's for the heart...

Her – Yes...

Him – Mine is more for memory...

Her – Those are my husband's medications...

Him – Then I must not be your husband...

She looks at him offended, lets go of his hand, and stands up.

Her – You could have said that earlier!

She leaves, upset. He watches her go.

15. Future Plans

A girl is sitting on a bench, staring ahead. It becomes clear that she is watching the couple from the previous scene. A boy arrives and sits next to her without saying a word. They remain in silence for a while, looking straight ahead.

Her – Can you imagine us when we're their age?

Him – No...

Her – She is all dressed up. She even put on makeup...

Him – Oh, yeah...?

Her – He didn't notice either...

Him – Why does he have an umbrella? There's not a cloud...

Her – She asked him to take it. At the age of hairstyling, we're wary of storms... And she knows it serves as his cane. It's more discreet... It's his little vanity...

Him – Did you see? Her hair is almost purple...

Her (*tenderly*) – It's still beautiful, isn't it?

Him – What? An old lady with a punk hairstyle?

Her – They must have been married for half a century, and they still hold hands...

Him – You bet! Look, she's storming off. And she doesn't look happy... Maybe they've been arguing for fifty years...

Her – He probably told her he found it too purple... (*Pause*) I wonder if it's going to rain after all... Shall we go?

Him – Uh, yeah...

He gets up to leave.

Her – By the way, why did you want to see me?

Him – Well... I don't know how to say this, but... I don't think we'll grow old together...

Her – I know...

Him – And you, did you want to tell me something?

She stands up as well, revealing that she is pregnant.

Her – You should have brought your umbrella too...

16. Vacation

A terrace. Two loungers. She arrives in a white bathrobe, sunglasses on her nose. She walks to the edge of the stage, takes a deep breath, and gazes at the horizon. He arrives in turn, leaning on crutches.

Her (*without turning around*) – Ah, the fresh air! Can you feel that sea breeze?

Him – Well, no... but my nose is a bit stuffy this morning...

He sits with difficulty on a lounge and places his crutches next to him.

Her – And those seagulls... Can you hear that? What a change of scenery!

He takes a metal box from his pocket, opens it, and offers it to her.

Him – Want a lozenge? Clears the airways...

But she pays no attention to this offer.

Her – It's truly paradise... I feel alive again! Don't you?

He takes a lozenge from the box and puts it in his mouth.

Him – For me, it would make me want to vomit...

He puts the box away.

Her (*excited*) – A new day beginning... And it promises to be glorious...

Him – Are you sure you're okay?

Her expression changes completely.

Her – I'm completely depressed...

Him – I have other kinds of lozenges if you want.

Her – My husband was supposed to come with me, but in the end, he stayed on the platform.

Him – I'm really sorry. So, you're temporarily single...

Her – More like definitively widowed.

Him – I see...

Her – Except that he's still alive... (*Pause*) And what happened to you?

Him – I'm on vacation, just like you.

Her – I meant your crutches...

Him – Ah, that... I know I need them to walk, but I don't remember why...

She turns again towards the sea.

Her – The sea is so blue... Like a real postcard... I'm thinking of taking a dip...

She removes her bathrobe, revealing her swimsuit.

Him – Don't go drowning yourself... That would be a shame... And it probably isn't very warm.

Her – What makes you say that?

Him – We're out of season.

Her – Ah, yes...

She puts her bathrobe back on.

Him – Want to play Scrabble?

Her – Thanks... I'm not that desperate yet...

Him – Did you love him that much?

Her – He was my husband...

Him – You'll forget him...

Her – I already can't remember very well how we parted...

Him – Farewells are the first to fade when you rewind.

Her – Are you in the movie business?

Him – If I was, I don't remember it anymore... And you?

Her – I'm an actress, to some extent.

Him – You'll see, this little time-out will do you a world of good.

Her – I already feel younger... Okay, it's decided, I'm taking a dip!

Him – In the ocean?

Her – In the pool!

She leaves, revealing the inscription on the back of her bathrobe: Titanic. He stands up without his crutches, approaches the edge of the stage, and spreads his arms while looking into the distance.

Him – I'm the king of the world!

17. First Love

A man strolls through what will turn out to be an art gallery. A woman approaches him with a big smile, seemingly emotional.

Her – Do you recognise me?

He seems caught off guard but, not wanting to disappoint her, tries something.

Him – Bridget?

Her – Victoria!

Him – Victoria!

Her – I've been looking at you for a while. Your face vaguely reminded me of something. And then it hit me all at once. Something in the expression...

Him – That's crazy... How long has it been?

Her – Oh, well... You didn't recognise me earlier, did you?

Him – Yes, yes, well... It's true that a moment ago... But now that you mention it... Everything is there... The chin... The eyes... The mouth... Even the nose...

Her – Yes...

Him – No, I said Bridget because... She's a friend of my mother. (Realising *his mistake and trying to recover*) You haven't changed much, right?

Her – Over the years...

Him – No, I mean... You're still recognisable.. When you know it's you... (Realising *the depth of the hole he's already dug*) So, you still live around here?

Her – Yes... Still in the same place... And you? You don't come back often, do you?

Him – No, not very... My mother still lives here, but... It's a bit complicated... (Preferring to change the subject) Victoria...! You're married, I imagine?

Her – I have four children...

Him – Oh, wow, really...

Her – And you?

Him – Me too... Well, I only have one, but... (New embarrassment) It's incredible that we meet like this here. In this art gallery. I was about to buy cigarettes. I came in like that, by chance...

Her – Yes...

Him – You won't believe it, but I was thinking of you earlier. Passing by your place, precisely... But I didn't think you could still live there. So, you haven't moved...?

Her – Well, no, you see. I'm still here...

Him – It's incredible...

They seem to not know what to say anymore.

Her – Have you had time to see the exhibition...?

Him – Yes... Well, not everything... There are some really nice things, huh?

To save face, for a moment, he contemplates the painting in front of him with her, trying to find something else to say.

Him – This one, on the other hand, is terrible, isn't it...? Looks like a child's drawing... I don't know how they can exhibit such things...

Her – I still need to work on my technique, I know...

Him (*flustered*) – Ah, because it's...? It's you who...?

Her – Yes...

Him – No, but I love the others, I told you...

Her – Well, they're not all mine. It's a group exhibition. But this one, yes, it's me...

Him – Of course! It's coming back to me now... You were already painting back then... On shoes boxes, right...?

Her – Chocolate boxes...

Him – Chocolate boxes... That's it. So now, you... You've changed the medium...

He takes a fresh look at the painting.

Him – Oh, yes, it's good... It's... It's a horse?

Her – A cat...

Him – Of course! No, you can see the... The ears, the mouth, the nose... The moustache... And it's abstract painting, right?

Her – No.

Him – Well, I mean... Naive painting...

Her – Not really...

Him – Well, you know, me and painting... And then this habit we have of always wanting to put labels on things... Especially when it comes to painting! Me first, huh? It's beautiful, and that's it... (*Adding a bit of emotion*) And it's so you...

Another awkward silence.

Him – You know, I was very much in love with you...?

Her – That was a long time ago...

Him – I would never have dared to tell you back then... It's funny... It feels good to be able to say it now... I mean now that...

Her – We're no longer on the market...

Him – Yes... (*Embarrassed*) Listen, I really have to go now... I'm going to see my mother, actually... You know, at her age... She could die at any moment...

Her – How old is she?

Him – Sixty-two... Well, but... She's always had fragile health, you know... It was really nice to see you again... (*Looking for an exit*) I'm on Facebook... Send me a friend request... We'll stay in touch...

Her – OK...

Him – I searched for you once or twice, you know... On Facebook... But with Victoria, um... (*In vain, trying to remember her last name*) There are so many...

Her – In the photo, I have a red nose... I mean a clown's nose...

Him – So it's no wonder I didn't recognise you... Well, I really have to run now, otherwise... Shall we kiss goodbye?

They kiss each other, a bit awkwardly. He is about to leave but, still searching for the definitive phrase that would fix everything, he turns around one last time and improvises.

Him – Well... (*Profoundly*) In the kingdom of heaven, first loves will be the last...

She politely agrees, pretending to understand the profound meaning of this cryptic sentence. He leaves with a mysterious smile, leaving her somewhat perplexed.

18. Neither Hot Nor Cold

Two characters (men or women). Possibly a couple. Maybe elderly. They remain silent for a moment.

One – It's muggy, isn't it?

Two – Yes.

One – It came all of a sudden.

Two – Mmm...

One – This morning, it was fine, right?

Two – This morning...?

One – And suddenly, it's so hot.

A moment passes.

Two – It smells like a storm.

One – You think so?

Two – I don't know...

One – So why did you say that?

Two – That's what people usually say, right?

One – Usually?

Two – Someone says, "It's muggy," and... the other responds, "It smells like a storm."

One – Mmm...

Two – Wasn't that what I was supposed to say?

One – Yes... Sure... (*A moment*) Still, at this time of the year...

Two – What?

One – That it's so muggy like this.

Two – Mmm...

Silence.

One – Or maybe it's just me... (*A moment*) Aren't you feeling hot?

Two – No, well... Not really...

One – Then why didn't you tell me?

Two – What?

One – You also said it was muggy!

Two – I don't know... I said it just like that... Not to upset you...

One – So, it must be me...

Two – You...?

One – Maybe I have a temperature!

Two – Do you feel like you have a temperature?

One – I don't know... What do you think? Is it muggy, or is it me?

Two – It's true that I'm starting to feel a bit warm now that you mention it...

One – It might be contagious.

Two – What?

One – Fever! It was fine a while ago, and now you're starting to feel warm too. It might be contagious!

Two – No, but I'm not really warm. I said that just to...

One – Why?

Two – I don't know... Just... (*A moment*) What if you take off your sweater...

Two – You think?

One – You can always try.

Two – Won't I catch a cold? If I have a fever...

One – It's not really warm, but... it's not that cold either. It's neither hot nor cold.

Two – Okay...

The first character takes off their sweater.

Two – So?

One – Oh, yes...

Two – Feeling better?

One – Oh, yes, yes... Now I feel better...

Two – Did you wear your sweater this morning?

One – No...

Two – Well, you see, that must be it...

One – Yes...

Two – It must be the sweater...

One – It's true that this morning... It wasn't that warm, right?

19. Deadly

Two characters.

One – I believe this time, we're truly the last...

Two – To think that we ruled the world for over 100 million years.

One – You'll see, in 100 million years, the species that succeeds us will still be wondering what caused our extinction.

Two – They'll talk about sperm depletion, nuclear war...

One – Volcanic eruption, collision with an asteroid...

Two – Just like the dinosaurs.

One – Maybe they became extinct for the same reason we did, in the end.

Two – True, 100 million years is a long time.

One – Especially in the final months.

Two – When a story becomes too heavy to bear...

One – The weight of backpacks, that's how it started.

Two – Even with e-books, a million centuries eventually becomes burdensome...

One – We were getting fed up with it, that's for sure.

Two – Totally over it.

One – We didn't have enough memory to remember all of that.

Two – It's true; it was maybe time for it to stop, but...

One – The bug of the millionth century, that's what finished us.

Two – And then we had done everything. What more could we do?

One – Without risking repetition.

Two – The only thing we hadn't done yet was to disappear.

One – I wonder who will replace us as the dominant species. Cockroaches?

Two – That depresses me...

One – Chickens?

Two – Do you really think we can rebuild a civilisation from a chicken's brain?

One – It would erase the memory and reset the counters...

Two – Yeah...

One – Unless the dinosaurs come back and take over for another 100 million years.

They freeze. Silence.

One – Damn... 100 million years... Do we really need a reason to disappear when we've been here for 100 million years?

The second one doesn't respond. He closes his eyes. He seems dead. The first one gives him an indifferent look before staring blankly ahead again.

One – No, I understand the dinosaurs. 100 million years... it's deadly.

20. Zero Gravity

Two characters.

One – The day will dawn soon...

Two – Do you think they'll remember us in a hundred years?

One – Probably.

Two – In a thousand years?

One – I don't know.

Two – They'll remember you.

One – Does it matter that much to you?

Two (*sarcastic*) – That they remember you?

One – That only I am remembered.

Two – Isn't that why we did it?

One – To become immortal?

Two – To be the first. Even if, in the end, we knew there would only be one.

One – I'll give you my place if you want. I'll be the second...

Two – We can't do that, you know.

One – Who could stop us?

Two – Okay. But why me?

One – Let's flip a coin!

Two – Immortality, decided by a coin toss? Challenge accepted...

The first one pretends to toss a coin into the air, and they both watch it not fall.

One – With the little gravity here, it won't come down before tonight.

Two – You knew that, right? Otherwise, you would have suggested drawing straws.

One – We both knew.

Two – It's daylight now. In a few minutes, you'll be the first man to set foot on this planet.

One – What does it look like?

Two – Like nothing. Or Texas, if you prefer.

One – Wish me luck.

Two – You're going to need it. Immortality is a long road...

One – Do you think famous dead people know they're immortal?

21. Real Estate in Space

An agent (man or woman) behind a desk with a computer. A client (or customer) enters.

Client – Hello.

Agent – Good morning, sir. Welcome to Space Realty. How can I assist you?

Client – Well, I... I'm currently a tenant, and I'm considering becoming a homeowner...

Agent – Very well...

Client – We just had our second child, and we're starting to feel a bit cramped.

Agent – I understand completely. The smaller it is, the more space it takes up, right?

Client – Yes...

Agent – Perfect... And... what kind of planet are you looking for?

Client – Not too big, because my budget is not unlimited. But still comfortable for when the children grow up.

Agent – Let me see what I can offer you. (*The agent types on the keyboard and looks at the screen.*) What do you think of this one? It's not huge, but it has two moons. Ideal for a family.

Client (*reading*) – Needs refreshing... What does that exactly mean?

Agent – The ground temperature is a bit high...

Client – How much?

Agent – It can go up to two hundred degrees in summer... But you can always install an atmosphere conditioner.

Client – I can't stand air conditioning...

Agent – And it's very bright. It's a planet very close to its star.

Client – Probably why it's such an oven... And this one?

Agent – Ah yes, it's very good too. The charm of the old... It really has character.

Client – Renovation required...

Agent – It comes without water and atmosphere, but you know, nowadays, those are not significant modifications. You can even get a tax deduction for some. And at this price...

Client – I would still prefer not to have any renovations.

Agent – Ready to move in, I see... I'm not very handy myself... Let me see... Ah, I think I have just what you need... It's a new listing... Look at this...

Client – It's very blue, isn't it?

Agent – That's the swimming pool... But take a closer look... The garden is very green... And you have a fridge at each pole. Well, they're slightly defrosted now, that's why the pool overflows a bit, but that can be easily fixed by adjusting the thermostat...

Client – It's actually not bad...

Agent – It's the countryside. Less than a hundred light-years from here...

Client – Where exactly is it located?

Agent – It's a bit out of the way, it's true. But on the other hand, it's very quiet. It's in the solar system...

Client – The solar system?

Agent – The Milky Way, you know?

Client – Vaguely...

Agent – I have something more central, of course, but it's more expensive... A planet like this, with a moon on top... I won't hide from you that the moon needs some work... But you can do that a little later when the family grows...

Client – And did you say it's ready to move in?

Agent – There's water, gas, solar electricity... And for the rustic touch, there are even a few active volcanoes left... Well, you might need to have them cleaned...

Client – What's it called?

Agent – Earth.

Client – Earth?

Agent – You can always change the name if you don't like it... It's at number 3211 in the Milky Way.

Client – And it's available immediately?

Agent – I think there are still some tenants who never paid the rent... If you're interested, I can make sure they vacate the premises very quickly... After taking inventory, you can move in whenever you want!

Client – I need to discuss it with my wife, but... Yes, I think I'll take it... I suppose you want a deposit right away...

Agent – That way, I'll reserve it for you. You know, these kinds of properties are quite rare. So they sell very quickly...

Client – Perfect...

The client takes out a credit card, and the agent swipes it through a slot in the computer.

Agent – There you go... Welcome home!

Client – Very well, I'll be back with my wife for the formalities...

Agent – No problem... We're at your service.

The client exits. The agent picks up his cellphone.

Agent – You won't believe it... I just managed to offload Earth... It's been sitting on our hands for so long... Can you swing by to tidy up before next week? The buyer seems eager to move in, and that bunch of squatters left it in a mess... Oh, you do whatever you want, but I think a good round of insecticide should solve the problem... Yes, or homicide, if you prefer... Alright, I'm counting on you then... OK, talk to you later... *(He hangs up and rubs his hands)* Well, that's done...

22. It's Not the End of the World

Him is there. Her comes back.

Him – So?

Her – Two hours.

Him – Two hours...

Her – Approximately.

Him – So in two hours, all of this will have ceased to exist.

Her – And us with it.

Him – I understand what the dinosaurs felt just before their extinction.

Her – But they weren't aware.

Him – They say animals are the only ones who can predict an earthquake a few hours before. Who knows? The dinosaurs might have had a premonition of their impending disappearance.

Him – Are you scared?

Her – I'm not even sure.

Him – After all, it's just the end of the world.

Her – If I were the only one disappearing, I think I'd be terrified. But knowing that everything will stop for everyone at the same time. And that this world won't outlive us.

Him – In a way, it's not us leaving. It's this world leaving us. (*A pause*) Wouldn't it have been better not to know?

Her – To know or not to know...

Him – Anyway, now, we can't act like we don't know.

Him – Two hours. For a self-examination, it's a bit short, isn't it?

Her – For an individual inventory before canceling your lease, not necessarily. But to assess all of humanity...

Him – What would you say? Overall positive?

Her – It's not just about balancing the positive with the negative. You also have to see everything in between. Dark matter. Insignificance. Absurdity.

Him – If one could still doubt the absurdity of this world, the insignificance of its end should finally discourage those who still believed in God.

Her – They would talk to you about apocalypse and divine punishment...

Him – Until now, my religion was more like "after me, the flood." I didn't think the flood could happen in my lifetime...

Her – So what do we do?

Him – I don't know.

Her – It's curious. I had often asked myself this question. What would I do if I only had one day to live? Or an hour.

Him – And?

Her – I thought about silly things like... listening to La Callas or making love.

Him – We still have time to do both. Provided we do it at the same time...

Her – But now it's different. I don't have to give meaning to my life for the few moments left. It's about life in general.

Him – We could have a child.

Her – It would be beautiful as a challenge. But it would remain completely absurd.

Him – We could commit suicide...

Her – So that we can still say: After us, the flood?

Him – It would be a gesture of freedom.

Her – It would be mostly a coquetry.

Him – Then what?

Her – How to still give meaning to the past in a world that has no future?

Him – When we used to say until the end of time, it meant forever. The end of time... I think this time we're there.

Her – And after?

Him – Can there be an after, after the end of time?

Her – New times?

Him – A new beginning?

Her – A new beginning would make no sense.

Him – Then a beginning.

Her – Everything is finished.

Him – Everything begins.

Her – And everything that has happened no longer has to be.

Him – I think it's time...

La Callas is heard. They hug each other.

Curtain

One – So, is it over?

Two – In any case, we're closer to the end than the beginning.

One – Well... Guess we have to go then.

Two – Seems like it, yes...

One – It wasn't so bad... Can we come back?

Two – That...

One – And do we really remember nothing?

Two – What would be the point of coming back...

The first one starts to leave, and seeing that the other is not following, turns around.

One – Aren't you coming?

Two – I have to set everything up again for the next performance...

One – Ah, okay... You're the...

Two – The show goes on.

One – Good luck...

He leaves. The other seems a bit discouraged.

Two – Someone has to mind the shop... Sometimes, I'd also like to go through that door, forget everything... And then come back one morning and start all over again... As if it were the first time... (*Changing his mind*) What if it were truly the last time? (*To the one leaving*) Wait for me, I'm coming with you... (*He tries to leave but can't find the door and resigns.*) For me, it never started... So it will never end... (*Turning to the audience*) Until next time...

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 brief moment of eternity
A Cuckoo's nest
A Hell of a Night
A simple business dinner
All's well that starts badly
An innocent little murder
Back in the spotlight
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 13th
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
Just like a Christmas movie
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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